

The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (Volume 1), by E. Cassirer

a. People / Organizations:

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b. Quotes:

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c. General Notes:

- Preface, by C. W. Hendel (pg. vii)
 - "Cassirer was hardly regarded as a philosopher who had developed an original philosophy of his own." (pg. viii)
- Introduction, by C. W. Hendel (pg. 1)
 - "The recollection of Kant is ever-present in the pages of Cassirer's writing. Whenever he started for any goal he went back to the philosophy of Kant as a base from which to proceed. And **it was specifically the Kantian conception of "form" that was basic for the whole of his thought.**" (pg. 2-3)
 - **"We must study the knowing before we can claim a knowledge of something beyond it called ultimate reality.** There is no doubt about the knowing - certainly it is itself a fact, but there is a question concerning the character of the relation between the knowing and the reality known." (pg. 3)
 - "The contention here is this, that the world is "constituted" in accordance with the forms of man's intuition and understanding. **This constitutive function of the forms is the theme of Cassirer.**" (pg. 10)
 - **"The schema is the uniting "representation," the synthetic "medium" in which the forms of understanding and the sensuous intuitions are assimilated so that they constitute experience.** The schema comprises the category but contains more than a category can supply. In this respect we can say that the schema is something better than the category, for it is more adequate, making possible what neither logical form nor content could yield by themselves. The schema has something of both in its nature - it is a sensuous-intellectual form. But the schema is not merely the medium through which the sensuous and the intellectual are brought into unity. The affair is more complex than that. We are not to forget that whatever is matter of sensuous apprehension always appears in the universal form of time. The schema must be a relation of the concepts of understanding with temporal appearances." (pg. 13)
 - "In this fashion the schema is a more complete thing than either the category or the form of time or the sensuous content—it is all these together, in their synthesis." (pg. 14)
 - **"The schema's the thing that caught the imagination of Cassirer. He interpreted the whole subsequent post-Kantian philosophy in Germany by reference to it. And his own philosophy of symbolic form was a development of the possibilities of this new concept of form."** (pg. 14)
 - "Cassirer does not mean that one is to dispense with images and substitute instead "symbols." **Both image and symbol are necessary to understanding. Both have a role in the symbolizing function. They are distinct, as Cassirer says in the *Symbolic Forms*, and the difference is precisely that between "passive images" of something given and "symbols" created by the intellect itself. Images are given but symbols are made.** Made of what? Of the images, the content of perception and experience. The intellect takes images and makes them serve as symbols. This is quite plain in the case of language. Words are sensuous images seen or heard but they are used with meaning and so they are employed as symbols. The very last sentence of the present book on Language leaves the reader with this thought: "language shows itself to be at once a sensuous and an intellectual form of expression." Indeed, this combination obtains throughout the realm of the intellectual life: "And so we see that the very highest and purest spiritual activity ... is conditioned and mediated by certain modes of sensory activity." (pg. 50-51)
 - **"Cassirer retains here the Kantian conception of consciousness as a knowing of many contents of experience together in unity, but he adds to this notion of synthetic unity a symbolic intent to express the meaning of the experience in and through some particular content which is made representative of the whole. The particular symbol is full of meaning conferred upon it by the totality of man's experience.** But the adjective "symbolic" does not belong solely to the image or content taken as representative or expressive of meaning, for it pertains no less to the forms in which meaning is intelligible so that they are "symbolic forms" in virtue of their part in the symbolizing function. Cassirer never forgets, it seems, the insight of Kant in the conception of schema. For **every schema of understanding is a phenomenon of imagination which is at once intellectual and sensuous; thanks to the latter aspect there is sense or meaning (Bedeutung) through reference to objects; thanks to the former there is agreement with the categories or forms through which anything whatsoever has meaning to the human mind.**" (pg. 51-52)
 - "Thus **in every case "symbolic form" is a condition either of the knowledge of meaning or of the human expression of a meaning.** In art the image or the content has its significance in virtue of the formal structure according to which the creation of the work of art is made. There is the form of painting and the form of music, and so on. And besides the generic form of an art there is the "individual form" of a style, even of the individual artist. Always some "universe of discourse" is involved in anything that has significance. Here then, as it is in organic life, the "whole is prior to the parts." Thus "like all the other symbolic forms art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality. ... It is not an imitation but a discovery of reality." "Myth combines a theoretical element and an element of artistic creation." Mythical thinking has its own distinctive symbolic forms of construction: they are modes both of expressing a theory of life and of portraying it in the manner of an art. And so return to language, the subject of the first book, it should be clearer now how fallacious were those older nominalist views of the function of language. Language is symbolic in the same way as myth, art, and science are. It is not a case of a point-for-point correspondence of terms with each identified thing or property. The properties and objects are only definite by virtue of the system of thought and experience which lies behind the intent to designate the words that serve as symbols. **A world of thought is drawn upon when a word is used with meaning.**" (pg. 53-54)
 - "Man and nature are thus affiliated through art and life, as in the vision of Goethe. For man ranges more widely than in the objective world of scientific law and he explores other worlds in imagination according to forms congenial to his consciousness. He articulates these worlds in objective form and expresses himself through a variety of cultural forms among which are art and science themselves. Language is a primordial form which is both expressive of man and revelatory of the nature of reality. Myth and religion have a twofold character, the character both of art and of theoretical knowledge. Science itself, too, seeming so purely theoretical by nature, is nevertheless an achievement representing man's persistent quest for unity and the comprehension of all that enters into his experience. Looking at the entire scene we have a system of cultural forms where all the distinct forms relate to each other while the whole sustains them all in mutually enhancing interrelationships." (pg. 56)
 - **"That system of forms is related to human consciousness which is in essence activity. For consciousness takes some given content as signifying a universe of meaning beyond itself and of which the content is a symbolic representation. The various forms are the different structures of such meaning. Consciousness functions in accordance with these forms which are characteristic of itself. It is "form-giving" to whatever is "given" to it."** (pg. 56-57)
 - **"...consciousness is a symbolizing activity"** (pg. 57)
 - "Hence one never finds in it anything barely "given" without meaning and reference beyond itself. There is no content which is not construed according to some form. Whatever human consciousness appropriates for any purpose whatsoever, whether to gain knowledge or to handle imaginatively in art, is already possessed of form at the very taking. Hence **Cassirer rejects the positivism** which assumes that

- hard facts or sense data are given at the start and that they are both the bases for and the criterion of all constructions of thought which must be referred back to either the perceptions or the facts for their truth." (pg. 57)
- **"The consciousness of a subject and the consciousness of an object are absolutely correlative with and indispensable to each other.** Consequently the first thing Cassirer insists upon in regard to all phenomena as understood or appreciated is their objective character. What is known or represented in symbolic form is objective because it 'bears the stamp of inner necessity'" (pg. 59)
 - The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (pg. 67)
 - Introduction and Presentation of the Problem (pg. 73)
 - The Concept of Symbolic Form and the System of Symbolic Forms (pg. 73)
 - **"Philosophical speculation began with the concept of being.** In the very moment when this concept appeared, when man's consciousness awakened to the unity of being as opposed to the multiplicity and diversity of existing things, the specific philosophical approach to the world was born. But even then man's thinking about the world remained for a long while imprisoned within the sphere of existing things, which it was seeking to relinquish and surpass. The philosophers attempted to determine the beginning and origin, the ultimate "foundation" of all being; the question was stated clearly, but the concrete, determinate answers given were not adequate to this supreme, universal formulation. What these thinkers called the essence, the substance of the world was not something which in principle went beyond it; it was a fragment taken from this very same world. A particular, specific and limited existing thing was picked out, and everything else was genetically derived from it and "explained by it." Much as these explanations might change in content, their general form remained within the same methodological limits. At first a particular material substance, a concrete *prima materia*, was set up as the ultimate foundation of all phenomena; then the explanations became more ideal and the substance was replaced by a purely rational "principle," from which everything was derived. But on closer inspection this "principle" hung in midair between the "physical" and "spiritual." Despite its ideal coloration, it was closely connected with the world of existing things." (pg. 73)
 - ◆ **"What Plato sought for, what he called "idea," had been effective as an immanent principle in the earliest attempts to explain the world,** in the Eleatic philosophers, in the Pythagoreans, in Democritus; but Plato was the first to be conscious of this principle and its significance. Plato himself took this to be his philosophical achievement. In his late works, where he sees the logical implications of his doctrine most clearly, he characterizes the crucial difference between his speculation and that of the Pre-Socratics: the Pre-Socratics identified being with a particular existing thing and took it as a fixed point of departure, while he for the first time recognized it as a problem. He no longer simply inquired into the order, condition and structure of being, but inquired into the concept of being and the meaning of that concept. Compared with the sharpness of Plato's question and the rigor of his approach, all earlier speculations paled to tales or myths about being. It was time to abandon these mythical, cosmological explanations for the true, dialectical explanation of being, which no longer clings to its mere facticity but discloses its intelligible meaning, its systematic, teleological order. And with this, thought, which in Greek philosophy since Parmenides had appeared as a concept interchangeable with that of being, gained a new and profounder meaning. Only where being has the sharply defined meaning of a problem, does thought attain to the sharply defined meaning and value of a principle. It no longer runs parallel to being, a mere reflection "about" being, but by its own inner form, it now determines the inner form of being." (pg. 73-74)
 - **"The fundamental concepts of each science, the instruments with which it propounds its questions and formulates its solutions, are regarded no longer as passive images of something given but as symbols created by the intellect itself.** Mathematicians and physicists were first to gain a clear awareness of this symbolic character of their basic implements. The new ideal of knowledge, to which this whole development points, was brilliantly formulated by Heinrich Hertz in the introduction to his *Principles of Mechanics*. He declares that the most pressing and important function of our natural science is to enable us to foresee future experience and he goes on to describe the method by which science derives the future from the past: We make "inner fictions or symbols" of outward objects, and these symbols are so constituted that the necessary logical consequences of the images are always images of the necessary natural consequences of the imaged objects." (pg. 75)
 - ◆ **"With this critical insight, it is true, science renounces its aspiration and its claim to an "immediate" grasp and communication of reality. It realizes that the only objectivization of which it is capable is, and must remain, mediation.** And in this insight, another highly significant idealistic consequence is implicit. **If the object of knowledge can be defined only through the medium of a particular logical and conceptual structure, we are forced to conclude that a variety of media will correspond to various structures of the object, to various meanings for "objective" relations.**" (pg. 76)
 - ◇ **"[U]pon closer scrutiny the fundamental postulate of unity is not discredited by this irreducible diversity of the methods and objects of knowledge; it merely assumes a new form.** True, the unity of knowledge can no longer be made certain and secure by referring knowledge in all its forms to a "simple" common object which is related to all these forms as the transcendent prototype to the empirical copies. But instead, a new task arises: to gather the various branches of science with their diverse methodologies - with all their recognized specificity and independence - into one system, whose separate parts precisely through their necessary diversity will complement and further one another. This postulate of a purely functional unity replaces the postulate of a unity of substance and origin, which lay at the core of the ancient concept of being." (pg. 77)
 - **"And this creates a new task for the philosophical critique of knowledge. It must follow the special sciences and survey them as a whole. It must ask whether the intellectual symbols by means of which the specialized disciplines reflect on and describe reality exist merely side by side or whether they are not diverse manifestations of the same basic human function.** And if the latter hypothesis should be confirmed, a philosophical critique must formulate the universal conditions of this function and define the principle underlying it. Instead of dogmatic metaphysics, which seeks absolute unity in a substance to which all the particulars of existence are reducible, such a philosophical critique seeks after a rule governing the concrete diversity of the functions of cognition, a rule which, without negating and destroying them, will gather them into a unity of deed, the unity of a self-contained human endeavor. But again **our perspectives widen if we consider that cognition, however universally and comprehensively we may define it, is only one of the many forms in which the mind can apprehend and interpret being.** In giving form to multiplicity it is governed by a specific, hence sharply delimited principle. All cognition, much as it may vary in method and orientation, aims ultimately to subject the multiplicity of phenomena to the unity of a "fundamental proposition." The particular must not be left to stand alone, but must be made to take its place in a context, where it appears as part of a logical structure, whether of a teleological, logical or causal character. Essentially cognition is always oriented toward this essential aim, the articulation of the particular into a universal law and order. But beside this intellectual synthesis, which operates and expresses itself within a system of scientific concepts, the life of the human spirit as a whole knows other forms. They too can be designated as modes of "objectivization": i.e., as means of raising the particular to the level of the universally valid; but they achieve this universal validity by methods entirely different from the logical concept and logical law. Every authentic function of the human spirit has this decisive characteristic in common with cognition: it does not merely copy but rather embodies an original, formative power. It does not express passively the mere fact that something is present but contains an independent energy of the human spirit through which the simple presence of the phenomenon assumes a definite "meaning," a particular ideational content. This is as true of art as it is of cognition; it

is as true of myth as of religion. All live in particular image-worlds, which do not merely reflect the empirically given, but which rather produce it in accordance with an independent principle. Each of these functions creates its own symbolic forms which, if not similar to the intellectual symbols, enjoy equal rank as products of the human spirit. None of these forms can simply be reduced to, or derived from, the others; each of them designates a particular approach, in which and through which it constitutes its own aspect of "reality." They are not different modes in which an independent reality manifests itself to the human spirit but roads by which the spirit proceeds towards its objectivization, i.e., its self-revelation. If we consider art and language, myth and cognition in this light, they present a common problem which opens up new access to a universal philosophy of the cultural sciences." (pg. 77-78)

◆ "...human spirit gives form to reality" (pg. 79)

- ◇ "Along with the pure function of cognition we must seek to understand the function of linguistic thinking, the function of mythical and religious thinking, and the function of artistic perception, in such a way as to disclose how in all of them there is attained an entirely determinate formation, not exactly of the world, but rather making for the world, for an objective, meaningful context and an objective unity that can be apprehended as such. Thus the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture. It seeks to understand and to show how every content of culture, in so far as it is more than a mere isolated content, in so far as it is grounded in a universal principle of form, presupposes an original act of the human spirit. Herein the basic thesis of idealism finds its true and complete confirmation. As long as philosophical thought limits itself to analysis of pure cognition, the naive-realistic view of the world cannot be wholly discredited. The object of cognition is no doubt determined and formed in some way by cognition and through its original law - but it must nevertheless, so it would seem, also be present and given as something independent outside of this relation to the fundamental categories of knowledge. If, however, we take as our starting point not the general concept of the world, but rather the general concept of culture, the question assumes a different form. For the content of the concept of culture cannot be detached from the fundamental forms and directions of human activity: here "being" can be apprehended only in "action." Only in so far as aesthetic imagination and perception exist as a specific pursuit, is there a sphere of aesthetic objects - and the same applies to all those other energies of the spirit by which a definite universe of objects takes on form. Even religious consciousness - convinced as it is of the "reality," the truth, of its object - transforms this reality into a simple material existence only at the lowest level, the level of purely mythological thinking. At higher levels of contemplation it is more or less clearly aware that it only possesses its object in so far as it relates itself to that object in a special way. What ultimately guarantees objectivity itself is the way in which it is approached, the specific direction that the spirit gives itself in relation to a proposed objective context. Philosophical thought confronts all these directions - not just in order to follow each one of them separately or to survey them as a whole, but under the assumption that it must be possible to relate them to a unified, ideal center. From the standpoint of critical thinking, however, this center can never lie in a given essence but only in a common project. Thus, with all their inner diversity, the various products of culture - language, scientific knowledge, myth, art, religion - become parts of a single great problem-complex: they become multiple efforts, all directed toward the one goal of transforming the passive world of mere impressions, in which the spirit seems at first imprisoned, into a world that is pure expression of the human spirit. In seeking the proper starting point for a philosophical study of language, modern philosophy has devised the concept of "inner linguistic form." A similar "inner form" may be sought in religion and myth, in art and scientific cognition. And this form would not mean only a sum or retrospective compendium of the particular phenomena in these fields, but the law determining their structure. True, we can find this law only through the phenomena themselves from which we "abstract" it; but this very abstraction shows that the law is a necessary constituent factor of the content and existence of the particular." (pg. 79-81)

■ Universal Function of the Sign: The Problem of Meaning (pg. 85)

- "For the sign is no mere accidental cloak of the idea, but its necessary and essential organ. It serves not merely to communicate a complete and given thought-content, but is an instrument, by means of which this content develops and fully defines itself. The conceptual definition of a content goes hand in hand with its stabilization in some characteristic sign. Consequently, all truly strict and exact thought is sustained by the symbolics and semiotics on which it is based. Every "law" of nature assumes for our thinking the form of a universal "formula" —and a formula can be expressed only by a combination of universal and specific signs. Without the universal signs provided by arithmetic and algebra, no special relation in physics, no special law of nature would be expressible. It is, as it were, the fundamental principle of cognition that the universal can be perceived only in the particular, while the particular can be thought only in reference to the universal." (pg. 86)
 - ◆ "This mutual relation is not limited to science but runs through all the other fundamental forms of cultural activity. None of them can develop its appropriate and peculiar type of comprehension and configuration without, as it were, creating a definite sensuous substratum for itself. This substratum is so essential that it sometimes seems to constitute the entire content, the true "meaning" of these forms. Language seems fully definable as a system of phonetic symbols - the worlds of art and myth seem to consist entirely in the particular, sensuously tangible forms that they set before us. Here we have in fact an all-embracing medium in which the most diverse cultural forms meet. The content of the spirit is disclosed only in its manifestations; the ideal form is known only by and in the aggregate of the sensible signs which it uses for its expression." (pg. 86)
- "But the usual means of drawing this boundary was to say that the intelligible world is governed by the principle of pure action, while the sensible world is dominated by the principle of receptivity. The free spontaneity of the mind prevails in the former, the confinement, the passivity of the senses in the latter. But for the "universal characteristic" which now stands before us in the broadest outlines as problem and project, this opposition is no longer irreconcilable and exclusive. For the senses and the spirit are now joined in a new form of reciprocity and correlation. Their metaphysical dualism seems bridged, since it can be shown that precisely the pure function of the spirit itself must seek its concrete fulfilment in the sensory world. Within the sensory sphere, a sharp distinction must be made between mere "reaction" and pure "action," between "impression" and "expression."" (pg. 86-87)
 - ◆ "Dogmatic sensationalism underestimates the importance of the purely intellectual factors and moreover, though it insists on sensibility as the basic factor in the life of the spirit, it by no means encompasses either the whole concept of sensibility or its whole effect. Dogmatic sensationalism presents an inadequate and distorted picture of sensibility, which it limits to "impressions," to the immediate givenness of simple sensations. In so doing, it fails to recognize that there is also an activity of the sensibility itself, that, as Goethe said, there is also an "exact sensory imagination," which operates in the most diverse spheres of cultural endeavor. We find indeed that, beside and above the world of perception, all these spheres produce freely their own world of symbols which is the true vehicle of their immanent development—a world whose inner quality is still wholly sensory, but which already discloses a formed sensibility, that is to say, a sensibility governed by the spirit. Here we no longer have to do with a sensible world that is simply given and present, but with a system of diverse sensory factors which are produced by some form of free creation." (pg. 87)
- "The process of language formation shows for example how the chaos of immediate impressions takes on order and clarity for us only

when we "name" it and so permeate it with the function of linguistic thought and expression. In this new world of linguistic signs the world of impressions itself acquires an entirely new "permanence," because it acquires a new intellectual articulation. This differentiation and fixation of certain contents by words, not only designates a definite intellectual quality through them, but actually endows them with such a quality, by virtue of which they are now raised above the mere immediacy of so-called sensory qualities. **Thus language becomes one of the human spirit's basic implements, by which we progress from the world of mere sensation to the world of intuition and ideas. It contains in germ that intellectual effort which is afterwards manifested in the formation of scientific concepts and in the logical unity of their form. Here lies the first beginning of that universal function of separation and association, which finds its highest conscious expression in the analyses and syntheses of scientific thought. And beside the world of linguistic and conceptual signs stands the world of myth and art, incommensurate with it and yet related in spiritual origin. For deeply rooted as it is in sensibility, mythical fantasy also goes far beyond the mere passivity of sensation.** If we judge it by the ordinary empirical standards provided by our sensory experience, its creations cannot but seem "unreal," but precisely in this unreality lies the spontaneity and inner freedom of the mythical function. And this freedom is by no means arbitrary and lawless. The world of myth is no mere product of whim or chance, it has its own fundamental laws of form, which are at work in all its particular manifestations. And when we consider art, it is immediately clear that the conception of an aesthetic form in the sensible world is possible only because we ourselves create the fundamental elements of form. All understanding of spatial forms, for example, is ultimately bound up with this activity of their inner production and with the law governing this production. And so we see that the very highest and purest spiritual activity known to consciousness is conditioned and mediated by certain modes of sensory activity. Here again the authentic and essential life of the pure idea comes to us only when phenomena "stain the white radiance of eternity." We can arrive at a system of the manifold manifestations of the mind only by pursuing the different directions taken by its original imaginative power. In them we see reflected the essential nature of the human spirit - for it can only disclose itself to us by shaping sensible matter." (pg. 87-88)

- **"Cognition, language, myth and art: none of them is a mere mirror, simply reflecting images of inward or outward data; they are not indifferent media, but rather the true sources of light, the prerequisite of vision, and the wellsprings of all formation."** (pg. 93)
- The Problem of "Representation" and the Structure of Consciousness (pg. 93)
 - See text
- Ideational Content of the Sign. Transcending the Copy Theory of Knowledge (pg. 105)
 - "Since every particular content of consciousness is situated in a network of diverse relations, by virtue of which its simple existence and self-representation contain reference to other and still other contents, there can and must be certain formations of consciousness in which the pure form of reference is, as it were, sensuously embodied. **From this follows the characteristic twofold nature of these formations: their bond with sensibility, which however contains within it a freedom from sensibility. In every linguistic "sign," in every mythical or artistic "image," a spiritual content, which intrinsically points beyond the whole sensory sphere, is translated into the form of the sensuous, into something visible, audible or tangible.** An independent mode of configuration appears, a specific activity of consciousness, which is differentiated from any datum of immediate sensation or perception, but makes use of these data as vehicles, as means of expression. Thus the "natural" symbolism which we have found embedded as a fundamental characteristic of consciousness is on the one hand utilized and retained, while on the other hand it is surpassed and refined. For in this "natural" symbolism, a certain partial content of consciousness, though distinct from the whole, retained the power to represent this whole and in so doing to reconstitute it in a sense. A present content possessed the power of evoking another content, which was not immediately given but merely conveyed by it. It is not the case, however, that **the symbolic signs which we encounter in language, myth, and art first "are" and then, beyond this "being," achieve a certain meaning; their being arises from their signification. Their content subsists purely and wholly in the function of signification.** Here consciousness, in order to apprehend the whole in the particular, no longer requires the stimulus of the particular itself, which must be given as such; here **consciousness creates definite concrete sensory contents as an expression for definite complexes of meaning.** And because these contents which consciousness creates are entirely in its power, it can, through them, freely "evoke" all those meanings at any time." (pg. 106)
 - **"For the function of language is not merely to repeat definitions and distinctions which are already present in the mind, but to formulate them and make them intelligible as such.** Thus in every sphere, it is through the freedom of spiritual action that the chaos of sensory impressions begins to clear and take on fixed form for us. The fluid impression assumes form and duration for us only when we mould it by symbolic action in one direction or another. **In science and language, in art and myth, this formative process proceeds in different ways and according to different principles, but all these spheres have this in common: that the product of their activity in no way resembles the mere material with which they began. It is in the basic symbolic function and its various directions that the spiritual consciousness and the sensory consciousness are first truly differentiated. It is here that we pass beyond passive receptivity to an indeterminate outward material, and begin to place upon it our independent imprint which articulates it for us into diverse spheres and forms of reality. Myth and art, language and science, are in this sense configurations towards being: they are not simple copies of an existing reality but represent the main directions of the spiritual movement, of the ideal process by which reality is constituted for us as one and many—as a diversity of forms which are ultimately held together by a unity of meaning."** (pg. 107)
 - ◆ **"What constitutes the true force of the sign, here as in other fields, is precisely this: that as the immediate, determinate contents recede, the general factors of form and relation become all the sharper and clearer.** The particular as such is seemingly limited; but precisely thereby that operation which we have called "integration" is effected the more clearly and forcefully. We have seen that the particular of consciousness "exists" only in so far as it potentially contains the whole and is, as it were, in constant transition towards the whole. But the use of the sign liberates this potentiality and enables it to become true actuality. Now, one blow strikes a thousand connected chords which all vibrate more or less forcefully and clearly in the sign. In positing the sign, consciousness detaches itself more and more from the direct substratum of sensation and sensory intuition: but precisely therein it reveals its inherent, original power of synthesis and unification." (pg. 108)
 - **"True, we still remain in a world of "images" - but these are not images which reproduce a self-subsistent world of "things"; they are image-worlds whose principle and origin are to be sought in an autonomous creation of the spirit.** Through them alone we see what we call "reality," and in them alone we possess it: for the highest objective truth that is accessible to the spirit is ultimately the form of its own activity. In the totality of its own achievements, in the knowledge of the specific rule by which each of them is determined and in the consciousness of the context which reunites all these special rules into one problem and one solution: in all this, the human spirit now perceives itself and reality. True, the question of what, apart from these spiritual functions, constitutes absolute reality, the question of what the "thing in itself" may be in this sense, remains unanswered, except that more and more we learn to recognize it as a fallacy in formulation, an intellectual phantasm. The true concept of reality cannot be squeezed into the form of mere abstract being; it opens out into the diversity and richness of the forms of spiritual life - but of a spiritual life which bears the stamp of inner necessity and hence of objectivity. In this sense each new "symbolic form" —not only the conceptual world of scientific cognition but also the intuitive world of art, myth, and language constitutes, as Goethe said, a revelation sent outward from within, a "synthesis of world and spirit," which truly

- assures us that the two are originally one." (pg. 111)
- **"The more richly and energetically the human spirit engages in its formative activity, the farther this very activity seems to remove it from the primal source of its own being. More and more, it appears to be imprisoned in its own creations - in the words of language, in the images of myth or art, in the intellectual symbols of cognition, which cover it like a delicate and transparent, but unbreachable veil. But the true, the profoundest task of a philosophy of culture, a philosophy of language, cognition, myth, etc., seems precisely to consist in raising this veil— in penetrating from the mediate sphere of mere meaning and characterization to the original sphere of intuitive vision. But on the other hand the specific organ of philosophy - and it has no other at its disposal - rebels against this task. To philosophy, which finds its fulfillment only in the sharpness of the concept and in the clarity of "discursive" thought, the paradise of mysticism, the paradise of pure immediacy, is closed. Hence it has no other solution than to reverse the direction of inquiry. Instead of taking the road back, it must attempt to continue forward. If all culture is manifested in the creation of specific image-worlds, of specific symbolic forms, the aim of philosophy is not to go behind all these creations, but rather to understand and elucidate their basic formative principle. It is solely through awareness of this principle that the content of life acquires its true form. Then life is removed from the sphere of mere given natural existence: it ceases to be a part of this natural existence or a mere biological process, but is transformed and fulfilled as a form of the "spirit." In truth, the negation of the symbolic forms would not help us to apprehend the essence of life; it would rather destroy the spiritual form with which for us this essence proves to be bound up. If we take the opposite direction, we do not pursue the idea of a passive intuition of spiritual reality, but situate ourselves in the midst of its activity. If we approach spiritual life, not as the static contemplation of being, but as functions and energies of formation, we shall find certain common and typical principles of formation, diverse and dissimilar as the forms may be. If the philosophy of culture succeeds in apprehending and elucidating such basic principles, it will have fulfilled, in a new sense, its task of demonstrating the unity of the spirit as opposed to the multiplicity of its manifestations - for the clearest evidence of this unity is precisely that the diversity of the products of the human spirit does not impair the unity of its productive process, but rather sustains and confirms it."** (pg. 113-114)
 - Volume 1 - The Phenomenology of Linguistic Form (pg. 115)
 - Chapter 1 - The Problem of Language in the History of Philosophy (pg. 116)
 - **"Philosophical inquiry into the origin and nature of language is as old as that into the essence and origin of being. For it is characteristic of the earliest conscious reflection on the world as a whole that there was as yet no distinction between language and being, word and meaning, but that they still formed an indivisible unity. Because language itself is a necessary condition of reflection, because **philosophical awareness arises only in and through language, the human spirit always finds language present as a given reality, comparable and equal in stature to physical reality.** From the moment when man first turns his attention to it, the world of language assumes for him the same specificity and necessity, the same "objectivity" as the world of things. Like the world of things, it confronts him as a whole, possessing its own self-contained nature and laws, in which there is nothing individual or arbitrary. For this first level of reflection, the character and meaning of words, like the character of things or the immediate character of sensory impressions, involves no free activity of the spirit. The word is not a designation and denomination, or a spiritual symbol of reality; it is itself a very real part of reality. The mythical view of language which everywhere precedes the philosophical view of it is always characterized by this indifference of word and thing. Here the essence of every thing is contained in its name."** (pg. 117-118)
 - Chapter 2 - Language in the Phase of Sensuous Expression (pg. 177)
 - **"In truth, however, the meaning of each form cannot be sought in what it expresses, but only in the manner and modality, the inner law of the expression itself. In this law of formation, and consequently not in proximity to the immediately given but in progressive removal from it, lie the value and the specific character of linguistic as of artistic formation. This distance from immediate reality and immediate experience is the condition of their being perceived, of our spiritual awareness of them. **Language, too, begins only where our immediate relation to sensory impression and sensory affectivity ceases.** The uttered sound is not yet speech as long as it purports to be mere repetition; as long as the specific factor of signification and the will to "signification" are lacking. **The aim of repetition lies in identity - the aim of linguistic designation lies in difference.**" (pg. 189)**
 - **"In general, language can be shown to have passed through three stages in maturing to its specific form, in achieving its inner freedom. In calling these the mimetic, the analogical, and the truly symbolical stage, we are for the present merely setting up an abstract schema- but this schema will take on concrete content when we see that it represents a functional law of linguistic growth, which has its specific and characteristic counterpart in other fields such as art and cognition."** (pg. 190)
 - Chapter 3 - Language in the Phase of Intuitive Expression (pg. 198)
 - **"In linguistics as in epistemology it is not possible to divide the sensory and the intellectual into two distinct spheres, each with its own self-sufficient mode of "reality." The critique of knowledge shows that mere sensation, i.e., a sensory quality without form or order, is not a fact of immediate experience but a product of abstraction. The matter of sensation is never given purely in itself, "prior" to all formation; the very first perception of it contains a reference to the form of space and time. But in the continuous progress of knowledge this indefinite reference becomes more specific: the mere "possibility of juxtaposition and succession" unfolds into the whole of space and time, into an order that is both concrete and universal. We may expect that language, as a reflection of the spirit, will also reflect this fundamental process in some way. And indeed Kant's statement that concepts without intuitions are empty, applies as much to the linguistic designation of concepts as it does to their logical determination. Even the most abstract terms of language still reveal their link with the primary intuitive foundation in which they are rooted. Here again, "meaning" is not distinct from "sensibility"; the two are closely inter-woven. Thus the step from the world of sensation to that of "pure intuition," which the critique of knowledge shows to be a necessary factor of the I and the pure concept of the object, has its exact counterpart in language. **It is in the "intuitive forms" that the type and direction of the spiritual synthesis effected in language are primarily revealed, and it is only through the medium of these forms, through the intuitions of space, time and number that language can perform its essentially logical operation: the forming of impressions into representations.**" (pg. 198)

 - ◆ **"Language possesses such a "schema" - to which it must refer all intellectual representations before they can be sensuously apprehended and represented - in its terms for spatial contents and relations."** (pg. 200)
 - ◇ **"...we recognize that the power demonstrated by language in such formations lies in not regarding the opposition between subjective and objective as a rigid, abstract opposition between two mutually exclusive spheres, but in conceiving it as dynamically mediated in the most diverse ways. **Language does not represent the two spheres in themselves but reveals their reciprocal determination - it creates as it were a middle realm in which the forms of substance and the forms of action are referred to one another and fused into a spiritual unity of expression.**"** (pg. 259)**
 - Chapter 4 - Language as Expression of Conceptual Thought. Concept and Class Formation in Language (pg. 278)
 - **"Like myth, language starts from the basic experience and basic form of personal activity; however, it does not, like mythology, weave the world in infinite variations around this one central point, but gives it a new form in which it confronts the mere subjectivity of sensation and feeling. In language, the process of animation and the process of definition constantly merge to form a spiritual unity.**

And it is through this twofold movement, from the inside out and back again, through this ebb and flow of the spirit, that inner and outer reality take form and definition." (pg. 288-289)

- "...language, with all its involvement in the sensuous, imaginative world, reveals a tendency towards the logical and universal, through which it progressively liberates itself and attains to a purer and more independent spirituality of form." (pg. 302)
- Chapter 5 - Language and the Expression of the Form of Pure Relation. The Sphere of Judgement and the Concept of Relation (pg. 303)
 - See text

d. Further Readings:

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