KANT, HEGEL, AND CASSIRER:  
THE ORIGINS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOLIC FORMS

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It is customary in the history of philosophy to place Ernst Cassirer in the Neo-Kantian movement that dominated German philosophy during the last thirty years of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. The two principal schools of this movement—the logistic or Marburg School, led by Cohen and Natorp, and the axiological or Southwest (Baden) School, led by Windelband and Rickert—are divided on whether the spirit of Kantian philosophy is best furthered by inquiry into logic and the foundations of the natural sciences or by inquiry into the theory of value and the foundations of the cultural sciences. Cassirer is commonly identified with the Marburg School. That Cassirer was Cohen's pupil and that his early writings are on philosophical problems in the natural sciences strongly support this interpretation. In his later works, however, Cassirer maintains views that go considerably beyond the Marburg position. The guiding thesis of his major work, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, that an analysis of linguistic and mythical thought is of central importance for a theory of knowledge, goes far beyond the Marburg School's view that science is the prototype of all knowledge.

The commentators on Cassirer's philosophy generally hold that the philosophy of symbolic forms is a departure from the Marburg position, but they are agreed that the philosophy of symbolic forms is fundamentally derived from Kant. My view in this paper is that the philosophy of symbolic forms is derived from Kant only in a broad and secondary sense and that its actual foundations are in Hegel. I will argue: (1) that Cassirer himself regards Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind as the basis for his theory of symbolic forms; and (2) that the problems Cassirer's commentators raise concerning the general


structure of the philosophy of symbolic forms can be largely solved through attention to Cassirer’s relation to Hegel. This paper will take it as established that Cassirer’s theory of symbolic forms goes beyond the position of Marburg Neo-Kantianism, and will inquire into whether it does not also go beyond Kant. I shall first consider Cassirer’s statements about Hegel and then consider the systematic interrelationships of their philosophies.

I

Cassirer’s commentators uniformly stress the importance of Kant for an understanding of the philosophy of symbolic forms. The contributors to the largest single work on Cassirer, The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, frequently remind the reader of the importance of understanding Cassirer’s philosophy through Kant. They make little mention of the influence of Hegel and engage in no analysis of it. Yet, in the Preface to the third volume of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: The Phenomenology of Knowledge (1929), Cassirer states that the purpose and plan of his theory of symbolic forms corresponds to that of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind. Cassirer states: “In speaking of a phenomenology of knowledge I am using the word ‘phenomenology’ not in its modern sense but with its fundamental signification as established and systematically grounded by Hegel” (xiv). Cassirer’s purpose in this volume is to draw together the re-

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4 Cassirer’s relationship to the Marburg position is most fully analyzed in William H. Werkmeister, “Cassirer’s Advance Beyond Neo-Kantianism,” PEC, 757–798. See also the comments in PEC by Pos, 65; Langer, 392; Gutmann, 446, 457–464; and Kuhn, 567. Cohen himself expressed doubts about Cassirer’s adherence to the Marburg position as early as the publication of Substance and Function (1910), trans. W. C. Swabey and Marie C. Swabey (New York, 1953). For an account of this see Gawronsky, PEC, 20–21; also Cassirer’s comments in Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics: Historical and Systematic Studies of the Problem of Causality (New Haven, 1956), xxiii–xxiv. On being questioned by Heidegger about his Neo-Kantianism at their meeting at Davos in 1929, Cassirer replied: “What does Heidegger mean by ‘Neo-Kantianism’? To whom does he actually address himself? One ought to think of Neo-Kantianism in functional terms and not as a substantial entity. What matters is not philosophy as a doctrinal system but as a certain way of asking philosophical questions.” Carl H. Hamburg, “A Cassirer-Heidegger Seminar,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, xxv (1964), 213.

5 E.g. Holborn, 43; Hamburg, 84–91; Swabey, 123f; Stephens, 152f; Felix Kaufmann, 185–194; Smart, 264–266; Langer, 385; Urban, 404–405; Gutmann, 457–464; Sidney, 535–541; Kuhn, 549f, 565f; Baumgardt, 577f; Solmitz, 736f, 750f; Werkmeister, 759f; Fritz Kaufmann, 812–815; also Charles Hendel’s general introduction to PSF (I, 1–29).

6 E.g. Felix Kaufmann, 188, 206, 210; Hartmann, 306, 310, 312; Montagu, 376; Urban, 405, 421, and 435; Kuhn, 563, 571; Fritz Kaufmann, 825; also Charles Hendel’s general introduction to PSF (I, 32–35, 62).
search of the previous two volumes by constructing a phenomenology of knowledge wherein scientific thought is shown to be a product of prior stages of mythical and sensory-intuitive thought. Cassirer states: "Philosophical reflection does not set the end [of consciousness] against the middle and the beginning but takes all three as integral factors in a unitary total movement. In this fundamental principle the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms agrees with Hegel's formulation, much as it must differ in both its foundations and its development" (xv, italics added). It is significant to note that Hegel is Cassirer's only reference in his statement of the foundations of his phenomenology of knowledge, and it is through this phenomenology that Cassirer ties together the various aspects of his theory of symbolic forms.

Cassirer also relates his thought to Hegel in important ways in the first and second volumes of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. In the general introduction to The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms contained in the first volume, Language (1923), Cassirer presents the basic problem of his theory of symbolic forms first in terms of Kant and then in terms of Hegel. He regards Kant as anticipating the basic conception of the philosophy of symbolic forms; Cassirer considers each of Kant's Critiques to be an examination of a different form of the human spirit: the first Critique deals with science, the second with ethical freedom, and the third with art and organic natural forms (79). Cassirer regards Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind as the most recent attempt to formulate a concrete system of the human spirit in a series of major attempts in the history of philosophical idealism since Descartes (83). Cassirer maintains that Hegel's system, as the systems before it, has the difficulty of making logic the prototype of all the forms of the human spirit; the stages of the Phenomenology of Mind are only the schema of movement for the categories of the Science of Logic. Cassirer regards his philosophy of symbolic forms as an attempt to create a system that overcomes the tendency toward logic inherent in Hegel's system (84).

In the Preface to the second volume of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Mythical Thought (1925), Cassirer states that Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind is the basis for his theory of myth. Cassirer maintains that an adequate conception of myth is possible only if myth is regarded as having its own internal structure and as occupying a necessary place within a total phenomenology of spirit. Cassirer states: "That myth stands in an inner and necessary relation to the universal task of this phenomenology follows indirectly from Hegel's own formulation and definition of the concept" (xv). Cassirer regards Hegel's distinction between science and sensory consciousness as analogous to his own distinction between knowledge and mythical consciousness. Cassirer, however, regards mythical consciousness as an
earlier and more fundamental stage of mind than Hegel’s stage of sensory consciousness (xvi).

In each of the three volumes of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer employs Hegel to explain the presuppositions of his philosophy; in addition, in an article, “Spirit and Life in Contemporary Philosophy” (1930), which appears as the Philosopher’s Reply in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, Cassirer takes Hegel as the basis for a defense of the philosophy of symbolic forms. In particular he argues that the dualism between spirit (Geist) and life (Leben) which originated in the German school of Life-philosophy (Lebensphilosophie) is not resolved in contemporary philosophical anthropology (864ff). If spirit and life are viewed as different orders, Cassirer maintains, rather than as substantial essences set off against each other, then their apparent dualism can be resolved. Spirit can then be thought of as a transformation of life that occurs through life turning back upon itself. Cassirer states: “At this point the fundamental thesis of ‘Objective Idealism’ completely maintains its ground, in the face of all the criticism which the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ ‘philosophy of life’ has urged against it. Especially as concerns Hegel, it would be a complete misunderstanding of his system to bring against it the reproof that by reason of its panlogistic tendency it denies the rights of Life—that it has sacrificed the vital sphere to that of logic” (875).

In defending his theory of symbolic forms and the theory of man that underlies it Cassirer selects Hegel rather than Kant.

It is clear from the above review of Cassirer’s statements that Cassirer himself regards Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* as the foundation work for *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. In each of its three volumes he makes reference to Hegel at points where he is informing the reader of the general structure of his thought. In the third volume Cassirer identifies the entire project of his philosophy of symbolic forms with the *Phenomenology of Mind* and makes no mention of its having a foundation in Kant. The influence of Kant, however, cannot be overlooked. Throughout the volumes of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer frequently makes Kant the basis for his discussion of specific issues and he only rarely employs Hegel in this respect. Charles Hendel has shown in his general introduction to *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that Cassirer’s theory of the symbol is based on a reformulation of Kant’s theory of the schema. Cassirer, however, refers to Hegel, not Kant, when describing the general struc-

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nature of his system of symbolic forms. Once attention is firmly fixed on Cassirer's statements concerning the relationship between his and Hegel's philosophy, the question arises as to why the commentators have failed to give the statements serious consideration. The answer is perhaps a simple one: because Cassirer was closely associated with the Neo-Kantian movement, the philosophy of symbolic forms has come to be viewed wholly in Kantian terms. A picture of Cassirer's philosophy has emerged in which the volumes of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms are viewed as three loosely connected critiques of culture. Cassirer is thought to have directed his attention to various subject matters in an effort to illustrate his concept of symbolic form, but he is not viewed as building a total system of experience.

II

Cassirer's commentators do not raise questions about specific issues in the philosophy of symbolic forms as much as they do about the general structure of it. In a major review of the twenty-three essays of The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, Iredell Jenkins states: "But what comes as a definite and cumulative shock is the uncertainty that these authors evidence concerning their interpretations and criticisms: their seeming inability to be satisfied as to what Cassirer's position actually is. . . ."9 Jenkins distinguishes three types of questions which the contributors raise: (1) questions concerning the internal structure of the system of symbolic forms; (2) questions concerning the "reference-value" of the symbolic forms; and (3) questions concerning the theory of man implicit in the philosophy of symbolic forms. Among others, Jenkins regards Leander's and Kuhn's essays as representative of the first; Swabey's and Urban's essays as representative of the second; and Bidney's and Fritz Kaufmann's essays as representative of the third. Jenkins points out that the questions of the contributors cannot literally be reduced to the above categories. They do, however, provide as adequate a framework as any for dealing with the second major point of this paper. Since The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer is virtually the only work of general criticism on Cassirer's philosophy,10 Jenkins' categories represent, at least indirectly, the

9 Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (1950), 47.
10 The critical writing on Cassirer is extremely limited. Other than the essays in PEC, there is only one book in English on Cassirer: Carl H. Hamburg, Symbol and Reality: Studies in the Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer (The Hague, 1956). The major points of Hamburg's work are included in his essay in PEC. There are approximately ten articles each in English and in German on Cassirer's philosophy. None of these deals with issues directly relevant to the problems of the overall structure and foundations of Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms. For a complete bibliography of critical works on Cassirer, Donald Verene, "Ernst Cassirer: A Bibliography," Bulletin of Bibliography, XXIV (1964), 103-106.
major questions that have been raised about Cassirer's philosophy to date. The answers to these questions, or at least the basis for answering them, I maintain, is to be found through an examination of Cassirer's relation to Hegel.

In constructing the general outlines of Cassirer's system, I regard the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: The Phenomenology of Knowledge* as the key work of Cassirer's philosophy; it is the only work in which Cassirer explicitly relates all the various elements of his philosophy to each other. In this volume Cassirer, like Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, distinguishes three major stages in the development of mind; and Cassirer, like Hegel, describes these stages in terms of the mind's relationship to its object. The first of Cassirer's three stages is the expressive function (*Ausdrucksfunktion*) of consciousness, the second is the representational function (*Darstellungsfunktion*),¹¹ and the third is the conceptual function (*reine Bedeutungsfunktion*). These stages stand in a dialectical relationship to each other. The expressive function is a stage of the simple unity of symbol and object; no genuine distinction is made between symbol and object (67–69). The representational function is a stage of disjunction or severance of symbol and object; the object is regarded as wholly other than the symbol (112–114). The conceptual function is a stage in which this separation is overcome; the object is viewed as a construction of the symbol, as a symbol of a different order (283–285). The three stages of Cassirer's phenomenology correspond in terms of their general conception to the three stages of Hegel's phenomenology: Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and Mind; their progression is similar to Hegel's conception of aufheben in which each stage is both the cancellation and the preservation of the stage before it.¹²

¹¹ There is some question of the proper term to use in characterizing Cassirer's second Funktion of consciousness. Carl H. Hamburg uses *Anschauungsfunktion* (*Symbol and Reality*, 63), but Wilbur M. Urban uses *Darstellungsfunktion* (*PEC*, 416 et passim). The title of *PSF*, III, Pt. 2 is, "Das Problem der Repräsentation und der Aufbau der anschaulichen Welt," but Cassirer frequently uses the term "*Darstellungsfunktion*" or "*Funktion der Darstellung*" to describe this stage. *Darstellung* describes more exactly the activity of consciousness at this stage, but *Anschauung* is more inclusive of the topics Cassirer discusses in this part.

¹² "The world of the spirit forms a very concrete unity, so much so that the most extreme oppositions in which it moves appear as somehow mediated oppositions. In this world there is no sudden breach or leap, no hiatus by which it breaks into disparate parts. Rather, every form through which consciousness passes seems to belong in some way to its enduring heritage. The surpassing of a particular form is made possible not by the vanishing, the total destruction, of this form but by its preservation within the continuity of consciousness as a whole; for what constitutes the unity and totality of the human spirit is precisely that it has no absolute past;
In the statement quoted earlier from the Preface to the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer claims that his phenomenology agrees with Hegel’s phenomenology in its “fundamental principle”—that the forms of consciousness are to be viewed as products of a single unitary development—but that it departs from Hegel’s phenomenology in its “foundations” (*Begründungen*) and its “development” (*Durchführung*). Cassirer’s phenomenology differs from Hegel’s in three major respects: (1) its conception of the fundamental stage of consciousness and the consequent alignment of succeeding stages; (2) its method of description of each stage; and (3) its lack of a terminating stage of philosophical knowledge. An examination of these differences will make evident the general structure of Cassirer’s systems of symbolic forms.

(1) Cassirer regards Hegel’s conception of the initial stage of consciousness in terms of sensation, perception, and thing as inadequate for describing the original state in which consciousness actually finds itself (II, xvi). He regards Hegel’s stage of sensory consciousness as a development from a more fundamental stage of mythical consciousness in which man perceives the object both as an “it” (*Es*) or thing and as a “thou” (*Du*) or alter ego. Cassirer maintains that the object and its spatial and temporal relationships are originally articulated wholly in emotional terms. Man does not originally come upon a world of sense qualities, perceptions, and things; he originally exists within a world of benign and malignant forces.

The initial or expressive function of consciousness in Cassirer’s phenomenology corresponds to the initial or Consciousness stage in Hegel’s phenomenology in its general conception—that the mind does not originally distinguish itself from the object—but it differs in its specific formulation of this conception. Cassirer’s mythical or expressive function of consciousness represents a stage below Hegel’s stage of Consciousness. In their specific formulations the stages of Cassirer’s and Hegel’s phenomenologies appear to correspond as follows: Cassirer’s representational function of consciousness corresponds to Hegel’s stages of Consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) and Self-Consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*). Cassirer’s conceptual function of consciousness it gathers up into itself what has passed and preserves it as present. ‘The life of the actual spirit,’ writes Hegel in this connection, ‘is a cycle of stages which on the one hand still subsist side by side and only on the other hand appear as past. The features which the spirit seems to have left behind it are also present in its depths’ (*PSF*, I, 78).


14 *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven, 1944), 77.
corresponds to Hegel's four stages of Mind;\textsuperscript{15} they differ in that Cassirer describes the conceptual function of consciousness solely in terms of mathematics and the natural sciences and Hegel considers Mind in terms of natural, social, and intellectual forms.

Cassirer also differs from Hegel in that he does not distinguish sub-stages within the three major functions of consciousness. Cassirer characterizes each function as a whole, whereas Hegel presents each stage as a progression of sub-stages. It appears, however, that sub-stages are in principle distinguishable within Cassirer's system. In characterizing the development within individual symbolic forms Cassirer speaks of mimetic, analogical, and symbolic stages; he describes the interrelationship of these stages in the same terms that he describes the interrelationship of the three major functions of consciousness.\textsuperscript{16} Mimetic, analogical, and symbolic represent within each symbolic form a progression of unity, disjunction, and reunification between symbol and object that is analogous to the general progression represented in the three major functions of consciousness. Cassirer, however, does not regard consciousness in its actual development as having a smooth progress from stage to stage; it undergoes various types of oppositions and sudden reversals.\textsuperscript{17} Cassirer presents consciousness as a number of individually developing forms which are broadly grounded in a total development; Hegel presents it as progressing from one major form to another through a series of sub-forms.

(2) Cassirer and Hegel differ in the method they employ in analyzing the individual phenomena of consciousness. Cassirer's aim in the third volume of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms is to combine existing research in the psychology of perception and speech behavior with his own research into the logical structures of myth and language of the first two volumes, and to relate this account to his theory of concept formation in mathematics and the natural sciences in his earlier work, Substance and Function.\textsuperscript{18} In the volumes that support the phenomenology of the third volume Cassirer is concerned to develop an account of the logical structure of three major areas of man's

\textsuperscript{15}By the term "Mind" I mean stage (C.) in the Phenomenology of Mind, containing (AA.) Vernunft, (BB.) Der Geist, (CC.) Die Religion, (DD.) Das absolute Wissen.

\textsuperscript{16}PSF, I, 190; also PSF, II, pt. 4, "The Dialectic of the Mythical Consciousness."

\textsuperscript{17}PSF, II, 235; also Essay on Man, 9.

\textsuperscript{18}PSF, III, xiii. Part I relates myth to studies in the psychology of perception; Part II, esp. ch. 6, relates language to the psychology of speech behavior and linguistics; Part III is essentially a restatement of Substance and Function.
cultural life—myth, language, and science—by showing how the general categories of thought, such as space, time, cause, substance, and number acquire content differently in each (II, 60–61). Cassirer regards these areas of man's cultural life as showing in largest terms the directions which the act of symbolizing may take. The structure of each of these areas represents the creation of a “synthesis in the manifold,” the common denominator of which is the symbol. Cassirer arrives at the stages of his phenomenology of knowledge by asking how the symbolic forms of myth, language, and science are possible, by asking what factors are necessary in consciousness in order that these forms of culture exist (I, 80). In presenting his accounts of the structures of myth, language, and science and the movements of consciousness that underlie them Cassirer proceeds directly in terms of the empirical materials available on each. Cassirer and Hegel differ in method in that the evidence for Cassirer's case is made an integral part of its construction. Hegel only rarely gives indication of the historical and cultural counterparts to the stages of his phenomenology.

(3) Cassirer's phenomenology, unlike Hegel's, does not terminate in a stage of philosophical knowledge. Hegel's stage of "Absolute Knowledge," the final stage of the Phenomenology of Mind, is the realization of philosophical knowledge as such; in this stage consciousness arrives at the notion that its manifestations comprise a system. The articulation of these manifestations as a system is the subject of the Science of Logic, which Hegel terms the second part of his total system of mind. In the Preface to the First Edition of the Science of

19 Symbolic forms do not denote classes of perceptions or objects. Symbolic forms represent the various perspectives that can be taken of any object. As Cassirer states: "We can consider an optical structure, a simple line, for example, according to its purely expressive meaning. As we immerse ourselves in the design and construct it for ourselves, we become aware of a distinct physiognomic character in it. A peculiar mood is expressed in the purely spatial determination: the up and down of the lines in space embraces an inner mobility, a dynamic rise and fall, a psychic life and being. . . . But these qualities recede and vanish as soon as we take the line in another sense—as soon as we understand it as a mathematical structure, a geometrical figure. Now it becomes a mere schema, a means of representing a universal geometrical law. . . . And once again we stand in an entirely different sphere of vision when we take the line as a mythical symbol or as an aesthetic ornament" (PSF, III, 200–201). See also "Das Symbolproblem und seine Stellung im System der Philosophie," Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft, XXI (1927), 194–195.


21 "Seeing, then, that Spirit has attained the notion, it unfolds its existence and develops its processes in this ether of its life and is (Philosophical) Science." The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J. B. Baillie, 2nd ed. (New York, 1955), 805.
Logic\textsuperscript{22} Hegel states that the subject matter of his logic is the "schema of movement" of consciousness contained in the \textit{Phenomenology of Mind} (37). In the \textit{Science of Logic}, Hegel maintains, the development of consciousness is presented as a progression of pure essentialities. Hegel states: "They [the stages of logic] are pure thought, Spirit thinking its own essence. Their spontaneous movement is their spiritual life: by this movement philosophy constitutes itself; and philosophy is just the exhibition of this movement" (\textit{Ibid.}). Hegel regards the \textit{Science of Logic} as a presentation of the process through which philosophy includes its own knowledge within the total system of knowledge which it constructs.

Cassirer, as shown earlier, regards the culmination of the \textit{Phenomenology of Mind} in the \textit{Science of Logic} as the major defect in Hegel’s system.\textsuperscript{23} Hegel’s philosophy is \textit{in principle} a concrete system of mind, in that the categories of his logic are based on the stages of his phenomenology, but in its actual presentation Hegel’s system is abstract, in that Hegel’s account of the individual categories is presented separately from his account of their phenomenal appearances. Cassirer’s system is an attempt not only to join in principle the categories of thought with their appearances; it is an attempt actually to present each through the other. By discussing the categories of thought in terms of the empirical data to which they give form, Cassirer intends to overcome the tendency in Hegel’s system to reduce all forms of spirit to the single form of logic. Cassirer deals directly with both the categorical and empirical aspects of mind; Hegel constructs concurrent systems of each.

Although Cassirer makes no statements as to how philosophical knowledge is to be included in his system, it would seem to comprise part of the conceptual function of consciousness and to occupy a place in Cassirer’s phenomenology similar to that of Absolute Knowledge in Hegel’s phenomenology. Cassirer’s description of the unity of concept and object in the conceptual function of consciousness in terms of the relationship between the function of a mathematical series and the members of the series can be regarded as a specific transformation of Hegel’s conception of the concrete universal.\textsuperscript{24} As the universal in Hegel’s conception has meaning only through its determinations and its determinations are such only as instances of the universal, so the function of a mathematical series has no specifiable meaning apart

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Substance and Function}, ch. 1, esp. 20-26. Note Cassirer’s comment on Hegel (20); also \textit{PSF}, III, pt. 3, ch. 1.
from the members of the series which it relates, and the members of the series are such only because they are instances of the function. Philosophy, for Cassirer, appears to be the activity of presenting a concrete account of experience in terms of the relationship between concept and object that is abstractly achieved in mathematical thought in the relationship between the function of a series and the members of the series. The mutually determinative character of the relationship between the universal element (the function) and the particular element (the member) in mathematical thought is an exact model of what philosophy hopes to achieve between the concept and its content. In particular, it is what Cassirer hopes to achieve in describing a stage of consciousness through its empirical contents.

Philosophy considered as an individual symbolic form would appear to stand to the other symbolic forms in the same way that Hegel's logic stands to his phenomenology; for both Hegel and Cassirer philosophy arrives at its own particular kind of knowledge by taking all other forms of knowledge as its object. Cassirer, however, appears to differ from Hegel in his conception of the way in which philosophy takes itself as object. In Hegel's system philosophy apprehends itself as a system of pure essentialities. In the Preface to The Philosophy of the Enlightenment Cassirer claims that philosophy can apprehend itself as a distinct form of knowledge by constructing a phenomenology of its own spirit; this phenomenology must be an elucidation of the "inner formative forces" of philosophy, not a mere record of its systems and results. Cassirer states: "Such a presentation of philosophical doctrines and systems endeavors as it were to give a 'phenomenology of the philosophic spirit'; it is an attempt to show how this spirit, struggling with purely objective problems, achieves clarity and depth in its understanding of its own nature and destiny, and of its own fundamental character and mission" (vi). Cassirer's statement suggests that philosophy should apply to its own development the same phenomenological method it employs in understanding the development and character of the other symbolic forms. Cassirer's conception of a "phenomenology of the philosophic spirit" can be construed as an attempt to overcome the methodological shift within the presentation of Hegel's system which occurs in passing from the intuitive presentation of the Phenomenology of Mind to the deductive presentation of the Science of Logic.

The above discussion of the differences between Cassirer's and Hegel's systems shows how the philosophy of symbolic forms can be interpreted as having its origins in the Phenomenology of Mind. It provides the basis for answering the three major questions which Professor Jenkins has summarized from Cassirer's commentators. Profess-

sor Jenkins divides the first of these questions, that of the internal structure of the system of symbolic forms, into three issues: (a) the procedure through which Cassirer arrives at his particular sequence of symbolic forms; (b) the extent to which each symbolic form is an independent entity; and (c) the extent to which all symbolic forms have equal status within the system (47–49).

Cassirer's procedure for arriving at the three stages of consciousness of his phenomenology has been shown to be the result of asking how myth, language, and science are possible, but the question remains as to Cassirer's justification for selecting these particular symbolic forms as the starting points for his system. In *An Essay on Man* (1944), which was written as a summary and introduction to *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer includes chapters on religion, art, and history in addition to chapters on myth, language, and science. In the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer mentions the possibility of symbolic forms of ethics (*Sitte*), law (*Recht*), economics (*Wirtschaft*), and technology (*Technik*) (xiv-xv). It seems clear that for Cassirer any area of culture is potentially a symbolic form; and whether any area of culture is a symbolic form would appear determined by whether it can be shown to have a distinctive logical structure. For Cassirer, in a manner analogous to Hegel, all symbolic forms are potentially present in each stage of consciousness.

In selecting myth, language, and science as the focal points for the presentation of the three major functions of consciousness, Cassirer, I believe, is reasoning from distinctions ordinarily made in the empirical history of consciousness to their systematic dimensions. The broad outlines of this history show man as having passed from a stage of mythical thought, in which he interprets his experience through images and rites, to a stage in which he develops the logical character of language and arrives at what may be termed a common sense world of individual persons and things, to a stage of scientific thought and technology in which man acquires the ability to reduce phenomena to variables in formal systems of notation. Myth, language, and science constitute phenomenological beginning points in Cassirer's system because they exist first as beginning points in the historical understanding of man's development. In principle each of Cassirer's three functions of consciousness could be arrived at by inquiring into the conditions of the possibility of any one symbolic form; myth, language, and science are presentational rather than logical beginning points. It should be noted that in Cassirer's system consciousness does not develop from one symbolic form to another, but from one function to another through a transformation of its relationship to the object; symbolic forms are regarded as the products, not the medium of this
process. Viewed vertically, consciousness is a series of three stages or functions. Viewed horizontally at any stage of its development, consciousness is a collection of variously articulated symbolic forms.

From the above discussion it follows that: (a) the number of symbolic forms is not limited in Cassirer's system; (b) each symbolic form comprises an independent entity to the extent that it can be viewed apart from its role in the general development of consciousness; (c) all symbolic forms have equal status in Cassirer's system in that all exist either actually or potentially in each stage of consciousness. The problems concerning the internal structure of Cassirer's system seem to derive in large part from confusing the order of its presentation with the order of its parts. Once attention is given to its relationship to Hegel its fundamental outlines become apparent.

In relation to the second major question, that of the "reference-value" of the symbolic forms, Professor Jenkins states that Cassirer is ambiguous about whether the symbolic forms refer to an order of reality external to them, or whether they describe the ways in which man produces an order of his own. Attention to the relationship between Cassirer's and Hegel's systems, I believe, also offers a criterion for resolving this second point. If the presuppositions of Cassirer's system are derived from Hegel, then for Cassirer, as for Hegel, the object has no existence apart from its relationship to consciousness. Cassirer, like Hegel and philosophical idealists in general, conceives the problem of knowledge as presupposing the existence of the object; the task of giving a philosophical account of knowledge is conceived as that of giving a general description of the ways in which knowledge is actually gained, rather than as the construction of proof that knowledge itself is possible. Although Cassirer may be unclear at specific points in his discussion of the symbolic forms, the ultimate presuppositions of his system indicate that the reference-value of any symbolic form is determined solely through its relationship within the system of symbolic forms. The justification for the reference-value of the symbolic forms would not constitute a unique problem for Cassirer's system; it would rest on the justification for the presuppositions of philosophical idealism as a whole.

The third major question, that of the theory of man implied in the philosophy of symbolic forms, is raised in a number of different ways by many of Cassirer's commentators. Professor Jenkins states that they center about the view that Cassirer appears to regard man as an agent who creates spontaneously and autonomously; he gives little attention to the natural environment which sets the conditions for man's life. As Professor Jenkins states it, this question is closely related to the question of the reference-value of the symbolic forms. The general import of the question is that Cassirer gives no account
of how the symbolic forms arise out of a non-symbolic reality. However, Cassirer's failure to provide non-symbolic material from which man's world is created does not represent a difficulty internal to his system. As with the question of the reference-value of the symbolic forms, the justification for Cassirer's position rests on the justification for the presuppositions of philosophical idealism as a whole. I believe, however, that Cassirer's theory of man is the point at which his philosophy is most lacking. Cassirer regards man's nature as evident in the forms of his cultural life; at one point in An Essay on Man Cassirer compares his method to Plato's method in The Republic, that of viewing man's nature as writ large in the state (63). Cassirer, however, unlike Plato, does not return to an account of the individual man. Cassirer does not inquire into whether his account of culture offers a theory of the good life. The question of the structure of individual existence and the status of human values is the point at which Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms is least developed.

In this paper I have intended to call into question the view that the philosophy of symbolic forms is essentially Kantian in its origins. I have intended to establish two points: (1) that Cassirer clearly identifies the presuppositions of his system with those of Hegel's system; and (2) that an examination of Cassirer's relationship to Hegel serves to clarify the issues which Cassirer's commentators raise about the ultimate structure of the philosophy of symbolic forms. No claim is made to have answered all of the problems of Cassirer's philosophy or even to have answered fully those discussed. It is only claimed that a framework is established for understanding Cassirer's philosophy where previously there was little or none.26

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26 A shorter version of this paper was read before the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, April 1968.