

## The Perception of the Divine: Myth, Art, and Religion in Ernst Cassirer

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According to the philosophy of religion proposed by Ernst Cassirer, myth and religion are two symbolic forms whose goal of representation is the idea of the sacred; to achieve this, both use different aesthetic representations such as totem, ritual, or art to configure their own idea of the divine. Through a critical examination of the author's work, both the structure and the form of mythical and religious thought are analyzed to describe the aesthetic function fulfilled in each form. To illustrate the contribution that art offers in the contemplation of the divine in both modalities, we will use Ratzinger's sermon "The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty."

**Keywords:** myth – religion – symbolic representation – aesthetic representation – Cassirer

### Introduction

In the second volume of *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (PSF), Cassirer studies the mythical and religious thinking as symbolic forms, and shows that all symbolic forms are based on myth, about it the author writes:

if the totality of these [symbolic] forms really constitutes a systematic unity, then the fate of any one of them is closely connected with the fate of all the others.... And it becomes immediately evident that myth possesses a decisive significance in and for this whole if we consider the genesis of the basic forms of intellectual culture from that of mythical consciousness. None of these forms possesses from the beginning an independent being and a clear, actual, and delimited shape; rather, each of them confronts us, as it were,

disguised and enshrouded in some shape of myth.... the problem of the beginnings of art, the beginnings of writing, and the beginnings of law and science leads back to a stage in which they all rest in the immediate and undivided unity of mythical consciousness (Cassirer 2021b, xxx).

Nevertheless, the objective of the author is to evaluate whether, despite their beginnings, there is some kind of independence in each formation processes and, if so, what the specific symbolic process may be. He evaluates whether the cosmological, ethical, and political configurations developed in ancient civilizations, as well as in the great modern religions, can be considered a valid form of thought, as well as an authentic knowledge of being (Cassirer 2021b, xxviii – xxxiv).

According to the author, mythical thought evolves and develops within the framework of a purely expressive function, which makes myth a “drama” (Cassirer 2021b, 50). Based on ethnographic reports, mythical texts, and artistic representations, the author argues that there is not only a fantastic vision of the world, but also an intuitive-religious understanding of the world; so, any primitive written work, painting, chant, or ancient name, is understood as a revelation of the origin or of the founding deity. In this way, all existence is seen as a manifestation of that same origin or deity. (Cassirer 2013, 2 – 70, 131 – 213). As a central feature of myth, it is noted that the part is the whole: “The whole [in myth] does not ‘have’ parts and does not break down into them; rather, the part is immediately the whole and effectively acts and functions as such” (Cassirer 2021b, 60).

Despite this conception of myth as a foundation of all symbolic forms, Cassirer shows that it would gradually reach a religious form:

In the gradual progress of the mythical view of the world, however, a separation now inserts itself here, and this separation constitutes the real beginning of specifically religious consciousness. The further back we follow it toward its origins, the less the content of religious consciousness can be distinguished from that of mythical consciousness. The two are so interwoven and interlinked that nowhere in actual reciprocal determinacy can they be separated from each other and juxtaposed in opposition to each other.... Despite this insoluble interweaving of the contents of myth and religion, their form is not the same. And the particular nature of the religious “form” manifests itself in the changed taking-of-position that consciousness assumes here toward the mythical image-world.... Religion takes the decisive step that is essentially alien to myth: in its use of sensible images and signs it at the same time knows them as such – as the means of expression that, though they reveal a determinate sense, must necessarily at

the same time remain inadequate to it, which “point to” this sense without ever fully grasping and exhausting it. (Cassirer 2021b, 289 – 290).

Although both cultural modalities are characterized by structuring the relationship between the human being and the origin and foundation of reality – mainly through artistic representations (narratives, paintings, songs, dances, etc.) – in each symbolic form we find a different process of synthesis of the perceived phenomena. About it, according to Ursula Renz emphasis that:

[We] cannot categorically distinguish religion from myth....He obviously takes religion to stand in some ontological continuity with myth....He nevertheless thinks that religion is separated from mythical thought by an important insight concerning the character of the image of the gods. Whereas the mythical attitude towards the image is magic, religion is essentially rooted in the knowledge of its representational character. This knowledge in turn changes the very quality of the object regarded as sacred. In contrast to the mythical magician, the religious man recognizes the image of the divine as a mere representation, and therefore knows that it is not the real and present divinity itself. (Renz 2011, 146 – 147).

Renz (2011, 147) also emphasizes that while in myth the expression appears as an emotive response to phenomena, in religion the same act of consciousness is guided by an act of awareness that drives the understanding of what is perceived through an idea of the divine, placing the emotional level to the background. In this process, art fulfills an important function for both; whereas the mythical object is a means of invoking the presence of the god or demon, in religious art we find that the artistic object functions as a linking resource between the deity and the subject; the main difference is that whereas in myth art functions as an expression of the sacred, in religion art functions as a purely evocative means.

In the following section, we will delimit the criteria that allow to differentiate each symbolic form, as well as the resources of aesthetic relation that each one takes advantage of. Then, we will use Joseph Ratzinger’s (2002) sermon entitled “The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty,” in which he elucidates the religious value of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ as a beautiful and true moment, to deepen in the kind of religious and artistic value offered by the most characteristic representation of Catholicism.

## **I. The Perception of the Divine in Myth and Religion**

This section examines Cassirer’s theoretical influences from Herman Usener and Herman Cohen to contextualize the perception of the divine in myth and

religion, and the function aesthetic representations within these symbolic forms. We will see how he takes key points from them to propose what he calls phenomenology of the spirit.

According to Cassirer, the original perception of the world is characterized as a simple awareness of creatures and magical forces: “Long before the world is given to consciousness as a totality of empirical ‘things’ and a complex of empirical ‘properties,’ it is given as a totality of mythical forces and effects” (Cassirer 2021b, 1). To support this theory, Cassirer uses Usener’s philological account of the process of conceptualization in Indo-European civilizations was associated with a “religious conceptualization,” and with an “unconscious processes of imagination,” whose main cultural manifestation was the “animation” of material objects and the “metaphorization” of language (Usener 1896, VI; Cassirer 2021b, 25 – 28). The author states that the primitive constitution of knowledge is related to the configuration of the idea of the divine:

The process of concept formation finds its preliminary conclusion in the expression of the word. To see how people’s concepts and ideas have evolved, we have only one tool, the facts of vocabulary. As with the formation of all other concepts, we can see the spiritual process by which the original concepts of Deity and Gods were formed only in the linguistic product of that process. (Usener 1896, 3).

Cassirer considers that in every perceptual act there is an act of cultural orientation which lead the way we perceive the world. In addition to this, he asks whether there is a general basic function that allows us to justify the meaning given to words:

What induces it to draw out certain figures from the flowing and always uniform series of impressions that meet our senses or that originate from the inner activity of spirit, to dwell on and stamp them with a certain “signification”? (Cassirer 2013, 151).

Following Usener (1896), in *Language and Myth* three historical moments of the process of conceptual configuration in ancient civilizations can be appreciated:

1. The “gods of the instant”: presented by both authors as the result of an emotive excitability, a fleeting moment that, nevertheless, remains as a particular moment identified with a form or idea that justifies its selectivity from among the totality of emotions (Usener 1896, 280; Cassirer 2013, 144 – 145).

2. The “particular gods”: once the subject becomes capable of controlling the emotions that reveal to him a fleeting god and stabilizes his emotive directionality, divinities that are regulated by the general orientation of perception appear (Usener 1896, 75 – 76; Cassirer 2013, 146).
3. The “personal gods”: the divinity is particularized thanks to the symbiosis of the activity and tradition of the community that classifies phenomenal appearances with a name, which makes it possible to identify specific situations with a code (Usener 1896, 330; Cassirer 2013, 147).

The main result of this historical-religious synthesis shows that: “Theoretical, practical, and aesthetic consciousness...are originally bound to mythical-religious consciousness” (Cassirer 2013, 168). Even from its primitive stage, this process of interrelation would imply configuring different social resources (rites, totems, narratives, etc.) with which the perceptions of divinity are stabilized, formed, and validated: “the ‘state of the gods’ becomes a faithful picture of the organization of social life” (Cassirer 2021b, 216). The task of the history of religion is to describe the transformation of environmental resources into ritual and cult systems for the structuring of an eventual religious experience. Cassirer (2021b, 308 – 313) shows that every mythical conception is presented as an antecedent of religious conceptions by virtue of the development of language. However, for the author, it was necessary to consider that the constitution of religious thought took advantage of aesthetic resources whose manifestation made it possible to distinguish it from the expressive activity of myth.

These ideas are based on Cohen’s theory (2015, 93 – 157) who places religion as a critical form of knowledge that relies on logic, aesthetics, and ethics for the configuration of the idea of God. According to this author, the idea of God appears in the history of culture as the result of a separation of its mythical contents: “I conceive the transcendence of God to lie in the significance of its independent content. Its independent content constitutes the significance of God’s transcendence” (Cohen 2021, 98).

Nonetheless, Cassirer will distance himself from both authors by proposing, with respect to Usener, a difference between myth, language, and religion, though recognizing that it is in the historical development that these symbolic forms interact culturally. From Cohen accepts the idea of religion as a stage whose pure form of relation constitutes the climax of the dialectical process, but additionally recognizes the primitive forms of conception as fundamental phenomenological moments. As we shall see in the following section, in *Mythical Thinking* he proposes a phenomenology of religious

thought in which two crucial moments are differentiated: a mythical-religious state, where the perception of divinity is characterized by the expressive or emotive awareness of the world, and a philosophical-religious state, whose characteristic is the understanding of the function of the divine in culture.

## **II. Myth and Religion. Aesthetic Differences**

In the presentation of the general project of PSF, the author introduces the theme of the second volume as a “phenomenology of mythical and religious thinking” (Cassirer 2021c, xxx) since he conceives the mythical phase as a first stage within the religious formations. For Cassirer, this step is indispensable in the development of the spirit, and it allows him to construct an original and unique system in comparison with the proposals of his predecessors.

In contrast with Cohen, Cassirer posits that myth and religion are distinct forms. However, he does not view these forms as inherently antagonistic. Instead, he asserts that the interrelation between mythical and religious thought facilitates both development and communication. To this end, Cassirer broadens the dialectical process of constitution by accepting that even in its primitive phases, a valid form of conception of the divine can be identified. The most important moments of this phenomenological progress proposed by the author are studied below.

The first moment is characterized by its development within the framework of what the author calls “mythical-religious” stage. The apprehension of phenomena is part of a transforming synthesis or mythical metamorphosis, which leads the subject to perceive the environment and its changes as a magical unity. Each perceived part is an active presence of the whole, and, therefore, is the whole itself:

Here, anything can come from anything, because anything can stand in temporal or spatial contact with anything. Whereas empirical-causal thinking speaks about “alteration” and seeks to understand it on the basis of a general rule, mythical thinking knows only a simple metamorphosis (Cassirer 2021b, 57).

The notion of a unified origin for all phenomena represents the initial recognition of the divine. However, this universal conception is not merely a conceptual construct; it is a “mysterium tremendum [fearful mystery] and mysterium fascinosum [fascinating mystery]” (Cassirer 2021b, 98). Thus, mythical perception is characterized by its affective intensity and its subsequent interpretation: “The real substratum of myth is not a substratum of

thought but of feeling. Myth and primitive religion...depend much more upon unity of feeling than upon logical rules" (Cassirer 2006, 98 – 99).

It is because of this fluctuation and emotional excitement derived from discovery that mythical thinking requires material forms of representation such as the "totem" to configure resources to distinguish between the divine and the uncanny: "in all mythical thinking [totem] is no mere sign but rather the expression of the interconnections that are intended and felt as thoroughly real" (Cassirer 2021b, 109). Through this modality, the individual establishes a logical resource to define the presence of the divine; experiences will be sacred if the event can be associated with its totem, whereas they will be profane, and therefore a taboo, if the emotive event is opposed to everything socially classified as desirable. With the distinction between totem and taboo, a system of mythical thought is constructed that allows the members of the community to be linked to the form of the socially accepted divinity.

Cassirer's conceptualization of what he calls "mythical-religious" elucidate the way in which primitive consciousness unifies perceptions around a schema, which is gradually constructed by the community. This schema gives rise to a sacred vision of common natural events. In this way, the author seeks to distinguish between the "mythical perceptions" described by Usener (1896, 280) as "gods of the instant" and those everyday perceptions whose meaning and content are interpreted within the framework of a structure that organizes the perception of phenomena. It is therefore not a specific phase but rather a dialectical process in which a primitive form of the religious emerges, albeit still subject to the affective impressions of the subjects:

[The perception of mythical object] lives, as it were, in an individual atmosphere; it is something unique that can be comprehended only in its uniqueness, in its immediate here and now. And yet, on the other hand, the contents of mythical consciousness are not simply abandoned to unconnected singularities; rather, there prevails in them also a universal – which, however, is of an entirely different kind and source from the universal of the logical concept... In their mere existence, and in their immediate constitution, they all contain a revelation which, nevertheless, also retains as such a kind of mystery, and this interpenetration, this revelation, is at once an unveiling and a veiling and imprints the mythical-religious content with its basic feature, its character of the sacred (Cassirer 2021b, 94 – 95).

The central theme of this mythical-religious phase is the indissolubility of the perceived phenomena, not because they are considered as parts of a concept or

a universal form, but because as a homogeneous whole it is the expression of a sacred that is revealed and accepted as such; the author presents this idea following Codrington's "mana" and "taboo" reports, in which these are presented as emotional perceptions of the world:

The mana and taboo representations do not serve the designation of certain classes of objects, but to a certain degree, they constitute in them the distinctive accent that magical-mythical consciousness places on objects. This accent divides the whole of being and events into a mythically significant and mythically irrelevant sphere, into what arouses mythical interest and what leaves it relatively indifferent (Cassirer 2021b, 98).

The history of civilizations shows the social efforts to organize a system of rituals and worship with which to communicate with the divinities; thus, the totem, or oral narrations about the origin of the world, as well as paintings and other resources operate as a resource of identity, but also as a training resource to encourage new members of the community to incorporate the codes and patterns delimited by previous generations (Cassirer 2021b, 268 – 283).

In contrast to this mythical-religious mode of perceiving, in the religious-philosophical stage the awareness of the divine is established as an act of intermediation: "The religious-philosophical perspective thinks the unity between God and the human less as a substantial than as a genuine synthetic unity: a unity of differences" (Cassirer 2021b, 303). While in the previous phase the apprehension of the divine depended on the intensity of the emotional hierarchy resulting from the perception of the phenomena, which were then translated into images or social resources (such as totems, narratives, or images) that served to express the experience of reality. In this subsequent phase, while we can still identify the same resources, they now develop as mediations of a spiritual meaning: "Everything physical and material, every existence and event, now becomes a parable for the corporeal-pictorial expression of something spiritual." (Cassirer 2021b, 304). Although the self, the world, and the divine are in constant interaction, in this phase they are distinguished from each other because the individual value of each of them is recognized. In the sphere of the religious symbolic form the believer recognizes the act of linking with the divine, but instead of perceiving the phenomena of the world as an encounter with the divine, a system of ritual and worship is established as an intermediary action: now the divinity appears as an act of invocation, or as the result of a process of search and encounter defined within the liturgical parameters of religious thought.



At this stage, the perception of the divine is the result of a function between the awareness and a symbolization of the same understanding of the phenomena, since the individual interpretation is shaped by the cultural resources. This process is described by the author using the analogy of the development of language (Cassirer 2021a, 133 – 143), in which the purely expressive phase (mimesis) evolves into a representative and finally into a symbolic phase; the author sees the same dialectic in the religious form:

[J]ust as language is determined in its spiritual development by the fact that it clings to the sensible and yet continually strives beyond it... the same basic characteristic opposition shows itself as well in the circle of the religious.... In religion, the sensible and the spiritual by no means coincide with one another, but they nevertheless point continuously to one another (Cassirer 2021b, 308).

This dialectic implies not only an evolution between phases, but also a synthesis of moments to develop a continuous interaction between material and spiritual dimensions; thus, in the mythical-religious phase, the construction of aesthetic resources, such as totemic identification, enabled the association between the members of the community and their corresponding divine form, but such unity implied a fusion of the self with the god, so that the emergence of the idea of a self appears as a late result within ancient communities. On the other hand, in the philosophical-religious phase, the recognition of the self as a reality independent of the aesthetic resource and the divinity is a primary objective, since the use of both religious images and sacred narratives (such as songs or poetry) seeks the delimitation of a sacred space and time, and the poetic or pictorial resources acquire their own independent value. This division occurs because of a recurrent interaction between the mythical form and other cultural forms such as language or art, since it is only in the continuous reinterpretation of each aspect of the world of culture, that the own and independent value that myth, language, art or religion fulfill is recognized:

...this process of separation and liberation is paralleled by another: art, like language, also appears in its beginning to be closely bound up with myth. Myth, language, and art form a concrete and still undifferentiated unity, which only gradually resolves itself into a triad of more independent spiritual modes of configuration....The image...achieves its purely presentative, specifically "aesthetic" function only insofar as the magic circle in which it remains entranced in mythical consciousness is broken through, and it is recognized as a particular form of configuration instead of as a mythical-magical figure (Cassirer 2013, 212).

The difference between each religious stage is found in the way and resources with which the perception of divinity is interpreted. Before the act of noticing and classifying phenomena by means of aesthetic resources, it acquires a differentiated function. In the mythical phase, with the use of communal images such as the totem, the affective experience of the encounter between the members and the geographical environment is structured in order to define a cosmic order dictated by the deities; on the other hand, in the philosophical phase, the structuring of experiences resorts to images or artistic forms (paintings, songs, poems, etc.) to delimit the form and content of the divinity. Simplistically, it can be said that, in the mythical phase, the objective is to order and ensure in the image or artistic form a means to perceive the divine, while in the religious phase a structure of both understanding and ritual delimitation is promoted to achieve the encounter between the subject and the divine.

For a better understanding of these stages, and as an example, the following section analyzes Joseph Ratzinger's sermon entitled "The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty," in which he reflects on the function that the image of the crucified Christ fulfills within the Catholic religion.

### **III. The Contemplation of Beauty as an Encounter with Truth**

In this section we use Ratzinger's reflection on the contemplation of beauty as an example of how the use of art allows the subject to relate to the divinity. It is important to emphasize that this is not a comparative study between authors; here we are considering only the reflection on the representation of Jesus on the cross proposed by the theologian as a case study. This sermon will be useful to deepen the use of art in myth where, according to Cassirer: "Myth sees in the image a fragment of substantial reality, a part of the thing-world, endowed with equal or higher forces than this world. From this first magical view, religious apprehension strives toward a progressively purer spiritualization." (Cassirer 2021b, 313).

Ratzinger's (2002) text contrast the description of Jesus in *Psalms* 45, where he is presented as the most beautiful man: "you are the most handsome of men; fair speech has graced your lips, for God has blessed you forever" (*Psalms* 45, 3). Later, in the Gospels Pontius Pilate invites the crowd to pity Jesus' pain and physical state: "So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, 'Behold, the man!'" (*Jn*, 19:5). Beauty fulfills a revelatory function, since it implies the overcoming of the apparent by referring the human faculties to the encounter with reality, which would not be the mere appearance of phenomena that can be perceived in isolation but the true forms: "The beautiful is knowledge certainly, but, in a superior form, since it arouses man to the real greatness of the

truth" (2002, §6). Knowledge is not only conceptualization of forms but the relationship between perception and contemplation of the beautiful, since the understanding of truth is sustained by the subject's ability to recognize in the contemplated phenomenon a sign to be understood and codified:

The encounter with the beautiful can become the wound of the arrow that strikes the heart and in this way opens our eyes, so that later, from this experience, we take the criteria for judgement and can correctly evaluate the arguments (Ratzinger 2002, §5).

One of the examples proposed by the author is the understanding of the horror of conceiving Jesus crucified. Faced with Pontius Pilate's call to the crowd to sympathize with the man who lay wounded and humiliated, the most recognizable sign of Catholics appears when they recognize in the cross as symbol of religious identity. Renz (2011, 143-144) has highlighted that the "sacred" represents the most fundamental interpretive category for understanding myth and religion (Cassirer 2013, 214-238). In this context, the crucifixion can be seen as a means of sacrum ideality, as it provides a unifying symbol for believers to commemorate a pivotal moment described in the Gospels. The central question here is whether the sense that unites believers involves a veneration for the horror of representing Christ crucified, or whether a new message underlies such an image:

Whoever believes in God, in the God who manifested himself, precisely in the altered appearance of Christ crucified as love "to the end" (*Jn* 13,1), knows that beauty is truth and truth beauty; but in the suffering Christ he also learns that the beauty of truth also embraces offence, pain, and even the dark mystery of death, and that this can only be found in accepting suffering, not in ignoring it (Ratzinger 2002, §4).

Ratzinger's answer raises the renewed search for the meaning of such representation in the original intention of the act: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped...and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (*Philippians* 2, 8). The beautiful act, therefore, does not manifest itself in the horror of representing the death of Christ on the cross but in the admiration of the form and the fulfillment of a saving mission. This principle in which the divine figure saves the community is reported by Cassirer as one of the fundamental moments of the understanding of the religious; the idea of a divinity that gives itself for humanity constitutes the

central act of the believer, since it represents the central moment in which the human being and the divinity come together:

The sense of sacrifice is not exhausted by the sacrifice to the god: rather, it appears to stand out fully and reveal itself in its true religious and speculative depth where the god itself is offered as a sacrifice or offers itself as a sacrifice.... All the great mystery cults revolve around the originary-mystery of this liberation and rebirth, brought about by the death of the god (Cassirer 2021b, 279 – 280).

As can be seen, the act of sacrifice constitutes a fundamental moment of religious thought, both in its mythical and philosophical phases. However, according to Cassirer, the difference between a mythical conception and a religious one lies in the form of representation of the sacrifice; while in the mythical phase the act occurs by means of authentic human or animal sacrifices, in religion the form refers to a union by means of form where the central value lies in the representation itself: “[in mythical-religious phase] a purely physical or ideal mediation has now been raised to a pure correlation in which for the first time the specific sense of the divine as well as the human is determined” (Cassirer 2021b, 281).

Ratzinger (2002) proposes that the icon of the crucifixion constitutes a call to the contemplation of a universal truth that can be understood and recognized only in the eventual liberation of the senses before the evidence of the immediately present, in order to contemplate it in the framework of the message that the artistic work proposes as a reflection:

An icon does not simply reproduce what can be perceived by the senses, but rather it presupposes ... “a fasting of sight.” Inner perception must free itself from the impression of the merely sensible, and in prayer and ascetical effort acquire a new and deeper capacity to see, to perform the passage from what is merely external to the profundity of reality, in such a way that the artist can see what the senses as such do not see, and what actually appears in what can be perceived: the splendour of the glory of God (Ratzinger 2002).

Thus, although the act of artistic representation represents a material resource for the manifestation of a divine sacrifice, the value of this work is not found in what the senses immediately report to the one who contemplates it but in the pure form of this invocation. The image of the cross does not propose to admire the horror of Christ’s death, since its value does not lie in the physical perception of the sacrifice but in the search for unity with the divine; here,

instead of referring to the moment of death, it invites us to believe in the message of salvation proposed by the general doctrine of the Gospels.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

The philosophy of religion proposed by Ernst Cassirer fulfills a double objective: to present myth and religion as independent but linked symbolic forms, and, on the other hand, to describe the phenomenological process that both forms fulfill. For Cassirer, this development resorts to new modes of intermediation, such as language and art, for the structuring of thought to articulate norms and rituals that allow the members of the community to order the perception of the world.

By drawing on Usener's work, Cassirer was able to describe mythical and religious thought as forms of thought whose cultural manifestation is objectified in the structuring of names throughout history. However, unlike the German philologist, Cassirer proposes to distinguish between the linguistic development of mythical and religious concepts. To achieve this, he resorts to the philosophical system proposed by his teacher Cohen, who placed religion as an objective critical resource that allows to define the idea of God as a universal foundation of knowledge. This is why Cohen suggests using the history of religion as a methodological resource that allows to identify both the problem and the development of religious thought itself.

Nevertheless, Cassirer, unlike his teacher, proposes that every religious system develops dialectically. In a first phase called mythical-religious, the self, the world, and the divine interact as one and the same reality, and their distinction is made possible by virtue of the aesthetic resources of intermediation; forms such as the totemic ones enable the identification of the divine form accepted by the community. In this sense, artistic representation plays a formative role in perception since the image indicates what is truly sacred. In the dialectical process, the consciousness of the sacred emerges as a goal, that is, here, the artistic form allows the divine to be evoked, using representation as a means of identity between the subject and the divinity, without confusing matter with form. The artistic image only refers to the deity, but, unlike the myth, religious conception does not consider the image as the god himself, only his invocation.

Therefore, for Cassirer, by going through a phenomenological process, a philosophy of religion accepts that even in the mythical perception of the world a conception of the divine already appears, but it is the function of language or art that allows its cultural communication. What is fundamental is that the demarcation that this archaic mode establishes is only the first moment of a dialectical unfolding of the spirit whose goal is the artistic representation of the

perceived, but instead of confusing the resource with the goal, it proposes an interaction between the believer and the divinity in its purest form through artistic religious representation.

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