The Myth of the State, by E. Cassirer

a. People / Organizations: https://ia902908.us.archive.org/18/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.506295/2015.506295.myth-of.pdf
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b. Quotes:
   - .

c. General Notes:
   - Forward, C. Hendel (pg. vii)
     - "**The philosophy of symbolic forms was, in a sense, the fulfilment of Professor Cassirer's ambition as a constructive thinker**. It was an elaborate study of the ways in which the world of human experience is articulated through the various modes of symbolizing activity that are characteristic of man. This view amplified the Kantian insight into the role of certain forms of sensuous intuition and logical categories in constituting our world of nature; other forms, it was now argued, have a similar function in constituting the world that man actually experiences and knows. **Language, myth, art, religion, history, science, all these forms of cultural expression alike enter into the knowledge man has both of himself and of his total environment. Here was Professor Cassirer's own philosophy of man and existence**." (pg. ix)
   - Part 1 - What is Myth? (pg. 1)
     - Chapter 1 - The Structure of Mythical Thought (pg. 3)
       - "In the last thirty years, in the period between the first and the second World Wars, we have not only passed through a severe crisis of our political and social life but have also been confronted with quite new theoretical problems. We experienced a radical change in the forms of political thought. New questions were raised and new answers were given. Problems that had been unknown to the political thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came suddenly to the fore. Perhaps the most important and the most alarming feature in this development of modern political thought is the appearance of a new power: the power of mythical thought. The preponderance of mythical thought over rational thought in some of our modern political systems is obvious. After a short and violent struggle mythical thought seemed to win a clear and definitive victory." (pg. 3)
         - "**[I]n man's practical and social life the defeat of rational thought seems to be complete and irrevocable. In this domain modern man is supposed to forget everything he has learned in the development of his intellectual life.** He is admonished to go back to the first rudimentary stages of human culture. Here rational and scientific thought openly confess their breakdown; they surrender to their most dangerous enemy." (pg. 3-4)
       - "We must know what myth *is* before we can explain how it *works*." (pg. 4)
         - "Many anthropologists have asserted that myth is, after all, a very simple phenomenon-for which we hardly need a complicated psychological or philosophical explanation. **It is simplicity itself;** for it is nothing but the *sancta simplicitas* of the human race. It is not the outcome of reflection or thought, nor is it enough to describe it as a product of human imagination. Imagination alone cannot account for all its incongruities and its fantastic and bizarre elements. **It is rather the *Urdummheit* of man that is responsible for these absurdities and contradictions. Without this "primeval stupidity" there would be no myth.**" (pg. 4)
       - "Myth that had occupied the lowest rank was suddenly elevated to the highest dignity. **Schelling's system was a "system of identity."** In such a system no clear-cut distinction could be made between the "subjective" and the "objective" world. The universe is a spiritual universe - and this spiritual universe forms a continuous unbroken organic whole. It is a false tendency of thought, a mere abstraction, that has led to the separation of the "ideal" from the "real." They are not opposed the one to the other; they coincide with each other. **Starting from this presupposition Schelling developed in his lectures an entirely new conception of the role of myth. It was a synthesis of philosophy, history, myth, poetry, such as had never appeared before**." (pg. 6)
       - "What holds for "primitive" languages holds also for primitive thought. Its structure may seem to us to be strange and paradoxical; but it never lacks a definite logical structure. Even the uncivilized man cannot live in the world without a constant effort to understand that world. And for this purpose he has to develop and to use some general forms or categories of thought. To be sure we cannot accept Tylor's description of the "savage philosopher" who reaches his conclusions in a merely speculative way. **The savage is no discursive thinker and no dialectician. Nevertheless we find in him, in an undeveloped and implicit state, the same capability of analysis and synthesis, of discernment and unification, that, according to Plato, constitute and characterize the dialectic art.** When studying some very primitive forms of religious and mythical thought - for instance the religion of totemistic societies - we are surprised to find to what a high degree **the primitive mind feels the desire and the need to discern and divide, to order and classify the elements of its environment. There is hardly anything that escapes its constant urge for classification.** Not only is human society divided into diverse classes, tribes, clans which have different functions, different customs, different social duties. The same division appears everywhere in nature. The physical world is, in this respect, the exact duplicate and counterpart of the social world. Plants, animals, organic beings and objects of inorganic nature, substances and qualities are equally affected by this classification…All this may seem to us to be entirely arbitrary and fantastic. But **we must not forget that every division presupposes a *fundamentum divisionis.*** This leading principle is not given us by the nature of things in themselves. It depends upon our theoretical and practical interests. Obviously these interests are not the same in these first primitive divisions of the world as in our scientific classifications. But that is not the point in question. **What matters here is not the content, but the form of classification; and this form is entirely logical. What we find here is by no means a lack of order; it is rather a certain hypertrophy, a preponderance and exuberance of the 'classifying instinct'.** The results of these first attempts to analyze and systematize the world of sense-experience are far different from ours. But the processes themselves are very similar; they express the same desire of human nature to come to terms with reality, to live in an ordered universe, and to overcome the chaotic state in which things and thoughts have not yet assumed a definite shape and structure." (pg. 14-15)
     - Chapter 2 - Myth and Language (pg. 16)
       - "**Between language and myth there is not only a close relationship but a real solidarity**. If we understand the nature of this solidarity we have found the key to the mythical world." (pg. 17)
         - "To be sure language and myth have a common root, but they are by no means identical in their structure. **Language shows us always a strictly logical character; myth seems to defy all logical rules; it is incoherent, capricious, irrational.**" (pg. 18)
           - "Myth originates not in its virtues but in its vices. To be sure language is logical and rational, but on the other hand it is also a source of illusions and fallacies." (pg. 18)
             - "That is the true source of mythical thought. Language is not only a school of wisdom but also a school of folly. Myth reveals the latter aspect to us; it is nothing but the dark shadow cast by language on the world of human thought." (pg. 19)
         - "Mythology is thus represented as pathological both in its origin and in its essence. **It is a disease that begins in the field of language and, by a dangerous infection, spreads over the whole body of human civilization**. But though it be madness, there is method in it." (pg. 19)
       - "There is, indeed, a natural or physical religion - an adoration of the fire, the sun, the moon, the bright sky - but this physical religion is only a

single aspect and a derivative phenomenon. It does not give us the whole and it does not lead us to the first and principal source. **The real origin of religion is to be sought in a deeper stratum of thought and feeling.** What first fascinated men were not the objects of his surroundings. Even the primitive mind was much more impressed by the great spectacle of nature taken as a whole. **Nature was the unknown as distinguished from the known-the infinite as distinguished from the finite. It was this feeling that from the earliest times supplied the impulse to religious thought and language.** The immediate perception of the Infinite has from the very beginning formed an ingredient and a necessary complement to all finite knowledge. **The rudiments of later mythological, religious and philosophical expressions were already present in the early pressure of the Infinite upon our senses - and this pressure is the first source and the real origin of all our religious beliefs**" (pg. 20)

- "To be sure **[Max Muller] sees no longer in myth and religion a mere arbitrary invention - a trickery of a cunning priesthood. But he agrees that myth, after all, is nothing but a great illusion - not a conscious but an unconscious deception, a deception brought about by the nature of the human mind, and, first and foremost, by the nature of human speech**. Myth always remains a pathological case. But we are now in a position to understand the pathology of myth without taking recourse to the hypothesis of an inherent defect of the human mind itself. If language is recognized as the source of myth - then even the incongruities and contradictions of mythical thought are reduced to a universal and objective and thus to a thoroughly rational power." (pg. 21)

- "Herbert Spencer found the first and principal source of all religion in ancestor-worship. The first cult, he declared, was not the cult of natural powers, but the cult of the dead. Yet in order to understand the passage from ancestor-worship to the worship of personal gods, we must introduce a new hypothesis. According to Spencer it was the power and the perduring influence of speech that made this step possible, and even necessary. **Human speech is metaphorical in its very essence; it is filled with similes and analogies. The primitive mind is unable to understand these similes in a merely metaphorical sense. It takes them for realities and it thinks and acts according to this principle**. It is this literal interpretation of metaphorical names that from the first elementary forms of ancestor-worship, from the worship of human beings, led to a worship of plants and animals, and finally of the great powers of nature." (pg. 21)
- "**The grave objections to which such a theory is liable are obvious. Myth is one of the oldest and greatest powers in human civilization. It is closely connected with all other human activities - it is inseparable from language, poetry, art and from early historical thought. Even science had to pass through a mythical age before it could reach its logical age: alchemy preceded chemistry, astrology preceded astronomy**. If Max Müller's and Herbert Spencer's theories were right we should have to conclude that, after all, the history of human civilization was due to a simple misunderstanding, to a misinterpretation of words and terms. It is not a very satisfactory and plausible hypothesis to think of human culture as the product of a mere illusion - as a juggling with words and a childish play with names. " (pg. 22)

- Chapter 3 - Myth and the Psychology of Emotions (pg. 23)
  - "Notwithstanding their many and important differences the theories of myth that we have so far considered have a common feature. The interpretations of Tylor and Frazer, of Max Müller and Herbert Spencer all start from the presupposition that myth is, first and foremost, a mass of "ideas," of representations, of theoretical beliefs and judgments. As these beliefs are in open contradiction to our sense-experience and as there exist no physical objects that correspond to the mythical representations it follows that myth is a mere phantasmagoria. The question necessarily arises why men cling so obstinately and forcibly to such phantasmagoria." (pg. 23)
    - "Linguists, anthropologists, ethnologists had offered their several theories of myth. All these theories were useful to illuminate a certain sector of the problem; but they did not cover the whole field. Frazer saw in magic a sort of primitive science; Tylor described myth as a savage philosophy; Max Müller and Spencer saw in it a disease of language. All these conceptions were open to severe criticisms. Their adversaries had no difficulty in exposing the vulnerable points of these theories. No theoretical or empirical solution of the problem had yet been reached. But **this state of affairs was changed by the appearance of the Freudian theory**. Here was, after all, a new conception that opened a wide horizon and promised a better survey. **Myth was no longer regarded as an isolated fact. It was connected with well-known phenomena which could be studied in a scientific way and which were capable of empirical verification.** Thus myth became perfectly logical - almost too logical. It was no longer a chaos of the most bizarre and inconceivable things; it became a system. It could be reduced to a few very simple elements. To be sure, myth still remained a "pathological" phenomenon" (pg. 28)
      - "What strikes us most when we read those first essays of Freud is the clarity and simplicity with which he develops his views. Here we do not find those highly complicated theories which were introduced later on Freud's authority by his adherents and pupils. Nor do we find the dogmatic self-assuredness that is so characteristic of most of the later psychoanalytical writings. Freud makes no pretension of having solved the old long-standing riddle. **He simply wants to draw a parallel between the psychic lives of savages and neurotics - a parallel that may be able to elucidate some facts which otherwise would remain dark and unintelligible.**" (pg. 29)
  - "As a psychologist Freud was, in fact, in a better position to build up a coherent theory of myth than most of his predecessors. **He was firmly convinced that the only clue to the mythical world must be sought in the emotional life of man**. But on the other hand he developed a new and original theory of the emotions themselves." (pg. 30)
    - "[T]o eliminate all conceptions of the "soul" was by no means the ambition of Freud. He too defended a strictly mechanistic view-but he did not think it possible to reduce man's emotional life to merely chemical or physiological causes. We may and must, indeed, continue to speak of the mechanism of emotions as a "psychic" mechanism. But psychic life is not to be confused with conscious life. Consciousness is not the whole; it is only a small and vanishing fraction of psychic life; it cannot reveal, it rather masks and disguises its essence." (pg. 30)
    - "**[To Freud] Myth was deeply rooted in human nature;** it was based upon a fundamental and irresistible instinct the nature and character of which remained to be determined" (pg. 30)
  - "**What Freud tried to reveal was the hidden *force* that lay behind the observable facts**. For this purpose he suddenly had to change his whole method. While he continued to speak as a physician and psychopathologist, he thought as a determined metaphysician." (pg. 31)
- Chapter 4 - The Function of Myth in Man's Social Life (pg. 37)
  - "**Of all things in the world myth seems to be the most incoherent and inconsistent. Taken at its face value it appears as a confused web woven out of the most incongruous threads**" (pg. 37)
    - "The problem appears, however, in a different light when we approach it from a different angle. The subjects of myth and the ritual acts are of an infinite variety; they are incalculable and unfathomable. But the motives of mythical thought and mythical imagination are in a sense always the same. In all human activities and in all forms of human culture we find a "unity in the manifold." Art gives us a unity of intuition; science gives us a unity of thought; religion and myth give us a unity of feeling. Art opens to us the universe of "living forms"; science shows us a universe of laws and principles; religion and myth begin with the awareness of the universality and fundamental identity of life." (pg. 37)
  - "What we find here is something quite different. It is a deep and ardent desire of the individuals to identify themselves with the life of the community and with the life of nature. This desire is satisfied by the religious rites. Here the individuals are melted into one shape-into an undistinguishable whole." (pg. 38)
  - "Here we grasp **one of the most essential elements of myth. Myth does not arise solely from intellectual processes; it sprouts forth from deep human emotions**. Yet on the other hand all those theories that exclusively stress the emotional element fail to see an essential point. Myth

cannot be described as bare emotion because it is the expression of emotion. The expression of a feeling is not the feeling itself - **it is emotion turned into an image**. This very fact implies a radical change. What hitherto was dimly and vaguely felt assumes a definite shape; what was a passive state becomes an active process." (pg. 43)

- "generally speaking, human responses belong to quite a different type. What distinguishes them from animal reactions is their symbolic character. In the rise and growth of human culture we can follow step by step this fundamental change of meaning. **Man has discovered a new mode of expression: symbolic expression**. **This is the common denominator in all his cultural activities: in myth and poetry, in language, in art, in religion, and in science.**" (pg. 45)
  - "These activities are widely different, but they fulfil one and the same task: the task of objectification. In language we objectify our sense-perceptions. In the very act of linguistic expression our perceptions assume a new form. They are no longer isolated data; they give up their individual character; they are brought under class-concepts which are designated by general "names." The act of "naming" does not simply add a mere conventional sign to a readymade thing-to an object known before. It is rather a prerequisite of the very conception of objects; of the idea of an objective empirical reality. Myth is not only far remote from this empirical reality; it is, in a sense, in flagrant contradiction to it. It seems to build up an entirely fantastic world. Nevertheless even myth has a certain "objective" aspect and a definite objective function. **Linguistic symbolism leads to an objectification of sense-impressions; mythical symbolism leads to an objectification of feelings.** In his magical rites, in his religious ceremonies, man acts under the pressure of deep individual desires and violent social impulses. He performs these actions without knowing their motives; they are entirely unconscious. But if these rites are turned into myths a new element appears. Man is no longer satisfied with doing certain things - he raises the question of what these things "mean," he inquires into why and whither, he tries to understand where they have come from and to which end they tend. The answer he gives to all these questions may seem to be incongruous and absurd; but what matters here is not so much the answer as the question itself. **As soon as man begins to wonder about his acts, he has taken a new decisive step; he has entered upon a new way which will in the end lead him far from his unconscious and instinctive life.**" (pg. 45-46)

- **"symbolic expression does not mean extenuation; it means intensification**. What we find here is no mere exteriorization but condensation. **In language, myth, art, religion our emotions are not simply turned into mere acts; they are turned into "works."** These works do not fade away. They are persistent and durable." (pg. 46)
- "In mythical thought and imagination we do not meet with individual confessions. **Myth is an objectification of man's social experience, not of his individual experience.**" (pg. 47)
  - "Genuine myth does not possess this philosophical freedom; for the images in which it lives are not known as images. They are not regarded as symbols but as realities. This reality cannot be rejected or criticized; it has to be accepted in a passive way. But the first preliminary step on the new road that finally will lead to a new goal has been made. For even here **emotions are not simply felt. They are "intuited"; they are "turned into images." These images are crude, grotesque, fantastic**. But it is just for this reason that they are understandable to uncivilized man because they can give him an interpretation of the life of nature and of his own inner life. Myth, and religion in general, have often been declared to be a mere product of fear. But **what is most essential in man's religious life is not the fact of fear, but the metamorphosis of fear**. Fear is a universal biological instinct. It can never be completely overcome or suppressed, but it can change its form. Myth is filled with the most violent emotions and the most frightful visions. **But in myth man begins to learn a new and strange art: the art of expressing, and that means of organizing, his most deeply rooted instincts, his hopes and fears**. This power of organization appears in its greatest strength when man is confronted with the greatest problem - that of death. To ask for the causes of death was one of the first and most urgent questions of mankind. Myths of death are told everywhere from the lowest to the highest forms of human civilization." (pg. 47-48)

- Part 2 - The Struggle Against Myth in the History of Political Theory (pg. 51)
  - Chapter 5 - 'Logos' and 'Mythos' in Early Greek Philosophy (pg. 53)
    - "A rational theory of the state came to light in Greek philosophy. Here, as in other fields, the Greeks were the pioneers of rational thought" (pg. 53)
  - Chapter 6 - Plato's Republic (pg. 61)
    - "All this shows us once more the unbroken unity of Plato's thought. In his philosophical doctrine we do not find that specialization which was introduced by later thinkers. His whole work was from the same mold. **Dialectic, theory of knowledge, psychology, ethics, politics, all this was fused together in one coherent and inseparable whole**. It bears the stamp of Plato's philosophical genius and of his personality. This holds also for Plato's attitude toward mythical thought. His struggle against myth followed from his conception and his very definition of dialectic. In the dialogue Philebus Plato points out that all things whatever are composed of two different and opposed elements: of "limit" (peras) and the "unlimited" or "undeterminate" (apeiria). It is for dialectic to bridge the gulf between these two opposite poles: to determine the undeterminate, to reduce the infinite to fixed measures, to set bounds to the boundless.8 If we accept this definition of philosophy and dialectic it becomes clear why Plato had to exclude myth from his Republic, that is to say, from his system of education. Of all things in the world myth is the most unbridled and immoderate. It exceeds and defies all limits; it is extravagant and exorbitant in its very nature and essence. To banish this dissolute power from the human and political world was one of the principal aims of the Republic. **Plato's logic and dialectic teach us how to classify and systematize our concepts and thought; how to make the right divisions and subdivisions. Dialectic, says Plato, is the art of dividing things by classes, according to their natural joints, and not trying to break any part after the manner of a bad carver**. Ethics shows us how to rule over emotions; how to moderate them by virtue of reason and temperance. Politics is the art of unifying and organizing human actions and directing them to a common end. Thus the Platonic parallel between the individual soul and the soul of the state is by no means a mere figure of speech or a simple analogy. It is the expression of Plato's fundamental tendency: the tendency to unify the manifold, to bring the chaos of our minds, of our desires and passions, of our political and social life into a cosmos, into order and harmony." (pg. 77)
  - Chapter 7 - The Religious and Metaphysical Background of the Medieval Theory of the State (pg. 78)
    - "Yet the God of Thomas Aquinas, the God of the Bible and of Christian revelation, is by no means the same as the God of Plato or Aristotle. **The scholastic thinkers were prone to forget this fundamental difference, because they did not read the classical texts in our modern way. They did not care for historical truth. They only knew and acknowledged a symbolic truth**. They had no critical or philological standards of interpretation; they used the medieval method of allegorical and spiritual interpretation." (pg. 88)
    - "To speak of a medieval "rationalism" is to speak in a very inaccurate and inadequate way. In the medieval system there was no room for our modern rationalism, the tendency of thought that we find in Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, or in the "philosophers" of the eighteenth century. No scholastic thinker ever seriously doubted the absolute superiority of the revealed truth. In this regard the dialecticians and theologians were unanimous. "Nolo sic esse philosophus," wrote Abélard in one of his letters to Héloise, "ut recalcitrem Paulo; non sic esse Aristoteles, ut sceludat a Christo." The "autonomy" of reason was a principle quite alien to medieval thought. Reason cannot be its own light; in order to perform its work it needs a higher source of illumination. In this respect the Augustinian theory of the magisterium Dei never lost its authority upon the minds of the medieval thinkers. Here too we can trace medieval thought to its historical origin in prophetic religion. Augustine had quoted the

saying of Isaiah: "Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis"-**"if you do not believe you will not understand."** This word became the cornerstone of the medieval theory of knowledge. **Reason left to itself is blind and impotent, but when guided and illuminated by faith it proves its whole strength. If we begin with the act of faith we can confide in the power of reason, for reason has been given to us not for any independent use of its own but for an understanding or interpretation of what is taught by faith. The authority of faith must always precede the use of reason**-"naturac quidem ordo ita se habet, ut cum aliquid discimus rationem praecedat auctoritas." But this authority once acknowledged and firmly established the way is open." (pg. 95)

- Chapter 8 - The Theory of the Legal State in Medieval Philosophy (pg. 97)
  - "**The thesis that the first and principal task of the state is the maintenance of justice became the very focus of medieval political theory. It was accepted by all the medieval thinkers, and it found its way into all forms of medieval civilization**. The first Fathers of the Church, the theologians and philosophers, the Roman lawyers and the political writers, the students of civil and canon law, were unanimous in this respect" (pg. 97)
    - "Plato had defined justice as "geometrical equality." Every individual has a share in the life of the commonwealth; but these shares are by no means the same. Justice is not the same as equality of rights. The Platonic state gives to everyone and to all the social classes their allotted work in the common work; but their rights and duties are widely different. That follows not only from the character of Plato's ethics, but, first and foremost, from the character of his psychology. Plato's metaphysical psychology is based upon his division of the human soul. The character of man is determined by the proportion between these three elements." (pg. 98)
  - "In the system of Stoicism there arose a new intellectual and moral force. From a merely theoretical point of view Stoicism has little claim to originality. In their physics, logic, and dialectic the **Stoics borrowed much of their theories from other sources**. **Their philosophy seems to be a mere eclecticism. They select doctrines from Heraclitus, Plato, and Aristotle**. But in their general conception of man and his place in the universe the Stoic philosophers did open a new way. They introduced a principle that proved to be a turning point in the history of ethical, political, and religious thought. To the Platonic and Aristotelian ideal of justice there was added an entirely new conception: the conception of the fundamental equality of men." (pg. 100)
  - "In medieval philosophy a right of open resistance against the ruler could not be admitted. If the prince derives his authority directly from God, any resistance becomes an open revolt against the will of God and, therefore, a mortal sin. Even the unjust ruler does not cease to be the representative of God and he must therefore be obeyed. Thomas Aquinas could not deny or overthrow this argument. Yet though accepting the current opinion de jure, he gave it an interpretation by which it practically changed its sense. He declared that men are bound to obey the secular authorities, but that this obedience is restricted by the laws of justice, and that, therefore, subjects are under no obligation to obey an unjust or usurped authority. Sedition is, indeed, forbidden by the divine law; but to resist an unjust or usurped authority, to disobey a "tyrant," does not have the character of revolt or sedition but is rather a legitimate act. All this shows very clearly that in spite of the incessant conflicts between the Church and the state, between the spiritual and the secular order, both orders are united by a common principle. The power of the king is, as Wyclif said, a "potestas spiritualis et evangelica." The secular order is not merely "temporal"; it has a true eternity, the eternity of the law and, therefore, a spiritual value of its own." (pg. 105)
- Chapter 9 - Nature and Grace in Medieval Philosophy (pg. 106)
  - "The medieval theory of the state was a coherent system based upon two postulates: the contents of Christian revelation and the Stoic conception of the natural equality of men. From these postulates all its consequences could be derived in thoroughly logical order. Nevertheless the system was open to a fundamental objection. Its form was correct and unassailable; but in a material sense it seemed to lack all foundations, The postulate of the equality of men was constantly contradicted by the facts of history and human society. At all times the theory of the natural freedom and the natural rights of man was confronted with this flagrant contradiction." (pg. 106)
- Chapter 10 - Machiavelli's New Science of Politics (pg. 116)
  - See text
- Chapter 11 - The Triumph of Machiavellism and its Consequences (pg. 129)
  - See text
- Chapter 12 - Implication of the New Theory of the State (pg. 140)
  - See text
- Chapter 13 - The Renaissance of Stoicism and 'Natural Right' Theories of the State (pg. 163)
  - "The thinkers of the seventeenth century however did not give way before this obvious objection. All of them were determined rationalists. They had an almost unbounded faith in the power of human reason" (pg. 165)
    - "In this respect all the political theories of the seventeenth century, however divergent in their aims and means, have a common metaphysical background. Metaphysical thought definitely takes precedence over theological thought." (pg. 165)
  - "According to the philosophers of the seventeenth century the task is a negative rather than a positive one. All we have to do is to dispel the clouds that hitherto have obscured the clear light of reason - to forget all our preconceived opinions and prejudices. For reason, says Spinoza, has this peculiar power to illuminate itself and its contrary; to discover both truth and falsehood. The political rationalism of the seventeenth century was a rejuvenation of Stoic ideas." (pg. 167)
  - "If there is any feature that is characteristic of this age and that may be regarded as the distinctive mark of the whole epoch, it is its intellectual courage, its radicalism of thought. Descartes' philosophy had begun with a general postulate. Once in his life every man has to forget all that he has learned before. He has to reject all authorities and to defy the power of tradition. This Cartesian demand led to a new logic and epistemology, to a new mathematics and metaphysics, to a new physics and cosmology. But seventeenth century's political thought seems, at first sight, to have been untouched by the new Cartesian ideal. It does not enter upon an entirely new route. On the contrary, it seems to continue a time-honored tradition." (pg. 168)
  - "What matters here is not so much the content of the Stoic theory as the function that this theory had to fulfil in the ethical and political conflicts of the modern world. In order to understand this function we must go back to the new conditions created by the Renaissance and the Reformation. All the great and undeniable progress made by the Renaissance and the Reformation were counterbalanced by a severe and irreparable loss. The unity and the inner harmony of medieval culture had been dissolved. Assuredly the Middle Ages were not free from deep conflicts. The struggle between the Church and the State never came to an end; the discussions about logical, metaphysical, and theological problems seemed to be interminable. But the ethical and religious foundation of medieval civilization was not seriously affected by these discussions. Realists and nominalists, rationalists and mystics, philosophers and theologians had a common basis that never was called into question. After the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this basis was shaken; it could never regain its former solidity. The hierarchic chain of being that gave to everything its right, firm, unquestionable place in the general order of things was destroyed. The heliocentric system deprived man of his privileged condition. He became, as it were, an exile in the infinite universe. The schism within the Church endangered and undermined the foundation of the Christian dogma. Neither the religious nor the ethical world seemed to possess a fixed center. During the seventeenth century theologians and philosophers still cherished the hope of finding such a center again. One of the greatest thinkers of the age incessantly worked on this problem. Leibniz made the most serious efforts to find a formula for the reunion of the different Christian churches. But all these

attempts were made in vain. It became clear that, within the Church itself, the former "catholicity" could not be restored. If there was to be a really universal system of ethics or religion, it had to be based upon such principles as could be admitted by every nation, every creed, and every sect. And Stoicism alone seemed to be equal to this task. It became the foundation of a "natural" religion and a system of natural laws. Stoic philosophy could not help man to solve the metaphysical riddles of the universe. But it contained a greater and more important promise: the promise to restore man to his ethical dignity. This dignity, it asserted, cannot be lost; for it does not depend on a dogmatic creed or on any outward revelation. It rests exclusively on the moral will - on the worth that man attributes to himself. That was the great and, indeed, invaluable service which the theory of natural rights had to render to the modern world. Without this theory there seemed to be no escape from a complete moral anarchy." pg. 169-170)

- "the philosophic thinkers of the seventeenth century were not in need of a "moral theology." They were even convinced that the very concept of such a theology was, in a sense, a contradiction in terms. For they had accepted the Stoic principle of the "autarky" (αὐτάρκεια) of human reason. **Reason is autonomous and self-dependent. It is not in need of any external help; it could not even accept this help if it were offered. It has to find its own way and to believe in its own strength. This principle became the cornerstone of all the systems of natural right**." (pg. 172)

- "The doctrine of the state-contract be comes in the seventeenth century a self-evident axiom of political thought. In the history of our problem this fact marks a great and decisive step. For if we adopt this view, if we reduce the legal and social order to free individual acts, to a voluntary contractual submission of the governed, all mystery is gone. There is nothing less mysterious than a contract. A contract must be made in full awareness of its meaning and consequences; it presupposes the free consent of all the parties concerned. If we can trace the state to such an origin, it becomes a perfectly clear and understandable fact. This rational approach was by no means understood as a historical approach. Only a few thinkers were so naïve as to assume that the "origin" of the state, as explained in the theories of the social contract, gave us an insight into its beginnings. Obviously we cannot assign a definite moment of human history at which the state made its first appearance. But this lack of historical knowledge does not concern the theoreticians of the state-contract. Theirs is an analytical, not a historical, problem. They understand the term "origin" in a logical not in a chronological sense. What they are seeking for is not the beginning, but the "principle" of the state-its raison d'être." (pg. 172-173)
  - "**Hobbes's theory culminates in the paradoxical assertion that the legal bond between the ruler and the subjects once it has been tied is indissoluble. The pact of submission by which the individuals renounce all their rights and freedoms is the necessary presupposition, the first step, that leads to a social order.** But it is, in a sense, also the ultimate step. Henceforth the individuals no longer exist as independent beings. They have no will of their own. The social will has become incorporated with the ruler of the state. This will is unrestricted; there is no other power beside or above the absolute sovereign. Obviously this was a gratuitous assumption that could not be proved or justified by the general concept of the social contract. For when combined with the Stoic doctrine of natural rights this concept led to the very opposite result. It was clear that the individuals, when entering into an agreement with each other and with the ruler, could only act for themselves. They could not create an absolutely rigid and unchangeable order; they could not bind their posterity. And even from the point of view of the present generation it was not possible to abdicate, unconditionally and absolutely, all rights and to transfer them to the ruler. There is, at least, one right that cannot be ceded or abandoned: the right to personality. Arguing upon this principle the most influential writers on politics in the seventeenth century rejected the conclusions drawn by Hobbes. They charged the great logician with a contradiction in terms. If a man could give up his personality he would cease being a moral being. He would become a lifeless thing-and how could such a thing obligate itself--how could it make a promise or enter into a social contract? This fundamental right, the right to personality, includes in a sense all the others. To maintain and to develop his personality is a universal right. It is not subject to the freaks and fancies of single individuals and cannot, therefore, be transferred from one individual to another. The contract of rulership which is the legal basis of all civil power has, therefore, its inherent limits. There is no *pactum subjectionis*, no act of submission by which man can give up the state of a free agent and enslave himself. For by such an act of renunciation he would give up that very character which constitutes his nature and essence: he would lose his humanity." (pg. 174-175)

- Chapter 14 - The Philosophy of the Enlightenment and its Romantic Critics (pg. 176)
  - "**In the development of political thought the eighteenth century, the period of the Enlightenment, proved to be one of the most fertile ages. Never before had the philosophy of politics played such an important and decisive role**. It was no longer regarded as a special branch but was the very focus of all intellectual activities." (pg. 176)
    - "The seventeenth century had been a metaphysical century and created a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals. The period of the Enlightenment had lost its interest in these metaphysical speculations. Its whole energy was concentrated upon another point, not so much an energy of thought as of action. "Ideas" were no longer regarded as "abstract ideas." They were forged into weapons for the great political struggle. The question never was whether these weapons were new but whether they were efficient. And in most cases it turned out that the oldest weapons were the best and most powerful ones." (pg. 177)
  - "**There has perhaps never existed a more complete harmony between theory and practice, between thought and life, than in the eighteenth century**. All thoughts were immediately turned into actions; all actions were subordinated to general principles and judged according to theoretical standards. It was this feature that gave to the culture of the eighteenth century its strength and its inner unity. Literature and art, science and philosophy had a common center and coöperated with each other to the same end. For this reason the great political events of the age were hailed with such general enthusiasm" (pg. 179)
  - "These are the obvious reasons for the complete and rapid change of ideas that we meet in the first decades of the nineteenth century. But it is not enough to describe this reaction as merely political. It has other and deeper causes. **The German romanticists who began the fighting and were the first heralds in the combat against the philosophy of Enlightenment were not primarily interested in political problems. They lived much more in the world of "spirit" - poetry and art - than in the world of hard political facts**. Of course romanticism had not only its philosophy of nature, of art and history, but also its philosophy of politics. But in this field the romantic writers never developed a clear and coherent theory; nor were they consistent in their practical attitude." (pg. 180)
    - "**There are, however, two points that are of vital importance in the struggle between romanticism and Enlightenment. The first is the new interest in history; the second the new conception and valuation of myth.**" (pg. 180)
      - "There is, however, one fundamental difference between the conception of history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The romantics love the past for the past's sake. To them the past is not only a fact but also one of the highest ideals. This idealization and spiritualization of the past is one of the most distinctive characteristics of romantic thought. Everything becomes understandable, justifiable, legitimated as soon as we can trace it back to its origin. This frame of mind was entirely alien to the thinkers of the eighteenth century. If they looked back to the past they did so because they wanted to prepare a better future. The future of mankind, the rise of a new political and social order, was their great theme and real concern. For this purpose the study of history is necessary, but it is not an end in itself. History may teach us many things but it can only teach us what has been, not what ought to be. To accept its verdict as infallible and definitive would be a crime against the majesty of reason. If history meant a glorification of the past, a confirmation of the ancient régime, it was, to the minds of the "philosophers" of the "Great Encyclopedia," doomed from

its beginning. It could have no theoretical interest for them because it lacked a real ethical value. According to the principle of the primacy of practical reason both things were correlative and inseparable. The thinkers of the eighteenth century, who by their adversaries were so often accused of intellectualism, never studied history in order to satisfy a merely intellectual curiosity. They saw in it a guide to action, a compass that could lead them to a future and better state of human society. "We have admired our ancestors less," said one of the writers of the eighteenth century, "but we have loved our contemporaries better, and have expected more of our descendants." As Duclos said, our knowledge of history can be no more and no better than an "anticipated experience." **That is the real difference, the deep gulf, between the period of the Enlightenment and German romanticism.**" (pg. 181-182)

- ◇ "According to this metaphysical conception the value of myth is completely changed. **To all the thinkers of the Enlightenment myth had been a barbarous thing, a strange and uncouth mass of confused ideas and gross superstitions, a mere monstrosity.** Between myth and philosophy there could be no point of contact. Myth ends where philosophy begins - as darkness gives way to the rising sun. **This view undergoes a radical change as soon as we pass to the romantic philosophers. In the system of these philosophers myth becomes not only a subject of the highest intellectual interest but also a subject of awe and veneration**. **It is regarded as the mainspring of human culture. Art, history, and poetry originate in myth**. A philosophy which overlooks or neglects this origin is declared to be shallow and inadequate. It was one of the principal aims of Schelling's system to give myth its right and legitimate place in human civilization. In his works we find for the first time a philosophy of mythology side by side with his philosophy of nature, history, and art. Eventually all his interest seems to be concentrated upon this problem. Instead of being the opposite of philosophic thought myth has become its ally; and, in a sense, its consummation. All this may appear paradoxical; but it follows from the very principles of romantic thought. Schelling only expressed the common convictions of the whole younger generation in Germany. He became the philosophic spokesman of romantic poetry. The deep wish to go back to the sources of poetry accounts for the romantic interest in myth." (pg. 182-183)

- "That was a new step in the general history of ideas-a step that was pregnant with the most important consequences which proved to be even more momentous for the further development of political than for that of philosophic thought. In philosophy the influence of Schelling was counterbalanced and soon eclipsed by the appearance of the Hegelian system. His conception of the role of mythology remained only an episode. Nevertheless the way was paved that could lead later to the rehabilitation and glorification of myth that we find in modern politics." (pg. 183)
- "It would, however, be a mistake, and it would not do justice to the romantic spirit, to hold it responsible for this later development. In recent literature we often meet with the view that romanticism was the first and the most prolific source of the myth of the twentieth century. According to many writers it has produced the concept of the "totalitarian state," and has prepared all the later forms of an aggressive imperialism. But judging in this way we are likely to forget the principal and, indeed, the decisive feature. The "totalitarian" view of the romantic writers was, in its origin and meaning, a cultural not a political view. The universe they were longing for was a universe of human culture. They never meant to politicize but to "poeticize" the world. To pervade all spheres of human life - religion, history, even natural science - with the "poetic spirit" was declared by Friedrich Schlegel as the highest aim of the romantic movement. Like most of the romantic writers Friedrich Schlegel felt much more at home in the "divine world of science and art" than in the world of politics. It was this attitude that gave romantic nationalism its special tinge and character. Assuredly the romantic poets and philosophers were fervent patriots, and many of them were intransigent nationalists. But their nationalism was not of an imperialistic type. They were anxious to preserve not to conquer. They tried, with the utmost exertion of all their spiritual forces, to maintain the peculiarity of the German character but they never meant **to enforce and impose it upon other peoples.** This **was a necessary result of the historical origin of German nationalism. This nationalism had been created by Herder - and of all the thinkers and poets of the eighteenth century Herder possessed the keenest sense and the deepest understanding of individuality**. That individualism became one of the outstanding and most characteristic features of the romantic movement. The romanticists never could sacrifice the particular and specific forms of cultural life, poetry, art, religion, and history, to the "totalitarian" state. They had a deep respect for all the innumerable, subtle differences that characterize the life of individuals and nations. To feel and to enjoy these differences, to sympathize with all forms of national life, was to them the real scope and the greatest charm of historical knowledge. **The nationalism of the romantics was, therefore, no mere particularism. It was the very contrary. It was not only compatible with a real universalism but presupposed it. To Herder every nation was only an individual voice in a universal, all-embracing harmony**." (pg. 184-185)
  - □ "The early romanticists saw the greatest privilege of medieval culture in the fact that the Middle Ages were held together by a universal religious ideal. Here Christianity was still an undivided whole. Christian society was a mystic body, governed by God and represented in the two correlative orders of the Universal Church and the Universal Empire. The romantic writers were inspired by the wish to return to this golden age of mankind. In this regard they could not think of restricting their cultural and religious ideals to their own country. They strove not only for a unified Germany but also for a unified Europe. In his essay Christianity or Europe Novalis praised the beautiful and splendid days when one Christianity inhabited the continent of Europe, when one great interest connected the remotest provinces of this wide spiritual empire. The greatest of the romantic theologians, Friedrich Schleiermacher, went much farther. The universal religion that he developed and defended in his Reden über die Religion comprises all sorts of creed and worship. All the "heretics" of former times could be included in this religious ideal. The "atheist" Spinoza was called by Schleiermacher "the great and sainted Spinoza." For truly religious feeling, declared Schleiermacher, all dogmatic differences are irrelevant. Religion is love but it is not love for "this" and "that" or for a finite and special object, but love for the Universe, the Infinite. That explains further the character of romantic nationalism." (pg. 185)
    - ◆ "It is true that this poetical and esthetic conception was not equal to the task of solving the problems of political life. **When these problems became more and more serious and threatening, the theory developed by the first romantic writers could not hold its ground. In the age of the Napoleonic Wars the founders and pioneers of German romanticism began to doubt their own ideal of "poeticizing" political life.** They became convinced that, at least in this field, a more "realistic" attitude was imperative and indispensable. Many romantic poets were prepared to offer up their former ideals to the national cause. In poets like Heinrich von Kleist romantic love changed into a bitter and implacable hatred. Even A. W. von Schlegel felt similarly. "As long as our national independence, and even the continuance of our German name, is so seriously threatened," he wrote in 1806, "our poetry might perhaps have to yield entirely to eloquence." But only a few romanticists followed this counsel; even in their extreme nationalism they would not disavow or renounce their universal ideals of human culture." (pg. 186)

- Part 3 - The Myth of the Twentieth Century (pg. 187)
  - Chapter 15 - the Preparation: Carlyle (pg. 189)
    - "What Carlyle meant by "heroism" or "leadership" was by no means the same as what we find in our modern theories of fascism. According to Carlyle there are two criteria by which we can easily distinguish the true hero from the sham hero: his "insight" and his "sincerity." Carlyle could never think or speak of lies as necessary or legitimate weapons in the great political struggles. If a man, like Napoleon in his later period, begins to lie, he immediately ceases to be a hero." (pg. 216)
      - □ "There is still one other feature that distinguishes Carlyle's theory from the later types of hero worship. What he most admired in his

heroes was not only the sincerity of feeling but also clearness of thought. Great energy of action and great will-power always imply an intellectual element. The strength of will and character would remain powerless without an equal power of thought. The equipoise between these two elements is the distinctive mark of the true hero. He is the man who lives among things, not among the shows of things. While others walk in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, the hero is alone with his own soul and the reality of things. Carlyle spoke as a mystic but his mysticism was no mere irrationalism. All his heroes--the prophets, the priests, the poets-are at the same time described as deep and genuine thinkers. In Carlyle's description even Odin, a mythical god, appears as a 'thinker'." (pg. 217)

- Chapter 16 - From Hero Worship to Race Worship (pg. 224)
  - See text
- Chapter 17 - Hegel (pg. 248)
  - See text
- Chapter 18 - he Technique of the Modern Political Myths (pg. 277)
  - "Myth has always been described as the result of an unconscious activity and as a free product of imagination. But here we find myth made according to plan. **The new political myths do not grow up freely; they are not wild fruits of an exuberant imagination. They are artificial things fabricated by very skillful and cunning artisans. It has been reserved for the twentieth century, our own great technical age, to develop a new technique of myth**. Henceforth myths can be manufactured in the same sense and according to the same methods as any other modern weapon - as machine guns or airplanes. That is a new thing-and a thing of crucial importance. It has changed the whole form of our social life." (pg. 282)
  - "**We have learned that modern man, in spite of his restlessness, and perhaps precisely because of his restlessness, has not really surmounted the condition of savage life. When exposed to the same forces, he can easily be thrown back to a state of complete acquiescence. He no longer questions his environment; he accepts it as a matter of course**." (pg. 286)
    - "[H]ere are men, men of education and intelligence, honest and upright men who suddenly give up the highest human privilege. They have ceased to be free and personal agents. Performing the same prescribed rites they begin to feel, to think, and to speak in the same way. Their gestures are lively and violent; yet this is but an artificial, a sham life. In fact they are moved by an external force. **They act like marionettes in a puppet show - and they do not even know that the strings of this show and of man's whole individual and social life, are henceforward pulled by the political leaders**. For the understanding of our problem this is a point of crucial importance. Methods of compulsion and suppression have ever been used in political life. But in most cases these methods aimed at material results. Even the most fearful systems of despotism contented themselves with forcing upon men certain laws of action. They were not concerned with the feelings, judgments, and thoughts of men. It is true that in the great religious struggles the most violent efforts were made not only to rule the actions of men but also their consciousness. But these attempts were bound to fail; they only strengthened the feeling for religious liberty. **Now the modern political myths proceeded in quite a different manner.** They did not begin with demanding or prohibiting certain actions. **They undertook to change the men, in order to be able to regulate and control their deeds. The political myths acted in the same way as a serpent that tries to paralyze its victims before attacking them. Men fell victims to them without any serious resistance. They were vanquished and subdued before they had realized what actually happened**." (pg. 286)
      - "Our modern politicians know very well that great masses are much more easily moved by the force of imagination than by sheer physical force. And they have made ample use of this knowledge. The politician becomes a sort of public fortuneteller. **Prophecy is an essential element in the new technique of rulership.** The most improbable or even impossible promises are made; the millennium is predicted over and over again." (pg. 289)
  - "**It is beyond the power of philosophy to destroy the political myths. A myth is in a sense invulnerable. It is impervious to rational arguments; it cannot be refuted by syllogisms**. But philosophy can do us another important service. It can make us understand the adversary. In order to fight an enemy you must know him. That is one of the first principles of a sound strategy. To know him means not only to know his defects and weaknesses; it means to know his strength. All of us have been liable to underrate this strength. When we first heard of the political myths we found them so absurd and incongruous, so fantastic and ludicrous that we could hardly be prevailed upon to take them seriously. By now it has become clear to all of us that this was a great mistake. We should not commit the same error a second time. We should carefully study the origin, the structure, the methods, and the technique of the political myths. We should see the adversary face to face in order to know how to combat him." (pg. 296)
- Conclusion (pg. 297)
  - See text

d. Further Readings:
   - System of Transcendental Idealism, by F. Schelling https://dn721904.ca.archive.org/0/items/f-w-j-schelling-system-of-transcendental-idealism/f-w-j-schelling-system-of-transcendental-idealism.pdf
   - The Golden Bough, by J. Frazer