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CULTURE IN THE REFLECTIONS OF ERNST CASSIRER

Abstract. At the level of assumptions, Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms is related to Marburg's interpretation of Kant's transcendentalism. H. Cohen and P. Natorp limited the scope of philosophy to the traditionally understood epistemology. Cassirer goes beyond this approach, even though he refers to Kant's own solutions; the dominance of *a priori* elements in cognition and their type and character is Cassirer's assumption and starting point. According to the Königsberg philosopher, as well as Natorp and Cohen, the analysis of cognition consists mainly in examining the formal conditions of scientific cognition. Cassirer's approach goes beyond this narrow methodological framework by assuming that the activity of the human spirit is not exhausted by scientific rationality; namely, that in addition to scientific rationality, there are other types of activity and other forms of *a priori* conditionings. This means that epistemology should transform into a broadly understood philosophy of culture and aim to recognize all *a priori* forms that organize the world of human experience and show their logical structure. Therefore, the subject of philosophical reflection should be myth, religion, language, art, science as symbolic forms of a *a priori* integration of human experience, and philosophy should become the philosophy of culture.

Keywords: Cassirer, symbolic form, epistemology, culture, myth, language, art, science.

Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms is largely connected with Marburg's interpretation of Kant's transcendentalism. Cassirer uses some of the approaches of H. Cohen and P. Natorp (e.g. the reduction of philosophy to epistemology), but ultimately refers to Kant himself; the domination of the *a priori* elements in cognition is for Cassirer the assumption and point of departure. Nevertheless, Cassirer's scope of knowledge expands, in relation to Kant's criticism and the reflections of the Marburg neo-Kantians. According to the Königsberg philosopher, as well as Cohen and Natorp, the analysis of cognition consists mainly in examining the formal conditions of scientific cognition. Cassirer's reflection goes beyond this narrow method-

ological framework, assuming that the activity of the human spirit is not exhausted by purely scientific rationality; that alongside the latter there are other types of activity and other forms of a priori syntheses. The task of epistemology is therefore to diagnose all such forms that organize the world of human experience and to show their structure.

It can be said that cognition in Ernst Cassirer's reflection is symbolic by its very nature: reason needs not images but symbols, and a priori syntheses of consciousness are symbolic forms. Myth, religion, language, search, science as such symbolic integrations encompass the entire field of activity of the human spirit.

In the philosophy of the so-called "late" Cassirer, which is the main subject of this analysis, dating from his departure from Germany in 1933, there was a change in the approach to philosophical issues, as well as in the way of their explication. This change, however, was not a sudden and radical one: the issues of culture were already present in his works, a good illustration of which is *Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken* from 1922 and *the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* announced in this work, published the following year (vol. I – *Language*)¹. After 1933, Cassirer realizes the dramatic nature of civilizational changes, one of the manifestations of which was Hitler's rise to power²; from that moment on, the main issue for him will be culture, and broadly understood – as covering all areas of human activity and creativity: history, state, social and political life, art, religion, science and myth. Donald P. Verene is quite right when claiming that Cassirer in the last years of his work accomplished something that could be described as a turn towards normativity: philosophy should move beyond the enclosed realm of hermetic discourse, acknowledge its own obligations towards society, and dare to protest against nihilism and axiological relativism³. And ultimately, as Cassirer himself said during meetings with Heidegger at the University of Hamburg, philosophy is supposed to reveal the value of freedom, to free man from the most dangerous fear, the fear of the current world⁴. Cassirer therefore wanted to piece together the world of twentieth-century culture, shattered by the war and its consequences, and to show anew the harmonizing work of the spirit from which culture emerges. Hence his undoubtedly refreshing and debunking tone in relation to myth, very clear in American lectures and in *The Myth of the State*, where the philosopher clearly writes that mythical thinking equipped with technology and perverse persuasion can lead to a new form of enslavement. Therefore, the fundamental question of this text is the question of the unity of culture (with reference to the context of Cassirer's reflection, of course). Is it a set of different segments that can-

not be reduced to each other in terms of the quality of cultural objects, or does it create a coherent whole, deep within the spiritual process of its formation?

Cultural foundations

What is culture? The answer is seemingly simple: culture is a way of organizing experience, and partaking are all kinds of synthesizing spiritual activities that are ultimately reflected in myth, religion, language, art and science. Yet, Cassirer sees in culture a continuous process of objectivization of our spiritual experience – sensations, feelings, desires, impressions, intuitions, thoughts, ideas. Through culture, we express our reception of the world and our contact with it. Language, art or science are stages on the way to this objectivization, which does not easily lend itself to an ultimate philosophical approach; the goal of this approach is to understand culture, but this goal is a kind of horizon that gets further away with each next step towards it. In this sense, culture is a kind of a snowball that, as it rolls down the snowy slope of human experience, swells with successive layers; this process cannot end as long as we exist; and similarly our process of its understanding⁵.

But our perception and experience of the world takes place through signs, some kind of spiritual shortcuts; these are symbols. Cassirer writes that the experience of the world in the form of perception, apperception, reflection and reasoning is carried precisely with the use of symbols; they are what takes beyond the sphere of ordinary experience, thanks to them the objectivization of the world takes place, whose permanent component is theory; thanks to it, the world experienced becomes the world of culture⁶. In this sense, the unity of culture appears as an assumption that still needs to be developed and justified, because the unity of culture is not a given, since mythical symbols differ from artistic or scientific ones. Culture and its unity cannot be easily captured in static, metaphysical, naturalistic or fatalistic categories; it must be conceptualized in a dynamic sense⁷ – as a system of changing meanings and moral values⁸. The active creative forces participating in the process of shaping culture are diverse, but they grow out from the common trunk of the activity of the human spirit and show different aspects of the same humanity. Cassirer writes: “Culture as a whole can be called a process of progressive human self-liberation. Language, art, religion, science are different phases of this process. In all these manifestations, man discovers and proves a new power – the power to build

one's own world, an «ideal» world. Philosophy cannot abandon the search for basic unity in this ideal world. But it does not confuse this unity with simplicity"⁹. The difficulty in approaching the foundations of culture is that it is not a "thing" based on permanent foundations, consisting of systems of theoretical assumptions; it is a system of actions¹⁰. "Culture," writes Cassirer, "means a whole of verbal and moral activities – of such activities as are not only conceived in an abstract way, but have the constant tendency and Energy of realization. It is this realization, this construction and reconstruction of the empirical world, that is involved in the very concept of culture and that makes up one of its essential and most characteristic features"¹¹.

Culture can also be understood as that by means of which a human can be defined¹². Humanity is defined and determined by human work, creative activity that builds monuments to the interpretation of the world of experience. They create different segments of culture. What connects them is not the similarity of products, but the same interpretative direction, i.e. function: they all aim at the synthesis of eye-witness data and create their own world built on the "bare experience". Therefore, they are connected by a functional bond¹³. But this is not the only way to recognizing culture; culture without a creator is an abstraction suspended in a vacuum, a display of images seen through a telescope. Understanding culture must necessarily be an understanding of human nature. "According to Plato, human nature is like a difficult text whose content must be deciphered by philosophy"¹⁴. Cassirer emphasizes, however, that in order to reach the fundamental structure of human nature, we must start from what is universal, because to some extent the universal explains the individual. The point is that cultural patterns visible in detailed segments of culture show certain important aspects of ourselves, and only the analysis of these aspects can lead to knowledge of who we are. "It is longer considered that a human be a simple substance that exists in itself and is known through itself. Its unity is understood as functional unity. Such unity does not mean the uniformity of the various elements of which it is composed. It not only allows for the multiplicity and multiformity of its components, but even requires it. It is a dialectical unity – the coexistence of opposites."¹⁵

However, each time a spiritual experience is reflected in some cultural creation¹⁶, certain tensions of variously directed forces are revealed in a human. On the one hand, our tendency to move beyond the present of existence towards eternity manifests itself, on the other hand, the conflict that lies deep within us, the conflict between tradition and innovation, resurfaces. At the very basis of culture-forming work lies the desire for immortality; what

actually distinguishes humans from animals is the ability to express and pass on individual experiences and sensations to posterity. "The forms of this expression – writes Cassirer – constitute a new sphere. They have a life of their own, some kind different of eternity that allows them to survive the ephemeral existence of the individual human being."¹⁷ The second tension that emerges in this context is the dispute between tradition and newness or innovation. A human is always pulled between these contradictory forces: one wants security, and this is to some extent satisfied by tradition, and at the same time one wants change, novelty, but this is the enemy of traditionalist stability. This dualism, as Cassirer calls it, is visible in all areas of cultural life; its extreme cases are revealed in myth (the primitive mind regards "agedness"¹⁸ as the greatest holiness). At the antipodes of myth there is art, the most explosive cultural form, and the mind of an artist almost always looks for new things in seeing the world, even when they accept the existing legacy and do not crave for an artistic revolution.

Symbolic integrations

Cassirer's philosophy of culture is an interpretation of cultural phenomena and in this way it is a criticism of culture, because in the Kantian sense, criticism is an in-depth analysis reaching to the most primitive factors. What is this Kantian inspiration, since Kant himself did not deal with the philosophy of culture? In one of his texts, Cassirer writes that Kant's influence boils down mainly to the way he deals with epistemological problems. It is about synopticity, systematicity, that Kant demanded from philosophical research. Synopticity is understood by Cassirer as a philosophical study – tracing what transformation the visible data undergo and what are the basic patterns of this transformation? And is it possible to discover general laws of transformation in culture that determine the basic patterns of interpretation of the world?

The aim of this text is not to reconstruct Cassirer's entire way of thinking about culture, nor to show in detail the logic of his interpretation, but only to capture the problem of how he understands culture. In this context, however, it is necessary to mention the symbol and symbolic forms.

Cassirer comes to the concept of symbolic form under the influence of Goethe's symbolism¹⁹ and, on the other hand, that of Kant. It was precisely this Kantian synopticity that the German philosopher saw in all those ways of organizing the data of experience, which were distinguished as myth, religion, language, art, science and history. For now, let's just settle for stating

that symbolic forms are ways of organizing and connecting all data as we experience the world. But these forms have their own specific logic (an ordering structure), which makes individual forms different from each other, while remaining (relatively) permanent ways of interpreting reality. However, they are not simple reflections of sensory data; they do not shine only with reflected light, they are themselves a source of light²⁰. The philosophy of culture sees them as systems of symbols having an internal unity, which, however, cannot be captured in a traditional metaphysical way, because it is not of a substantive character, but a functional one – relational and operational²¹. This feature makes cultural symbols dynamic; symbols are subject to frequent semantic changes, hence the task of a culture researcher: to reveal these changes, remembering that the world of culture must be discovered again and again; Without this cultural hermeneutics, the world of the human spirit would be gray and unambiguous²².

So where does this constant boiling of culture, the flickering of its content and meanings come from? On the one hand, the explanation is a symbol that participates in shaping culture as a means of expression; it is inherently ambiguous²³; on the other, it is the unbridled power of the human spirit and its restlessness. “Culture in its uninterrupted stream – writes Cassirer – constantly produces new symbols – linguistic, artistic, religious. Science and philosophy, however, must break down this language of symbols into its elements to make it understandable. It must treat analytically what is synthetically produced. There is therefore a constant ebb and flow. Natural science serves us, according to Kant’s expression, «to syllabify phenomena in order to be able to decipher them as experience»; cultural studies teach us to interpret symbols to reveal the content hidden within them – so that the life in which they have their source can be made visible again.”²⁴

Critical idealism does not want to be merely a recorder of cultural facts. In order to understand them, it arranges them according to general rules, but they are not, as Cassirer writes, deduced *a priori* from thought; these rules must be sought in the history of art, myth, science, religion, in a context that will enable the study of the ways of thinking present in them, and not their historical forms: it is about fundamental ways of thinking, understanding, imaging, representing present in language, science or art; if we look into them, we will be able to distinguish their structural similarities and differences, not historical ones²⁵. In Cassirer’s philosophy, the problem of meaning prevails over the question of historical development, which is the main issue in the sciences dealing with genealogy. In the philosophy of culture, as it is understood here, traditional logical means should not be employed; it is necessary to take into account the basic axiological

problems that belong to the very core of culture, and the fact that culture is ultimately an expression of the same spiritual energy, if seen in a proper synthetic take. That is why the German philosopher writes: "But philosophical synthesis means something different. What we are looking for here is not unity of results, but unity of action; not the unity of products, but the unity of the **creative process**."²⁶ This unity is a functional unity. Thanks to this unity, culture can be seen as conditioning two things: it is the condition for interpersonal communication, but it is also a way of better self-knowledge²⁷.

In Cassirer's philosophy, the fundamental point of reference is an essentially Kantian question: how is the world of human culture possible? The transcendental method is the best possible solution here; philosophy should be able to penetrate the activity of the human spirit and trace in it all those functions exemplified and embodied by science, myth or language. But these creative activities (functions of the spirit) should not be understood as creations or products (*ergon*), but as creative production (*energeia*). Philosophy cannot be satisfied with examining individual surfaces of cultural fields, because the problem of the whole is more important; what is culture heading towards and what is its meaning: "What is this whole of spiritual culture?"²⁸ Cassirer writes that it is not only about analyzing the forms of individual areas of culture, but about the analysis of the act of their creation, not only about works, but about spiritual creative processes, about a specific topography of symbolic consciousness, about fundamental ways of imaging, fantasizing, presenting, and believing within each of the symbolic forms of culture: "What it «is», what does each of them mean and what functions does it fulfill? How do language and myth, art and religion behave towards each other, how do they differ and what connects them? Here we reach the «theory» of culture, which must ultimately seek its culmination in the «philosophy of symbolic forms» – this culmination may also appear as an «infinitely distant point» to which we can only get closer asymptotically."²⁹

The shallows of naturalism

Cassirer's theory of culture is supposed to be (as he writes) a phenomenology of culture³⁰, against the background of which the shortcomings of naturalism examining the cultural universe can be seen. Various varieties of empiricism, physicalism, and naturalism force us to focus on facts; but the concept of fact is not precise.

“But this does not solve the problem of the true scientific method – writes Cassirer – on the contrary, it is a problem in itself. What does a «scientific fact» mean? Of course, no chance observation or mere accumulation of sensory data provides us with such a fact. Scientific facts always imply a theoretical, that is, a symbolic, element. Many, if not most, scientific facts that have changed the entire course of the history of science were hypothetical facts before they became observable facts.”³¹ Reducing multi-dimensional and ambiguous cultural events only to what can be observed and described is a reduction to elements that are not the most important in the life of culture. Naturalism cannot capture the importance of cultural forms, i.e. certain mechanisms of thinking and feeling that ultimately generate cultural objects – linguistic texts, artistic images, mythical stories or scientific documents. If a naturalistic method were used, focusing only on measurable elements, the analysis would include all the thoughts, experiences, fears and hopes that are expressed in paintings, musical pieces, etc.; the history of religion would be merely a description of rituals, sacrifices, prayer texts – that would be extreme behaviorism. Naturalism in any form is incapable of penetrating the spiritual process that is the foundation of all creation of culture: naturalism cuts the Gordian knot, but does not solve it – only phenomenological analysis in the form of the philosophy of symbolic forms³² can do this.

Hippolyte Taine wanted to implement the program of naturalism in history of art and literature. In *The Philosophy of Art and History of English Literature*, he assumed that the shape of culture and the content of works are determined by three factors that can be precisely measured and described: race, environment and moment. Taine assumed that the science of art and literature would properly achieve its research goals if it abandoned the aspirations of scientific independence and based itself on the natural science framework; and this framework relies primarily on causal analysis. In this way, the “sciences of the spirit” will achieve the precision and durability of the conclusions of the “sciences of nature.” In Taine’s approach, the diversity and multicolored subject matter of cultural sciences must be treated reductively – that is, it must be reduced to the laws and principles that govern spiritual creativity, because “spirit”, like “nature”, works according to certain permanent mechanisms determining the shapes of its products; extracting the general causes of their creation from the multitude of religious, artistic, musical and literary phenomena is the fundamental goal of cultural sciences. And these causes, according to Taine, are race, environment, moment (*rasse, milieu, moment*).

According to Cassirer, however, Taine failed to implement this program because the conclusions he reached in his analysis of cultural phenomena do not fall within the scope of the “general causes” that were declared at the starting point. This is clearly visible in the example of Taine’s description and analysis of 17th-century Dutch painting. The French thinker, trying to explain aesthetic issues, reaches into the materialistic-naturalistic layer; he therefore presents the Dutch climate and landscape as the fundamental determinants, so to speak, of the anthropological shape of the Dutch (character) and their spiritual creativity; The Netherlands is built on sediment and river silt that accumulates as rivers flow. This way of shaping the geological landscape determines the climate, atmosphere and mood as well as the physical, moral and spiritual features of people, and thus determines art. Therefore, we find here a reduction of what is spiritual to what is physical – and therefore the quintessence of the naturalistic program. “Upon a closer look,” Cassirer writes, “you see that it didn’t work. Taine begins by saying that he speaks the language of naturalists, but one senses that he is not fluent in it. The further he progresses and the closer he gets to the actual, concrete problems, the more he is forced to speak and think in a different conceptual language. It starts from concepts and terms typical of natural science, but in the course of work both undergo a peculiar **transformation of meaning**”³³. This departure from the race-environment-moment schema is revealed, for example, in landscape descriptions which, in addition to purely physical characteristics, unexpectedly acquire “physiognomic” and “emotive” characteristics, expressed in terms of feeling and expression; viewing the landscape as depressing or joyful cannot be justified in purely natural science terminology. Cassirer says that this is an obvious breach of the logic of the argument, but where Taine departs from it is where he becomes more interesting. And when a French historian reaches the quintessence of the general image of man of a given era, he abandons his methodological inclination, leaves behind geographical observations, archives, even psychological characteristics contained in library annals, and reaches – as in the case of the seventeenth-century Dutch – to artistic testimonies; in this case to the paintings of Rubens. Ultimately, he completely trusts the artist’s intuition, being fully aware that it is not a realistic registration of the presented objects, a kind of photography, but an artistic rendition and a reveal of what is hidden under the layer of physical and physiognomic features. In this way, the naturalistic pattern shows us its helplessness in the face of a spirit that takes on corporeal forms, because in fact, Rubens did not discover, but created such a type of a Fleming that tells us more about the seventeenth-century Dutch, their soul, desires,

anxieties than all written documents of that era put together³⁴. The inductive method, of course, has its advantages and has played a significant role in the history of specific sciences, but in the field of cultural research it reveals a particularly acute weakness.

Final remarks

Cassirer, in one of the fragments concerning aesthetic problems, writes that beauty is not directly related to morality, but it can be considered a symbol of morality, because beauty reveals man's ability to transcend empirical concreteness; although art and morality are different, both have references to what Kant in his *Critique of of Judgment* calls the intelligible (supersensible) substrate of humanity: it is an ideal defining the core of the creative energy of the human spirit³⁵. Why does this energy crystallize? What is it heading towards? What does it want to articulate? According to Cassirer, this is where we should look for an integral link between culture and freedom. The basic issue of culture, which can be discovered under a large amount of empirical material, is the ethical problem, which in turn refers to the issue of freedom and necessity³⁶. In his philosophy of history, Kant maintained that by tracing history, one can capture various lines of development, but first one must discover the general principles of morality, because they determine the course of history, and the fundamental manifestation of this moral issue is freedom, which Kant understands as the autonomy of reason. According to Cassirer, this is precisely the fundamental goal of the philosophy of culture: how can this autonomy be achieved? Freedom, i.e. the autonomy of reason and spirit, is the driving force of culture, it is its beginning and end, culture is simply the actualization of the desire for freedom³⁷. And although Cassirer goes beyond Kant's framework for understanding freedom with his philosophy of symbolic forms, he nevertheless accepts Kant's basic findings.

And yet Cassirer, this admirer of the cultural universe, the free realm of the creative spirit, concludes that for ever more subtle means of expressing cultural progress, for ever more perfect intellectual tools thanks to which we understand the world better and better, we have to pay a certain price, a price in the form of the loss of a direct experience of the world: "what remains is the world of intellectual symbols, not the world of direct experience."³⁸ The entire intricate symbolic network, religious rites, paintings of brilliant masters, mythical and literary stories, sounds and moods of musical works, and even diagrams explaining science, have stood before man,

covering the physical reality: we can no longer look at the landscape otherwise than through the visions of Goethe, Shakespeare, Hölderlin; people talk to one another through cultural forms; real nature seems to disappear in the cocoon of culture³⁹. Only philosophy has the courage to ask about the price of such progress, because it aspires to the role of the “conscience of culture”⁴⁰. And only philosophy is able to ask what the value of technical progress is, inasmuch as it is a component of cultural development. And its Cassirerian answer is not very cheerful: “By using tools, man has declared himself ruler over things. However, this rule did not become a blessing for him, but a curse. The technique he invented to subjugate the physical world turned against himself. It led not only to increasing self-estrangement, but ultimately to a certain self-loss of the human existence. A tool that seems to be designed to satisfy human needs has instead created countless artificial needs. In this respect, every improvement in technical culture is and remains a true gift of the Danaï”⁴¹.

N O T E S

¹ See. P. Parszutowicz, *O fenomenologii form symbolicznych*, “Idea. Studia nad strukturą i rozwojem pojęć filozoficznych”, XXV, p. 309.

² Regarding Cassirer’s personal issues at the time see: A. J. Noras, *Historia neokantyzmu*, Katowice 2012, p. 600–601.

³ See. D. P. Verene, *Introduction*, w: *Symbol, Myth and Culture. Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer*, New Haven – London 1979, p. 21. This edition includes Cassirer’s works chiefly from his American period; these are his lectures given at Yale and Columbia, articles published in niche periodicals as well as notes.

⁴ See. C. H. Hamburg, *A Cassirer-Heidegger Seminar*, “Philosophy and Phenomenological Research”, 25, 1964, p. 215.

⁵ See. R. Konersmann, *Filozofia kultury. Wprowadzenie*, przeł. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 2009, p. 89.

⁶ See. E. Cassirer, *Language and Art II*, In: *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, op. cit. p. 167.

⁷ See. B. Szymańska, *Co to jest “filozofia kultury”?*, In: (Ed.) Z. Rosińska, B. Michalik, *Co to jest filozofia kultury*, Warszawa 2006, p. 19.

⁸ See. E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism as a Philosophy of Culture*, In: *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, op. cit., p. 90.

⁹ E. Cassirer, *Esaj o człowieku. Wstęp do filozofii kultury*, trans. A. Staniewska, Warszawa 1971, p. 359. [Quote translation: Michał Pelczar].

¹⁰ See E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism as a Philosophy of Culture*, op. cit., p. 65.

¹¹ E. Cassirer, *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, op. cit., p. 65 [quote trans: M.P.]

¹² Zob. H. Buczyńska, *Cassirer*, Warszawa 1963, s. 51.

¹³ See E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, Yale University Press 1944, p. 141.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 125.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 351.

¹⁶ Cassirer emphasizes that every cultural creation or object has two sides – spiritual and material-sensual. All areas of culture and the corresponding types of creative activity use such creations. He explains: “They are signs, monuments, memorabilia in which alone we can grasp the religious, linguistic, artistic meaning. And it is this mutual interpenetration that constitutes what we recognize as an object of culture. This object, like any other object, occupies a position in time and space. It has its here and now, it comes into existence and passes. And as long as we describe this here and now, this creation and passing, there is no need to go beyond the area of physical arrangements. However, on the other hand, in this area, what is physical appears in a new function. It not only ‘is’ and ‘becomes’, but in its being and becoming it ‘reveals’ something else. The manifestation of some ‘meaning’ that is not separated from the physical, but is embodied by it and in it, is the common moment of all the content that we designate as ‘culture’. One can probably ignore this moment and become blind to its ‘symbolic value’ by using the kind of abstraction that omits and ignores”; E. Cassirer, *Logika nauk o kulturze*, transl. P. Parszutowicz, Kęty 2011, p. 67. [Quote trans.: M.P]

¹⁷ E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, op. cit., p. 353.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 354.

¹⁹ See. D. P. Verene, op. cit., p. 26. On the role of the concept of style derived from Goethe see also P. Parszutowicz, *Fenomenologia form symbolicznych, Podstawowe pojęcia i inspiracje “późnej” filozofii Ernsta Cassirera*, Warszawa 2013, p. 82, 100–101.

²⁰ See. E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism as a Philosophy of Culture*, op. cit., p. 71.

²¹ See Ibid. According to Cassirer, every type of interpretive activity uses symbols, because “the basic concepts of every science, the means by which it asks its questions and formulates solutions, no longer appear [as] passive reflections of a given entity, but as self-generated intellectual symbols.” E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 1 – *Die Sprache*, in: ibid., *Gesammelte Werke*. Hamburger Ausgabe, Bd. 11, Hamburg 2011, p. 3; cited in: P. Parszutowicz, *Logiczne podstawy nauk o duchu. O krytycznej filozofii kultury Ernsta Cassirera* (Introduction to: E. Cassirer, *Logika nauk o kulturze*, ed. cited, p. 13).

²² E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of History*, w: *Symbol, Myth, and Culture*, ed. cit., p. 139.

²³ Zob. P. Parszutowicz, *Fenomenologia form symbolicznych*, ed. cit., pp. 88–89.

²⁴ E. Cassirer, *Logika nauk o kulturze*, ed. cit. pp. 105–106 [quote trans.: M.P]

²⁵ See. E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism as a Philosophy of Culture*, ed. cit., p. 81.

²⁶ E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man...*, ed. cit., p. 135.

²⁷ E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of History*, ed. cit., p. 137.

²⁸ E. Cassirer, *The Concept of Philosophy as a Philosophical Problem*, ed. cit., p. 57.

²⁹ E. Cassirer, *Logika nauk o kulturze*, ed. cit., p. 116, [quote trans.: M.P]. In order to reach the foundations of culture fully, the analysis of the act and the analysis of the form must be preceded by the analysis of the works – their meanings, which, together with the collection of such results, will begin to be arranged into individual groups (i.e. forms), and this in turn (analysis of the works) should be preceded by an analysis of the creation of the works, or a description taking into account the reasons for the creation of the works; only such a comprehensive examination may prove adequate; see there.

³⁰ See. E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man...*, ed. cit., p. 107.

³¹ Ibid., p. 116.

³² See E. Cassirer, *Logika...*, ed. cit., p. 66. One of the sources of Cassirer's inspiration for the concept of the symbolic form was Aby Warburg, who in reference to the visual arts used the expression "pathos formula", in the sense of relatively permanent patterns of expressing experience and sensations; Cassirer writes that in a similar way one can study other areas of culture, myth, language, religion, science, in order to show how movement and rest, event and duration are related in these forms of thinking, "and use one as a means of representing the other" [quote trans.: M.P.]; Ibid., p. 134.

³³ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁴ Cassirer quotes the following fragment of Taine's *Philosophie de l'art.*: "(...) the artist, by changing the relations of the parts, changes them in the same direction in order to clearly reflect a certain essential feature (*caractère essentiel*) of the object and, consequently, the basic idea (*idée principale*) that he has created. Let's mark this word, gentlemen. This feature is what philosophers call the essence of things (*l'essence des choses*). (...) Let us leave aside the word **essence**, which is technical, and simply say that the purpose of art is to reveal some main feature, some characteristic, prominent and significant, an important point of view, the fundamental basis of the existence of an object. And for this reason they say that the purpose of art is to reveal the essence of things"; Ibid., p. 103 [quote trans. M.P].

³⁵ Zob. E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism as a Philosophy of Culture*, op. cit., p. 88. See also I. Kant, *Krytyka władzy sądzienia*, przeł. J. Gałęcki, Warszawa 1986, s. 282.

³⁶ Zob. E. Cassirer, *Critical Idealism...*, ed. cit., p. 82.

³⁷ See ibidem, p. 85.

³⁸ E. Cassirer, *Language and Art I*, w: *Symbol, Myth and Culture*, ed. cit., p. 154.

³⁹ See E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man...*, ed. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁰ E. Cassirer, *Logika nauk o kulturze*, ed. cit., p. 52 [quote trans. M.P].

⁴¹ Ibid. [quote trans. M.P.].

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