



*Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study  
The Swedish Ernst Cassirer Society  
and University of Gothenburg hereby invite to the symposium*

LAW AND SYMBOLIC ORDER  
CASSIRER'S CONTRIBUTION TO LEGAL PHILOSOPHY

Stenasalen, Ågrenska Villan

May 27, 2008

Over the past decade Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture has been widely recognized as a genuine contribution to many fields of philosophical discussion. But while Cassirer addressed language, myth and science at length in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, the legal sphere did not play a major role in his main work. This changed significantly after Cassirer had left Nazi-Germany and started his work at University of Gothenburg. In Sweden Cassirer outlined his own perspective on the role of law in human culture. Various aspects of Cassirer's philosophy of law and its relevance for the present-day debate on law shall be explored during an interdisciplinary symposium.

Prof. Dr. Michael Moxter (Hamburg), this year's holder of the guest-professorship in honour of Ernst Cassirer at SCAS, will focus on the relationship between symbolic order and violence and its role within Cassirer's contribution to legal philosophy. The philosopher Dr. Thomas Meyer (Leipzig), author of a recently published Cassirer-biography based on new sources, will highlight the Jewish reflection on the concept of natural law during the Weimar Republic and its significance for Cassirer. Dr. Deniz Coskun (Nijmegen), lawyer and author of a juridical dissertation titled 'Law as Symbolic form', gives an introduction to Cassirer's understanding of Human Rights. By taking his departure from Cassirer's famous speech 'On the idea of a republic', Prof. Dr. Roland Axtmann (Swansea) will discuss Cassirer's defense of democracy in comparison to Hannah Arendt's and Dolf Sternberger's political thinking. Sven-Olov Wallenstein (Södertörn), lecturer in Philosophy and Art Theory, will demonstrate how important the concept of sovereignty is for the topic by commenting on Giorgio Agamben's interpretation of Carl Schmitt's Political Theology.

The symposium will take place on Tuesday, May 27 in Stenasalen, Ågrenska villan (see the following page for time schedule). The evening before, on Monday, May 26 the fourth holder of the guest-professorship in honor of Ernst Cassirer at SCAS, Professor Michael Moxter will give the Fourth Annual Ernst Cassirer Lecture. The lecture is entitled Law, Representation and Violence. The Significance of Cassirer's Philosophy for the Legal Sphere and will be held at 18.00 in the University building, Lecture hall 10, Vasaparken 1, Göteborg. The lecture is followed by a reception.

The lecture and the symposium are made possible through a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation to the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS). The University of Gothenburg has kindly offered to host the event.

#### THE ERNST CASSIRER PROGRAMME

The Ernst Cassirer Programme was initiated by Professors Bernd Henningsen and Björn Wittrock. It has been made possible through a generous grant in 2002 to the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS) by the Volkswagen Foundation. The programme involves close cooperation between SCAS and its German sister institute, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. Each of five years one prominent senior scholar from the German-speaking world holds the Ernst Cassirer Professorship at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, SCAS. The principal of SCAS (Björn Wittrock) appoints the Ernst Cassirer Professor after consultation with the Academic Advisory board of the programme (Professors Bernd Henningsen, Axel Horstmann, Inge Jonsson, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus and Wolf Lepenies). The programme involves an ambitious initiative devoted to the promotion of key themes in the cultural sciences and to the revitalization of scholarly and cultural links between the Scandinavian and the German-speaking worlds. Like his predecessors (Professors John Michael Krois, Hans Joas and Hans-Peter Krüger), this year's Ernst Cassirer Professor, Michael Moxter gives an annual Ernst Cassirer lecture, arranges a symposium as well as an international summer school.

Support for one postdoctoral fellow, to be selected by the Cassirer Professor and the Principal of SCAS after consultation with the Academic Advisory Board of the programme is also included. This year this position is held by Dr. Thomas Wabel.

## TIME SCHEDULE

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

Each lecture lasts for 45 minutes and is followed by a 30 minute long discussion.

9.30 – 9.45 *Introduction*  
Michael Moxter

9.45 – 11.00 *Ernst Cassirer and the Jewish tradition of Natural Right*  
Thomas Meyer

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee & Tea

11.15 – 12.30 *Law as Symbolic Form*  
Deniz Coskun

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.15 *Cassirer, Arendt, Sternberger and the Defense of the Republic*  
Roland Axtmann

15.15 – 15.30 Coffee & Tea

15.30 – 16.45 *Law and Sovereignty in the Writings of Agamben and Schmitt*  
Sven-Olov Wallenstein

17.00 – 18.00 Panel discussion  
Björn Wittrock (moderator)