

Responsibility

The Charge of Meaning in Art and Language

On the consequences of the cultural anthropological approaches of Cassirer, Warburg and Böhme

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Abstract

This article starts from the assumption that there is a connection between art and language and responsibility. What is it based on? It follows on from the research of the Hamburg Circle in the 1920s by Ernst Cassirer and Aby M. Warburg, and was strengthened in the 2000s by Hartmut Böhme. Their joint starting point is the emotional life of human beings. Thus, they assume that already the perception is shaped by it and can be increased in rituals. Comparably hardly noticed by us, it continues to have an effect in art and language and thus influences the recipient. From this derives the demand that both the one who speaks and the one who is creatively active bears responsibility for his or her doing. With the knowledge of the effect of art and language, however, the recipient is also required to take responsibility for his actions influenced by it. The article aims to show this connection, which is deeply rooted in the nature of human beings.

The article was originally published in German. It has now been translated by the author with the kind permission of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Additions were made only in the notes and in the bibliography. The concept for the text goes back to a conference of the Evangelical Academy of the Martin Luther City of Wittenberg (Saxony). On this basis, the author was invited to contribute to the publication of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) *Mitteilungen—Zur Erneuerung evangelischer Predigtkultur* (Kirche im Aufbruch 5), edited by Kathrin Oxen and Dietrich Sagert. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013. The selection of the text for this issue of *Art Style Magazine* was based on one of the fundamental ideals of Metropolis, which sees itself as democratic and based on the responsibility of each member in dealing with art and language.

Starting Point

They are “gestures of attention” with which things are charged with meaning. It is precisely this perspective that Hartmut Böhme brings to the cultural studies discussion with his view of fetishes and thus proposes a different theory of modernity. Böhme presents this approach in his 2006 book *Fetishism and Culture* (cf. Sauer’s 2007 review, see also Böhme 1997). In considering this approach, it is important to emphasise that the charging with meanings occurs in a moment of devotion and is embedded in a ritual. This understanding of fetishes gains importance when it becomes clear what a central role they play for the self-image and the cultural and social integration of the individual. Taking Böhme’s approach as a starting point, this paper—inspired by the cultural anthropologists Aby M. Warburg and Ernst Cassirer—undertakes a change of perspective that focuses not only on the person caught in ritual but also on the “active” producer of fetishes in art and language, and, from there raises the question of the individual’s responsibility for his or her actions.¹

Starting Thesis

The background for this expansion of focus is thus, in addition to Böhme’s approach, the contribution of the cultural scientist Aby M. Warburg (1893, 1923), who, as Böhme emphasizes, is very important for the foundation of his thoughts, as well as the approach of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1923, 1924–25, 1929, 1944), who in turn was very close to Warburg.² Inspired by Warburg and Cassirer, the extended assumption pursued here is accordingly: just as we perceive and understand things as meaningful or are grasped by their meaning, we are also constantly producing that meaning. Seen in this light, we are responsible for what we produce, since it has an effect or influence on the recipient’s feeling and thus on his or her action.

Premises

According to Böhme, our longings, desires, wishes and fears are the reason why we charge things with meaning so that they can function as fetishes. Behind the desire to form fetishes and charge things with foreign meanings is, according to Böhme, the fear of death. Unlike humans, only one thing can live “forever,” although both are material in nature. Thus, according to Böhme, “it is the fear that we will die and that things will never lose their materiality just as we lose our life (...) that drives us to transform the universe of things into thoughts.”³ The animation of things, then, is about overcoming death in order to live on in things. In this way, basic values open up to the individual, the satisfaction of which can

be seen as independent of culture. The things to which the individual turns prove to be more or less arbitrary in the light of modern development (Böhme 2006, 287). Warburg refers here to comparable processes, which he makes the starting point of his cultural theory. Based on observations made during a trip to America in 1895–96, in an essay from 1923 (on the snake ritual of the Hopi Indians) Warburg speaks of the fact that in the magical animation, as performed by the Pueblo Indians in the mask dance, not only is a primal fear overcome, but at the same time an explanation of the world takes place. To this, he said literally:

The Indian opposes the incomprehensibility of the processes in nature with his will to comprehend by transforming himself personally into such a cause of things. In a libidinous way he puts the cause of the inexplicable consequence in the greatest possible comprehensibility and vividness. The mask dance is danced causality. (Warburg [1923] 1992, 45–5, transl. by the author)⁴

This form of mastering (“causation”) need not take place in rituals, as Warburg makes clear; it can also purely mental: “The will to devotional surrender is a refined form of masking.” For Warburg, in this respect, a development can be suggested “from symbolism that is real in the flesh and adopted in the flesh to symbolism that is merely imagined” (Warburg [1923] 1992, 54–5, transl. by the author).⁵ Warburg’s theory of culture is thus based on the assumption, as Böhme aptly states in a 1997 essay, that it is “symbolic and ritual processes that first create a space of distancing from a universal primal fear” (Böhme 1997, 5, transl. by the author). The process of charging things, but not only them, with meaning goes back, as Cassirer points out, to processes deeply rooted in the human psyche. They rest on a “strong and libidinous underlayer (Cassirer [1929] 1964, 79)” or on a “soul-spiritual basis (ibid., 94)”. All perception is characterised by this. Cassirer calls this form of perception, which he assumes to be original, as *Ausdrucks-Wahrnehmung* (perception of expression). Before any linguistic or conceptual version, experience is present as an *Ausdruckserlebnis* (expressive experience). The phenomenology of pure expressive phenomena is characterised by the fact that:

concrete perception (...) is never absorbed in a complex of sensual qualities—such as light or dark, cold or warm—(...) it is never exclusively directed towards the “what” of the object, but grasps the nature of its overall appearance—the character of the alluring or the threatening, the familiar or the uncanny, the soothing or terrifying, which lies in this appearance, purely as such and independent of its present interpretation. (ibid., 78, transl. by the author)⁶

According to Cassirer, a renouncement of this original way of accessing the world is not possible: "(...) no abstraction, however far it is pushed, is capable of eliminating and erasing this layer as such (...) (ibid., 85, transl. by the author)." In this way, the expressive character as it lives in the perception of expression has always been an essential component of perception and not a subsequent "subjective adjunct" to what is "objectively" given in sensation.

Function

The charging with meaning belonging to man, which is recognizable here in all three approaches, has, as Böhme emphasizes, a fundamental, existential meaning. Thus, the creation of fetishes serves to establish a social order. It can be seen as "a complex system of creating order, controlling action, securing boundaries, protecting, overcoming fear, creating symbolic meaning and ritually integrating communities and individuals" (Böhme 2006, 185, transl. by the author)⁷. They convey the value of utility (function), social status (meaning), lust or unlust (aesthetics), freedom (through plenitude), and on an immaterial level, survival (in the last things) and remembering and forgetting (in the trash and in the museum) (ibid., 106–36). In them lies a promise of happiness and meaning. In this respect, fetishes contribute fundamentally to distinction between "lust/unlust, participation/non-participation, happiness/non-happiness, beauty/non-beauty, meaning/non-sense, one could almost say [between] being/non-being" (ibid., 287).

Warburg sees in the actions of humans (especially in religion, but also in art and technology, i.e. in rituals with language, design, and in abstract signs) a specific task to charge things with meaning. They can be understood as "cultural techniques of controlling body and affect," as Böhme summarises (Böhme 1997, 31, transl. by the author).

It is significant for Cassirer that while he sees the libidinous underlayer as essential to the human development, he does not make it an issue itself. Rather, he describes man's journey as a constant process of distancing and objectification, or rather as a process of creation, whose achievements (the symbolic forms) Cassirer finally evaluates as "creations of cultural conscience" (Cassirer [1929] 1964, 105–6).

How are Things Charged with Meaning?

According to Böhme, the prerequisite for making still things speak is ultimately “amazement, curiosity, attention, persistent dwelling on a thing, moment and intensity and respect, that is, aesthetic sensation” (Böhme 2006, 89). This attitude opens a window to things and makes it possible (with Merleau-Ponty) to establish a bond with them (ibid., 100). If these gestures of attention are missing, as in depression or melancholy, it is impossible to unite things and people in actions (ibid., 124). Practised rituals are essential for the “auratization” and “memory impregnation of things.” The former makes it possible to transform them from dead objects into living memory carriers (ibid., 355–64). Böhme, following Marcel Mauss, speaks in this context of a “magical milieu,” of a scenic embedding and situational presence that the fetishes require (ibid., 230–37; 256). The understanding that begins in this moment or situation is not a cognitive act of decoding, but a participatory act. Through it,

they [things] become an event that grasps those addressed, pulls them out of their ordinariness, and thereby makes them ecstatic in a certain sense. (...) Scenic symbols are not perceived, deciphered, interpreted and recognized from a distance. They captivate, they impress, they fascinate, they attract, they even suck in, they overwhelm and enchant (...). (ibid., 257, transl. by the author)⁸

Warburg speaks of the influencing or affecting of the individual as a process of “embodiment”. In this context, he refers in particular to collective-cultic acts of religious ceremonies in which fears are banned and at the same time “engrams” (gestures) are imprinted. These can be understood as patterns of experience that then “survive in memory as heritable material” (Böhme 1997, 70). The first forms of a so-called “figure of order,” a first shaping of the “wild” life of affect, are thus not taken over by the arts, but by religions. The captivating presence of affect, which first inscribes itself in the body and remains in memory as a “bodily inscribed course of action” (pathos formula), takes shape in the cultic action in a specific way as gesture. Only from here are they grasped and realized by the artist. It becomes clear, however, that art does not refer exclusively to the gestures of religion, but is able to develop its forms directly in confrontation with the “imprint” (pathetic forms) of the reflexes of fear (ibid., 31). It is devotion, but also more or less the very active doing itself (action, language, design, and sign-making) through which this charging of meaning takes place.

For Cassirer, it is essential that human beings interpret in each moment what they perceive as significant. Cassirer describes this original form of human experience as one of *Erleben und Erleiden* (living through and suffering) (Cassirer [1929] 1964, 88). It is determined by a volitional acceptance or an originally affective-emotional interpretation of the first moments of perception (soul features):

In the mirror of language (...) one can mostly still immediately recognize how all perception of an 'objective' originally proceeds from the apprehension and distinction of certain "physiognomic" characters and how it remains, as it were, saturated by them. The linguistic designation of a certain movement, for example, almost always contains this moment: instead of describing the form of the movement as such, as the form of an objective spatio-temporal event, it is rather the state of which the movement in question is the expression that is named and linguistically fixed. 'Speed', 'slowness' and, if necessary, 'angularity' (...) can be understood purely mathematically; on the other hand, 'force', 'haste', 'restraint', 'delay', 'exaggeration' are names for states of life as well as for forms of movement, and in truth describe them by indicating their characters. Those who wish to characterize forms of movement and forms of space involuntarily entangled in a labelling of characteristics of the soul, because forms and movements have been experienced as phenomena of the soul before they are judged by the intellect from the standpoint of objectivity, and because the linguistic proclamation of objective concepts takes place only through the mediation of experiences of impressions. (Cassirer [1929] 1964, 94, transl. by the author)⁹

The path away from this original form of experience, which however always remains, can be described as a twofold "process of externalization" in which ultimately subject and object can be perceived separately. It leads from the world of immediate "expression" (sensuous-visual and phonetic) to the world of "representation" (language and image work) to that of "pure sense" (concepts) (ibid., 99). The conception of one's own ego, of man's "self", Cassirer argues, following Max Scheler, emerges only at the end of this process. It is not its starting point (ibid., 94). But as soon as this self, the ego, is discovered and thus the separation of subject and object is accomplished, there is inevitably a break with the original world of expression. The newly acquired concept of thing and causality cannot be reconciled with it (ibid., 99–100). Even when, thanks to

Anschauung (aesthetic consciousness or contemplation), the individual grasps what is perceived as his or her own creation, as in art, the recipient, according to Cassirer, does not relate the “living forms” then perceptible back to himself or herself, but evaluates them in the context of occasion/motif: “Art is intensification of reality” (Cassirer [1944] 2007, 221).

With regard to the activity of the artistically or linguistically active person, the question arises to what extent he or she can bring about a participatory process with his or her own means, or does this “only” require a ritual embedding? Especially the approach of Warburg and Cassirer, but also my own reflections¹⁰ suggest this extension of Böhme’s approach. According to this, this charging with meaning begins much earlier and can already be stimulated with every word heard and every pattern perceived. In this respect, meaning depends not only on the rituals practiced, but on the respective “expressive potential,” specifically the “affective potential” of the words spoken or the forms designed. Cassirer refers here to *Bewegungsformen und Raumgestalten* (forms of movement and spatial forms), that are always already interpreted as properties of the soul, while Warburg draws attention to bodily inscribed courses of action (“pathos formula”) that can be conveyed through design. Related to my own research, the view of both can become much more concrete if one takes into account that this expressive potential, in relation to speech, already lies in the raising and lowering of the voice, in the ductus and intensity of the sound or its sequence, or in relation to design, for example in the field of painting, is characterized by the intensity (saturation) and brightness (valeur) of the color, the extension and density of the spots, the direction and position of the lines. Not only rituals, but also very concretely the way something is said and shaped, and thus the rhetoric and style, have a decisive influence on the what and to that extent on the meaning, according to this expanded view (Sauer 1999–2000, 2012b).

Distinguishing Fetishes

The mere fact that things or works of art or even linguistic expressions can absorb the individual, whether through ritual and/or through what is said and shaped itself, leads to the legitimate question: Can we distance ourselves from their “pull” at all? Böhme also sees this moment and refers in this context to “mechanisms” in the cultures to counteract this effect, which leads to a reification and devaluation of things by separating very specific things and keeping them in very specific places, in order to declare them in this way the *unveräußerlichen* (immutable) and thus sacred things. In this respect, it is the specific rituals “produced” in the handling of these things that make a distance possible. It is the distance created by the glass in the museum or other taboo boundaries between us and the thing that, as Böhme points out with Kant, makes it possible to experience oneself in the perception of the object, “in the matrix of lust and unlust (and not of commanded/forbidden, true/false)” and thus to feel oneself and to exchange ideas about it with others. Böhme refers to these things, thus tabooed as first-order fetishes, in contrast to second-order fetishes associated to consumption (an insatiable desire) and economics (for profit optimization) (Böhme, 2006, 298–307; 330–71). By being marketable like a commodity, second-order fetishes cannot fulfil their promise of happiness and meaning in the long run. However, they too contribute to the distinction between “lust/unlust, participation/non-participation, happiness/non-happiness, beauty/non-beauty, meaning/non-sense, one might almost say [between] being/non-being.” First-order things. on the other hand, in a world of series and copies, of alienation and disposition, prove to be incomparable, untouchable, and thus absolute.

Thus, through the meaning they create, they are able to connect to one’s own being and, beyond that, to the “chain of life.” Only they can convey uniqueness and individuality, and a meaning beyond one’s own death. Thus, first-order fetishism within the economic system has a “transcendentally economic purpose (ibid., 287).” In pre-economic cultures, *unveräußerbare* (non-salable) and sacred things traditionally fulfilled this purpose; in modern cultures, works of art do so. While first-order fetishes were initially kept in churches and temples, today they are found primarily in museums and private collections. Only when the fetish is withdrawn from the cycle of disposal, and thus what “circulates in society as desire and fear is shut down and exterritorialized,” does its protective and sustaining power come into its own. Then, according to Böhme, fetishism functions aesthetically and not as “external” economic, religious, sexual, consumerist. First-order fetishes allow us playfully deal with the unconscious desires and threats that we encounter in the fetish but that are normally remain hidden. At the moment of encounter (event) they reveal them (performance of the fetish). Thus, they prove to be media of envisioning (ibid., 355–364).

According to Warburg's observations, the excitations that cause us to charge things with meaning can be processed in very different ways. This can be done by objectifying or embodying the excitement in the form of a magical animation (fetish/totem). Another possibility lies in the setting of abstract signs that create an absolute distance to the arousal (fear) and enable a purely reflexive processing. A third way opens up through the creation of symbols and images in which the arousal finds an expression and, at the same time, a form is given to the arousing object. In this way, images in particular take on a task fundamental to cultural development. They "are a distancing form and an expression-giving gesture, enabling thought without abstraction, reflexive without a reflexive spell, mimetic without any mimicry-like consummation, significant without loss of contact with the signified." Returning to the anxiety (arousal) by which the individual is characterized, Warburg says in reference to the experience of images: "You live and do me no harm." Accordingly, in Warburg's view, images can be seen as "spaces of thinking through in contemplation (Böhme 1997, see 10 also 17–22, transl. by the author)."

A process of distancing from a world determined by fetishes, which Cassirer regards as original (mythical consciousness), is described by him as indicated above as a gradual process of externalization: from a world of the Thou to one of the It and finally of the Ego (Cassirer [1929] 1964, 99–107). With Cassirer, our modern understanding of the world, which knows how to distinguish between subject and object, is ultimately based, on an originally emotional interpretation of the world. What is remarkable at this point—and here further references to Böhme and Warburg can be made—is that it is precisely the arts that can reveal the original expressive sensations in a pure, potentiated form. Thus, the arts, by their very nature, are initially to be understood less as carriers of information than as means of expression of specific experiences. They are, comparable to myth, directly connected to our ability to react to experiences (forms of movement and space) from the outside and to transform them into an artistic form or to bring them to view. This concept was also formulated by Warburg. It is the art that reflects the world to us in such a primal way as alive and animated. The "homely, familiar, and secure" can be expressed in this way as well as the "inaccessible, the frightening, or the dull and cruel." It is the original potential for effect of an expressive experience that, as Cassirer makes clear, can be banished by art. For the artist, Cassirer says in parallel to Warburg, the power of passion "has become a formative, form-giving force." By undergoing a transformation in the face of artistic works, our passions are deprived of their material burden. Art transforms them into actions, into movement rather than feeling, into a dynamic process of inner life that moves us (Cassirer 1944, 229). Remarkably, and comparable to my own research, it is the work itself, and not just its setting, that is able of arousing these feelings (Sauer 1999–2000, 2012b).

(...) I begin to form an image of her (the landscape, MS). Thus, I have entered a new terrain, the field not of living things but of "living forms." I no longer stand in the immediate reality of things, but I move in the rhythm of spatial forms, in the harmony and contrast of colors, in the balance of light and shadow. Immersion in the dynamics of form establishes the aesthetic experience. (ibid., 233–34, transl. by the author)¹¹

However, in describing the development of man as an increasing process of objectification and distancing, and in elaborating the emergence of symbolic forms as creations of cultural consciousness, Cassirer does not explicitly address the life of the soul itself (the libidinous underlayer).

Consequences for Perceiver: Responsibility

For Warburg as well as for Böhme, however, it is precisely this moment that becomes significant for their approach. Accordingly, it is one's own soul life, or rather, it is one's longings, needs, desires, and above all, fears that are fundamental for the charging with meanings. Thus, for Böhme, given the ubiquitous presence of the fetishes we create, it is not a matter of repressing or forgetting fetishism as an apparently dark side within us, but of developing a self-reflexive relationship to it. Only self-reflexivity enables each individual to come to terms with what grows out of the centre of our drives, desires, and fantasies, so that a path can be found between devotion and distance, between control and identification, without freezing in "compulsive rationalizations of a pseudo-enlightenment" or falling into the "pathologies of addiction." Finally, the modernity of cultures is characterized by the fact that the "ineradicable need for magic and fetish can become a play form of culture and the culture of play" (Böhme 2006, 480–83).

With regard to the question of the recipient's responsibility, it can be argued that the space for reflection created in particular by first-order fetishes, but which can also be gained through playful interaction with second-order fetishes, enables not only a confrontation with one's own concerns, fears, and needs, but also a conscious examination of the decisions and actions initiated by the power of the fetishes. The distance to them, which the taboo border or the game opens up, makes it possible to become aware of them and to take responsibility for one's own actions accordingly.

Consequences for Designer: Responsibility

From the perspective of the artistically and linguistically active person, something comparable arises: What happens if this distance is not sought by this person with their work (the words and images) and thus not wanted, so ultimately no distance is created by a glass, etc.? Propaganda and advertising will hardly seek this distance. Does the person concerned then still have responsibility for his or her actions? From this perspective, this then lies exclusively with the one who seduces to (blindly) run along. Against this background, a self-reflexivity practiced independently of experience seems inevitable as an attitude toward the world.

But this also means that if works, linguistic and formative, already have an "effect" through their pronunciation and design, that is, through their "expressive potential" as well as the "gestures of regard" (attention and curiosity) they receive, then the speaker and designer bear responsibility for their actions at every moment.

It follows, especially with regard to the broader perspective of Böhme's approach, that already the creator is able to transmit meanings by stylistic or rhetorical means and thus to "enchant." A context based on ritualization is able to strengthen or increase this effect. In view of this finding, however, an uneasiness almost inevitably arises. As a speaker and designer, how can I be responsible about what I do? Am I not already seducing? As a designer and speaker, opening up the game itself with the help of new deconstructive methods, as Böhme points out, seems to be a path that enables both understanding and thus closeness as well as a distance-creating effect.¹² One can also be helped by the arts, which, as Böhme confirms with his reference to the function of first-order fetishes, and as Warburg, Cassirer, and my own research add, are capable to open up a space of thinking through in contemplation. Another, as already noted, is to become aware of one's own receptivity and actions, and thus to practice self-reflexivity so that everyone—both the producer and the recipient—not only has responsibility for themselves, but can and will take it.

Author Biography

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Notes

1. Cf. my earlier research in Martina Sauer: "Wahrnehmen von Sinn vor jeder sprachlichen oder gedanklichen Fassung? Frage an Ernst Cassirer," in *Kunstgeschichte. Open Peer Reviewed Journal* (December 3, 2008). Access date: March 22, 2021, www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/discussion/2008/Sauer/, and the comments on the thesis in Lambert Wiesing's review, cf. in: *Kunstgeschichte open peer reviewed Journal* (December 22, 2009) Access date: March 22, 2021: <https://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/56/>. Cf. furthermore the following four publication by Martina Sauer: "Bild-versus Kunstbegriff Cassirers," in *Das Bild als Denkfigur, Funktionen des Bildbegriffs in der Philosophiegeschichte*, edited by Simone Neuber, Roman Veressov (München: Fink, 2010), 183–98; Martina Sauer: "Affekte und Emotionen als Grundlage von Weltverstehen. Zur Tragfähigkeit des kulturalanthropologischen Ansatzes Ernst Cassirers in den Bildwissenschaften," in *IMAGE* 13, no. 1 (January 2011); Martina Sauer: "Zwischen Hingabe und Distanz—Ernst Cassirers Beitrag zur Frage nach dem Ursprung der Bilder im Vergleich zu vorausgehenden (Kant), zeitgleichen (Heidegger und Warburg) und aktuellen Positionen," in *IMAGE* 15, no. 4 (April 2012); and Martina Sauer, *Faszination—Schrecken. Zur Handlungsrelevanz ästhetischer Erfahrung anhand Anselm Kiefers Deutschlandbilder* (Heidelberg: Arthistoricum.net, 2012).

2. A connection that can be seen both in their joint work in Hamburg and in the exchange of writings. Cf. John Michal Krois: "Zum Lebensbild Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945)," in *Internationale Ernst Cassirer Gesellschaft* (November 2011).

3. Hartmut Böhme, *Fetischismus und Kultur. Eine andere Theorie der Moderne* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 53–4, 53: Thus, according to Böhme "[treibt uns] jene Sorge, dass wir sterben und dass die Dinge ihr Dingliches niemals so verlieren wie wir unser Leben, (...) dazu, das Universum der Dinge in Denken zu verwandeln."

4. Aby M. Warburg, *Schlangenritual. Ein Reisebericht* (Berlin: Wagenbach, [1923]1992), 45–55: "Der Unfassbarkeit der Vorgänge in der Natur stellt der Indianer dadurch seinen Willen zur Erfassung entgegen, dass er sich in eine solche Ursache der Dinge persönlich verwandelt. Triebhaft setzt er für die unerklärliche Folge die Ursache in größtmögliche Fassbarkeit und Anschaulichkeit. Der Maskentanz ist getanzte Kausalität."

5. See also Ulrich Raulff: "Nachwort," in *Warburg, Aby M. Schlangenritual, Ein Reisebericht* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1992), 80.

6. According to Cassirer, the phenomenology of pure expressive experiences is characterized by the fact that "[die] konkrete Wahrnehmung (...) niemals in einem Komplex sinnlicher Qualitäten—wie hell oder dunkel, kalt oder war—[aufgeht], (...) sie ist niemals ausschließlich auf das 'Was' des Gegenstandes gerichtet, sondern erfasst die Art seiner Gesamterscheinung—den Charakter des Lockenden oder Drohenden, des Vertrauten oder Unheimlichen, des Besänftigenden oder Furchterregenden, der in dieser Erscheinung, rein als solcher und unabhängig von ihrer gegenwärtigen Deutung, liegt." Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Die Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, [1929] 1964), 78.

7. Hartmut Böhme, *Fetischismus und Kultur. Eine andere Theorie der Moderne* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 185: "Es kann angesehen werden als "ein komplexes System der Ordnungserzeugung, der Handlungssteuerung, der Grenzbewahrung, des Schutzes, der Angstbewältigung, der symbolischen Sinnstiftung und der rituellen Integration von Gemeinschaften und Individuen."

8. *Ibid.*, 257: Through it, "werden sie [die Dinge] zu einem Ereignis, das Adressaten erfasst, aus ihrer Alltäglichkeit herausreißt und dadurch in gewisser Hinsicht ek-statisch macht. ... Szenische Symbole werden nicht aus der Distanz wahrgenommen, entziffert, interpretiert und erkannt. Sie schlagen in Bann, sie imponieren, faszinieren, sie ziehen an, ja saugen ein, sie überfluten und bezaubern (...)."

9. Ernst Cassirer, *Die Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, [1929] 1964), 94: "Im Spiegel der Sprache (...) lässt sich zumeist noch unmittelbar erkennen, wie alle Wahrnehmung eines 'Objektiven' ursprünglich von der Erfassung und Unterscheidung gewisser 'physiognomischer' Charaktere ausgeht, und wie sie mit diesen gleichsam gesättigt bleibt. Die sprachliche Bezeichnung einer bestimmten Bewegung etwa birgt fast durchweg dieses Moment in sich: statt die Form der Bewegung als solche, als Form eines objektiven raum-zeitlichen Geschehens, zu beschreiben, wird vielmehr der Zustand genannt und sprachlich fixiert, von dem die betreffende Bewegung der Ausdruck ist. 'Raschheit', 'Langsamkeit' und zur Not noch 'Eckigkeit' (...) mögen rein mathematisch verstanden werden; dagegen 'Wucht', 'Hast', 'Gehemmtheit', 'Umständlichkeit', 'Übertriebenheit' sind ebenso sehr Namen für Lebenszustände, wie für Bewegungsweisen und beschreiben in Wahrheit diese durch Angabe ihrer Charaktere. Wer Bewegungsgestalten und Raumformen kennzeichnen will, findet sich unversehens in eine Kennzeichnung von Seeleneigenschaften verstrickt, weil Formen und Bewegungen als Seelenerscheinungen erlebt worden sind, ehe sie aus dem Gesichtspunkt der Gegenständlichkeit vom Verstande beurteilt werden und weil die sprachliche Verlautbarung der Sachbegriffe nur durch Vermittlung von Eindruckserlebnissen stattfindet."

10. Cf. in addition to the publications mentioned in note 1, the first discussion by me on this topic against the background of developmental psychology and neuroscience approaches, Martina Sauer: "Entwicklungspsychologie/Neurowissenschaft und Kunstgeschichte—Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion von Form als Grundlage von Wahrnehmungs- und Gestaltungsprinzipien," in *ejournal.net* (June 5, 2011), 1-10: Access date: March 22, 2021. <http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/134/>.

11. Ernst Cassirer, *Versuch über den Menschen. Einführung in eine Philosophie der Kultur* (Hamburg: Meiner, [1944] 2007), 233–34: "(...) ich fange an ein Bild von ihr [der Landschaft] zu formen. Damit habe ich ein neues Terrain betreten, das Feld nicht der lebendigen Dinge, sondern der 'lebendigen Formen'. Nicht mehr in der unmittelbaren Wirklichkeit der Dinge stehend, bewege ich mich nun im Rhythmus der räumlichen Formen, in der Harmonie und im Kontrast der Farben, im Gleichgewicht von Licht und Schatten. Der Eintritt in die Dynamik der Form begründet das ästhetische Erlebnis."

12. Cf. in particular Böhme's comments in the last chapter 4 on fetishism, sexuality, and psychoanalysis, in which he shows that the feminist movement in particular has demonstrated this connection since the 1970s. See Hartmut Böhme, *Fetischismus und Kultur. Eine andere Theorie der Moderne* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 373–483, cf. for a summary on this: 481–83.

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