

Monothematic Block: Cultural Objects of Experience: A Symbolic Approach

Introduction



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In Ernst Cassirer's account in *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, knowledge is constituted through a phenomenological process that articulates a mythical mode of apprehension already at the level of perception. This process continues as experience is expressed through language or art and culminates in the formation of scientific symbols that represent reality. Cassirer's transcendental approach to knowledge in culture enabled him to develop the concept of the symbol as a means of critiquing culture.

In light of this set of ideas, we can revisit the broader question: What function do the symbols of myth, language, art, and science fulfill within culture? Can we assume a unity of cultural understanding based on the particular outcomes of symbolic forms? Cassirer addressed these questions in his magnum opus; however, it remains important to critically examine the epistemological validity of his claims.

This monothematic block brings together studies of some of the symbols proposed by Cassirer while examining what he terms the "internal nature" of these forms. To this end, we propose to study the relationship between experience and cultural activities, such as religious practices, artistic production, and the development of physics and mathematics. We will also consider other activities that allow us to evaluate the nature and operation of symbols within their respective spheres of expression. Some of the questions we will address are as follows: How does the experience of objects determine our knowledge of them?

What role does culture play in our knowledge of objects? What kind of knowledge emerges from experience? What kind of knowledge emerges from experience in myth, language, art, religion, and science?

While not all contributions directly reference Cassirer, they all address the problem of knowledge and its relationship to symbols, including myth, art, language, religion, and science. The proposed structure offers a path for investigating cultural objects. Each contribution examines a specific manifestation in order to assess the epistemological content generated through its symbolic practice, as well as the ways in which its structure constitutes a valid mode of knowledge.

Pablo Galindo's contribution provides a mythological analysis of the relationship between the body and dance in the Rarámuri community of the Sierra Tarahumara in Mexico. Fernanda Rojas examines the symbolic form of religion through an interpretation of the concept of fire in the Gospels, drawing on Charles Spurgeon's sermons. Andrés Téllez-Parra explores the symbol of art, specifically, the form of aesthetic representation in Paul Willemen's writings on cinema. He examines the epistemological content offered by cinematic symbols. Finally, Hernán Pringe examines the foundations of mathematics in order to explore what Cassirer calls the *Bedeutungsfunktion*. He further examines how the concept of function operates within mathematics and the natural sciences. Finally, I present a critical review of Jean Lassègue's book on Cassirer's work. His original interpretive reading is undoubtedly an essential reference work for scholars of the Neo-Kantian philosopher.

This volume examines cultural objects and the ways in which lived experience enables the constitution of symbols. We regard Cassirer's philosophical framework as a coherent approach that integrates seemingly disparate cultural expressions, such as ritual dance or the symbol of fire. These connections are made possible by the mediating role of symbolic forms. All the articles are studies based on this framework.

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