

The Logic of the Cultural Sciences, by E. Cassirer

a. People / Organizations:

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b. Quotes:

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c. General Notes:

- Translator's Introduction, by S. G. Lofts (pg. xiii)

- **"Cassirer considers once again the examples of language and art. In both cases Cassirer aims to show that neither language nor art "copies" an already determined and given reality. Rather, it is only through their formative activity that anything that can rigorously be called the presence of reality comes about.** "In this case, the 'given' of objects is transformed into the 'task' of objectivity. And this task, as it can be shown, does not involve theoretical knowledge alone; rather, every energy of spirit participates in its own way. Now language and art can also be assigned their particular 'objective' meanings— not because they imitate a reality existing in itself but because they preform it, because they are determined ways and directions of objectification." Each of the symbolic forms determines the relation between the "subject pole" and the "object pole" according to its specific law of formation. The two poles are not to be thought of as substantially separated entities, one existing before the other, that the different symbolic forms must somehow unite. Rather, their separation and subsequent reunification are brought about in and through one and the same act: the act of symbolic formation. Here there can be no separation of the "symbol" and "object." (pg. xxviii)
- **"Every true unity presupposes the separation of that which it brings together as a unity. Where there is no separation, no difference, there can be no unity or identity. The different symbolic forms differentiate the I and the you while at the same time uniting them in a common world of action. The I exists as I only in the alterity of the you and vice versa. Through all symbolic activity, the one reaches out to the other, but it is precisely this act of reaching out that creates the distance between them, a distance that differentiates them from one another while at the same time uniting them.** Evidently, this distance can never be fully overcome without at the same time destroying that which it creates. All this applies to the presence of the I to itself, to the knowledge the I can have of itself. Self-consciousness is possible only insofar as the subject is "split," insofar as the I becomes something other than itself, that is, its own alter ego." (pg. xxxiii)
- **"Every reference to the I is made by way of a reference to an alter ego, which the I is not. The I and the you are binary poles of the same reality, which is brought about through their mutual activity. Each of the different symbolic forms constitutes a different mode of action, a specific kind of relation between the I and the you that at once differentiates them and yet binds them together."** (pg. xxxii)
- **"For Simmel, the life of spirit is caught up in a paradoxical and tragic structure.** On the one hand, spirit can achieve its existence only by externalizing itself in the objective forms of culture. These cultural formations reify the life of spirit, the "pure self-movement of the I," thus giving it an objective presence in the world. Only through this objective presence can spirit become an object of consciousness— become, that is to say, self-conscious. However, this process of externalization leads to an alienation of spirit from itself. The objective forms of culture prove to be a limitation and burden on the I that endanger its liveliness, its free spontaneous movement. Spirit invests itself in its work, and in fact must invest itself in its work, but this work stands before it as something other, as something fixed and stable, something external and objective, something dead. As Simmel writes: "it is... as if the creative motion of the soul were to die in its own products" (quoted p. 106). **The I no longer recognizes its own creative impulse in the dead works culture.**" (pg. xxxix)
- **"Hence the "tragedy of culture." For in order for spirit to know itself, it cannot remain within itself, as a being-in-itself, but must externalize itself in the objective forms of culture. It is only in these external and fixed forms that the subjective life of spirit achieves its objective presence, if not its very existence. However, the anonymous structures and formations of objective spirit mark the death of the spontaneous free movement of the I which created them."** (pg. xl)
- Study 1 - The Object of the Science of Culture (pg. 1)
- "It is rather linguistic consciousness, the awakening of symbol-consciousness, which impresses its stamp upon perception and intuition to the extent that it grows stronger and extends and clarifies itself. Both perception and intuition become "objective" inasmuch as the energy of language succeeds in clarifying, differentiating, and organizing the dull and undifferentiated chaos of simple states of affairs. **Linguistic symbolism opens up a new phase of the mental-spiritual life. A life in "meanings" supplants the life of mere impulses, of being absorbed by the immediate impression and into the various needs.** These meanings are repeatable and recurring; something that does not cling to the bare here-and-now but is meant and understood in countless life-moments and in the appropriation and use by countless different subjects as being the self-same something, identical with itself. By virtue of this identity of intention, which rises above the multifariousness and diversity of momentary impressions, there emerges, gradually, and by stages, a determined "continued existence", a "common cosmos." What we call "learning" a language is therefore never a purely receptive or reproductive process but one that is productive in the highest degree. In this productive process the I not only gains insight into an existing order but has its part in constructing this order; it gains its share in this order, not insofar as it inserts itself simply into it as if it were something given and readily available, but rather insofar as each individual acquires it for himself and by virtue of this acquisition cooperates in its conservation and renewal. From a genetic point of view we may therefore say that language is the first "common world" into which the individual enters, and that it is through its mediation that the intuition of an objective reality is first made accessible to him." (pg. 14-15)
- **"The individual "symbolic forms" —myth, language, art, and knowledge— constitute the indispensable precondition for this process. They are the specific media that man has created in order to separate himself from the world through them, and in this very separation bind himself all the closer to it. This trait of mediation characterizes all human knowledge,** as well as being distinctive and typical of all human action. Even plants and animals exist only by means of the fact that they not only continually receive stimuli from their environment but also, in a certain manner, "answer" them." (pg. 25)
- **"All this changes fundamentally as soon as we enter into the sphere of human action, which is characterized even in its simplest and most elementary forms by a kind of "mediatedness" that is sharply opposed to the manner in which the animal reacts. This transformation in the mode of action presents itself most clearly as soon as man makes the transition to the use of tools. For in order to invent a tool as such, man must look beyond the sphere of immediate need. In creating it he does not act from the impulse and necessity of the moment. Instead of being moved immediately by an actual stimulus, he looks to "possible" needs, for which he prepares the means of satisfaction in advance. The intent [Absicht] that the tool serves contains within itself a certain foresight [Voraus-Sicht]. The impulse does not originate only from the spur of the present but belongs also to the future, which must in some way be "anticipated" in order to become effective in this manner. This "idea" of the future characterizes all human action. We must place something not yet existing before ourselves in "images" in order, then, to proceed from this "possibility" to the "reality," from potency to act. This basic feature emerges still more clearly when we turn from the practical to the theoretical sphere. There exists no fundamental difference between the two, insofar as **all our theoretical concepts bear within themselves an "instrumental" character. In the final analysis they are nothing other than the tools that we have fashioned for the solution of specific tasks and that must be continually refashioned.** Concepts do not refer, like sense perceptions, to any particular given, to a concretely present**

situation; they move, rather, in the sphere of the possible and seek, as it were, to delineate the range of the possible. The more the horizon of human ideas, opinions, thoughts, and judgments expands, the more complex becomes the system of intermediary links necessary to survey it. The symbols of speech are the first and most important link in this chain. However, forms of another kind and another origin, the forms of myth, religion, art, connect themselves to it. One and the same fundamental function, the function of the symbolic as such, unfolds itself in its different cardinal directions and creates within them ever new formations. It is the totality of these formations that characterizes and distinguishes the specifically human world. The "receptor world" and the "effector world" of animals acquire something new in the human sphere: they are joined by an "image world"; and it is this image world that gains more and more power over man as it develops." (pg. 26)

- **"Through the use of tools man has set himself up as ruler over things. However, this power has turned into no blessing for him but rather into a curse. The technology that man invented in order to subjugate the physical world has turned against him. It has led not only to a heightened self-alienation but ultimately to a kind of self-loss of human existence. The tool, which appeared to provide the fulfillment of human needs, has instead created countless artificial needs."** (pg. 27)
- Study 2 - The Perception of Things and the Perception of Expression (pg. 34)
 - **"For [myth] the world can assume another face at any moment, because it is the emotion that determines this face.** In love and hate, in hope and fear, in joy and terror the features of reality transform themselves. Each of these excitations can give rise to a new mythical gestalt, a "god-of-the-moment."" (pg. 40)
 - **"Language is therefore by no means merely an alienation from ourselves; rather, like art and each of the other "symbolic forms," it is a pathway to ourselves.** It is productive in the sense that through it our consciousness of the I and our self-consciousness are first constituted." (pg. 54)
- Study 3 - Concepts of Nature and Concepts of Culture (pg. 56)
 - See text
- Study 4 - The Problem of Form and the Problem of Cause (pg. 87)
 - See text

d. Further Readings:

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