

ABSTRACTS

NORBERT ANDERSCH, *Ernst Cassirer's Afterlife: Reinventing Consciousness as Fictional Matrix*

As a brilliant philosopher but very modest man Ernst Cassirer never trained disciples, he did not create a 'Cassirer-school', nor was he keen in having admiring 'followers'. But for the Head ('Rektor') of Hamburg University (1929/30) it was hard to be forced into exile in 1933. Saving his family from racist persecution, reinventing himself three times in three different countries (England, Sweden and the US), creating a livelihood, having to think and write in foreign languages proved challenging for a man close to his 60s. In these dangerous times Cassirer did not ask for help but generously supported others instead. Coming back from exile to the post-WWII European scientific discourse might have been difficult for him, but as we know: he never made it back in the first place. He died in 1945 in New York, from a heart attack, most likely caused by exhaustion. So in post-war Germany there were only few persons left trying to save Cassirer's legacy. Many more obedient followers of Hitler-fascism were unrepentant, untouched and still in power – happy to keep Cassirer's challenging philosophy out; especially Martin Heidegger (Cassirer's challenger in the 1931 Davos dispute) who never renounced his fascist mindset. Cassirer's inventive ideas instead 'took the long way home'. His philosophy exercised a hidden but consistent impact on thinkers and researchers in the second half of the 20th century. As a medical doctor I cannot judge Cassirer in the same terms as present philosophers do. Today's ongoing comparison of his writings to the works of Husserl, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty for the umpteenth's time has – sorry to say – never been too inspiring to me. What I found fascinating though, was to – finally – detect Ernst Cassirer's paradigm changing impact as a philosopher of consciousness. And this is the subject of my talk today.

Keywords: Cassirer – exile – post WWII impact – philosopher of consciousness – psychopathology

KATHARINA BLÜHM, *Cassirer, Heidegger and the Cognitive Sciences*

In this paper I ask, how an approach with self-asserted incompatibility to any biological research program whatsoever, and heavy ethical contaminations, the Heidegger approach, received a positive role in the development of the *Cognitive Sciences*, while Cassirer's work is absent – absent in such a way that it partially got newly invented, in the partial (and comparably problematic) reinvention of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* under the name of the *Extended Mind*. Heidegger denies animality, he accuses biological research to be reifying and charges the reference to the body of being Cartesian. Cassirer in contrast, has not only a mature account of biological self-organization, his work is anchored in close transdisciplinary structures of co-operation and communication in Hamburg and beyond. Nonetheless, Heidegger-based considerations got a positive role in overcoming the overintellectualistic and disembodied account of the early *Cognitive Sciences*.

Keywords: exile – cognitive science – embodiment – enactive approach – kinaesthetic dimension

FABIEN CAPELLÈRES, *Cassirer in France: 1903-1948. Mapping Cassirer's Influences and Receptions*

This article examines Cassirer's reception and possible influence in France, from 1903 to 1948. It contrasts a reasonably good factual information regarding Cassirer's publications with an apparent lack of intellectual integration, not only in philosophy, but also in the nascent fields of linguistics, sociology, psychology.

Keywords: Cassirer's reception – Leibniz's reception – Couturat – Mauss – Durkheim – Meyerson – Davos – Geistesgeschichte – philosophy of symbolic forms.

TOBIAS ENDRES, *Ernst Cassirer's Influence on the Philosophy of Wilfrid Sellars*

The aim of the paper is to highlight a hidden reception of Ernst Cassirer's works in the writings of Wilfrid Sellars. To set out such reception, I will begin with defining criteria that allow us to point out a possible influ-

ence from one thinker on another. In a second step, I will present several links between the set-out criteria and the constellation Sellars-Cassirer. Finally, the *Cassirer Lectures Series* at Yale, Sellars' review of *Language and Myth* as well as Sellars' lecture *Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man* will serve as at the basis for an analysis of historical and systematic connections between Cassirer and Sellars. The conclusion will show that we actually can speak of a hidden influence from Cassirer on Sellars' thought and that philosophical desiderata remain in this context which are worth to explore even today.

Keywords: Cassirer – Sellars – influence – reception – analytic-continental divide

KAROLINA ENQUIST KÄLLGREN, *System or Form. Cassirer and Ortega's Debate on the Nature of Knowledge and History*

In this article I examine the different views on structure or form in history found within the works of José Ortega y Gasset and Ernst Cassirer. I ask on what grounds both took turns in presenting a respectful critique of each other's ideas of structures in history, not the least because they sometimes employed the same or similar concepts to discuss the issue. I show how Ortega criticized what he perceived to be the all too ideal interpretation of Cassirer's functional law-fullness, and instead postulated that any valid historical form had to include the experience of a living individual. Cassirer on the other hand felt that this was not systematic enough. I propose that their differences lay in the way they perceived of the validity of form in history, as well as in the extent and way in which these historical forms were material as well as forms of cognition. Finally, they also disagreed on the temporality of history, and in what way it developed towards the future.

Keywords: Cassirer – Ortega y Gasset – history – system – form – historic reason

JENNIFER MARRA HENRIGILLIS, *Normativity of Symbolic Forms as Objective Moral Standards in Culture*

In a time when morality itself has been undermined by rampant subjectivism and relativism on the one hand, and callous indifference on

the other, we find ourselves in search of some universal guiding principle for moral decision making. But there is a danger, of course. Cultures that value individualism over all praise subjectivism and relativism for its tolerance and acceptance, dismissing strict objectivity as fascist. I argue that it is possible to have an objective ethic that respects humanity in all its variety and diversity while simultaneously providing, indeed insisting upon, an objective, foundational standard for normative judgment. I believe Cassirer provides us with such an ethic – it is laced within his philosophy of symbolic forms and the driving force of his later works. In this study, I will argue that normativity is built into the philosophy of symbolic forms at two levels: on the level of individual objects in relation to their appropriate symbolic form, and on the level of forms in their relation to other forms. Such normativity is objective, not relative, and cannot be reduced to mere subjective taste. The implications for this study are vast, both for Cassirer studies and moral investigations into contemporary issues.

Keywords: Cassirer – symbolic forms – ethics – objectivity – normativity

CARMEN METTA, *Notes on Recent Rethinking of Cassirer's Philosophy*

The concept of structure that Cassirer and Lévi-Strauss borrow from linguistic structuralism can be considered in both authors as the evolution of Cassirer's concept of symbolic form (Christian Möckel). This interesting reading hypothesis, assuming Lévi-Strauss' debt towards Cassirer, can be further developed if we look at the texts of the authors in a more precise way.

Firstly, this contribution argues that: the precarious balance between structure and event by Lévi-Strauss echoes the one between thing and expression by Cassirer; it is just surviving as a symbolic form among the others that science runs no risk to change into a phantasmagoria (the "myth" of progress); the functional priority of the event is at the origin of the paradigmatic cultural value of the mythical form. Secondly, taking inspiration from a Paul Cortois' study on the proper name, this contribution deepens it by elaborating on an example of classification of the proper name offered by Lévi-Strauss. The concept of structure thus revealing itself in a new complexity, and the primacy of the event in the structuring of mythical thought proving to be the link between Cassirer and Lévi-Strauss.

Keywords: structure – event – proper name – Überreste – afterlife

GREGORY MOYNAHAN, *“Not to Give Up Anything of What is Human”*. The *“History of Problems”* [Problemgeschichte] and the *Phenomenology of History in Hans Blumenberg and Ernst Cassirer*

Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) wove commentary of Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) through a number of his key philosophical texts, ranging from those on myth and science to a reading of the parallel of Cassirer’s Davos debate with Heidegger to the reformation colloquy of Luther and Zwingli. Although Blumenberg frequently adopted positions critical of Cassirer, the style of Blumenberg’s work was deeply indebted to his predecessor. The debt is apparent not only in the manner in which Blumenberg used broad intellectual histories as a vehicle for redefining philosophical and social problems, but also in the deeper foundations of Cassirer’s philosophy. Here Blumenberg often adopted Cassirer’s basic methodology and discoveries but transformed their valence, in the process often redefining philosophical themes within the tradition of rhetoric. Thus Blumenberg’s “theory of reoccupations” can be read as an adaptation of Cassirer’s use of set theory as a model for epistemological change -- a topic that Cassirer argued was his most original philosophical contribution – yet one which shifts debates from the development of concepts to that of metaphors. Although a number of authors have noted that Blumenberg’s work can be seen as squaring the circle of the diverging positions of Cassirer and Heidegger, his approach to these problems can be read as doing so from a common inheritance and critique of the earlier neo-Kantian work of Hermann Cohen.

Keywords: Blumenberg – Cassirer – Problemgeschichte – metaphorphology – symbolic forms

MATS ROSENGREN, *Castoriadis, an unconscious follower of Cassirer?*

What is an afterlife? It may take many forms, more or less spectral, more or less haunting. And it may also be quite concrete, as in explicit references. But how do you establish an afterlife without explicit connections? This short text investigates the case of Cornelius Castoriadis as a potential custodian of Ernst Cassirer’s legacy. It highlights five themes, common to the two thinkers, and argues that Castoriadis can indeed be read as someone who deepened and expanded the thoughts of Cassirer.

Keywords: Castoriadis – Cassirer – body – technology – process – Radical metaphor/ Radical imagination – creation

ARNO SCHUBBACH, *Differences in symbolic representation. Goodman's signification and Cassirer's Darstellung*

It is well known that Nelson Goodman referred affirmatively to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture several times in his writings. However, a closer look reveals not only hardly any traces of an extensive confrontation. It also becomes apparent that Goodman and Cassirer conceive of symbolic representation in a fundamentally different way: Whereas Goodman assumes an instrumental use of symbols or signs that reference individual objects, Cassirer focuses on how elements of experience acquire a general meaning through their relations to one another and to the whole nexus of consciousness. Cassirer's approach has little affinity with Goodman's signification and 20th century semiotics in general, but rather adopts the concept of *Darstellung* from philosophy around 1800, which lends it a renewed relevance.

Keywords: Cassirer – Goodman – Kant – philosophy of culture – sign theory – semiotics

LAÏLA SOUID, *Metaphysical considerations of Cassirer's philosophy. An unexplored heritage*

Admittedly Cassirer didn't address metaphysics directly as a subject in itself and he has never been known as a metaphysician or even as a logician. Nevertheless, there are logical and metaphysical considerations that led him to the fundamental work of philosophical history and anthropological philosophy which made him famous. My purpose here is to take seriously this logical and metaphysical considerations and to ask for their significations in an *erkenntnistheoretische* perspective. I'm not going to read between the lines in order to find a metaphysical theory by Cassirer in the literal sense but I would try to reconstruct the concept of metaphysics itself through Cassirer's philosophy when the word metaphysics itself still holds a pejorative connotation and this is, I think, the major reason why this part of Cassirer's heritage remains, so far I see, unexplored.

Keywords: metaphysics – logics – form – categories – scholastic – symbolic idealism

MURIEL VAN VLIET, *Michel Foucault, lecteur de Cassirer*

The article shows how Foucault's ethics can be understood as carrying forth Cassirer's philosophy of culture. On the basis of Kant, both authors conceive ethics as a liberation from minority and determinism. Convergences between Cassirer and Foucault can also be pointed out in their views of logic and politics, notably in their approach to the question of modernity and the paradigms of humanities, on the one hand, and that of the complexity of politics, on the other. Background differences of philosophical style remain between the two, specifically between eternally renewed creative interpretation in Cassirer and constant *dépassement* of the terms of the *discours* in Foucault.

Keywords: Cassirer – Foucault – modernity – ethics – politics