The Persistence of Myth as Symbolic Form

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CONTENTS

OLYMPIAN OR PATHOLOGIST? CASSIRER, GUNDOLF, AND THE HERO MYTH

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'Perhaps the most important and most alarming feature in this development of modern political thought is the appearance of a new power: the power of mythical thought', Cassirer wrote in *The Myth of the State*.[1] Today man 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'.[2] The assumption that the twentieth century produced a disintegration of cultural harmony to the detriment of rational thought left two possible positions for an intellectual: either one of a detached Olympian, as Cassirer's friends used to call him in his early years as a student at Marburg, when he could still contemplate the ideal notion of culture as a harmony of opposites; or, under the influence of Jacob Burckhardt, the philosopher could take the role of a pathologist of civilization. As the Nazi regime progressed, the latter role became almost unavoidable.

In the 1930s, Cassirer not only identified himself with the role of a cultural pathologist, establishing the line of cultural development towards the twentieth century (from the high point of German idealism) as declining. He also increasingly began to search for an active position of philosophy in the struggle for ideal culture. In this process, mythic thought played a crucial role as a continuously present paradigm in human thought. Cassirer diagnosed Nazism as an ideology which profited from a 'technique of political myths'. Because intellectual, not social or material forces were at the core of Cassirer's causality for the success of Nazi ideology, any aetiology of the problem consequently had to focus on the symptoms of the problem in the thought process itself. Cassirer's attention to elements of mythic thought in the writing of his own contemporaries was part of this critique.

It was common for critics of Nazism from the 1940s onwards to create direct connections between nineteenth and early twentieth-century hero myths and the cult of the *Führer* in National Socialist ideology.[3] For example, the art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001), speaking on the subject of 'Myth and Reality in German War-Time Broadcasts' (1969), addressed his audience with a critique of the contribution to hero-worship made by the literary scholar Friedrich Gundolf (1880–1931), citing Gundolf's phrase: 'The historian cannot be a good politician [. . .] but he can help stir the air in which visionary deeds may thrive and he can recruit the minds of men for coming

heroes. In this sense he summons the forces of history and their embodiments, the peoples and leaders.'[4] Replacing Gundolf's own phrase of 'stirring of the air' with the more familiar Old Testament notion of 'sowing the wind', Gombrich remarked sarcastically that the German-Jewish scholar who 'helped to "stir the air" would himself have reaped the whirlwind, had he not died in 1931'.[5] The seeds of Gundolf's mythic thought, he argued, subsequently flourished as part of Nazi ideology and its regime.

Compared to such critiques, Cassirer's problematization of mythic thought in the modern age was more subtle. In this context, his positive evaluation of Gundolf's work (of which we know from Cassirer's published references to Gundolf and their correspondence) seems particularly surprising. To understand Cassirer's ambiguous relationship to hero-worship, we need first to analyse what basis can be found in his understanding of mythic thought for isolating and quarantining mythic elements from modern intellectual writing, as implicitly intended by Gombrich. After a discussion of the cognitive role Cassirer attributed to history, and particularly history seen through the lens of individual characters, it will be possible to return in greater detail to Cassirer's attitudes to Friedrich Gundolf's work and reassess their mutual sympathies.

I: The Boundaries of Cassirer's Critique of Mythic Thought

1. The Foundations for a Critique of Mythic Thought

Cassirer's phenomenology of mythic thought began with two initial premises which discussed why he as a philosopher could not, at first sight, accept mythic thought as an object of study. Following Kant, 'the notion of a critique presupposes that the philosophical question addresses a fact which was not created by philosophy in its unique significance and features, but which it has come across as already existent, so as to analyse it according to its "conditions of possibility"' ['der Ausdruck der Kritik schließt seit Kant die Voraussetzung in sich, dass ein Faktum vorliegt, an das die philosophische Frage sich wendet — ein Faktum, das in seiner eigentümlichen Bedeutung und Geltungsart von der Philosophie nicht erschaffen, sondern vorgefunden wird, um sodann auf die "Bedingungen seiner Möglichkeit" untersucht zu werden'].[6] Mythic thought, by contrast to ethical life or art, did not evidently fulfil this condition. Not only was mythic thought not an obvious subject of investigation; from a strictly idealist perspective, it seemed to be something 'non-existent' ['ein Nichtseiendes'].[7] This was the reason why Kant never considered it an object of inquiry.

The second problem had to do with the history of the development of the human intellect. Cassirer argued that the original forms of all 'spiritual' culture have their roots in mythic thought, and all our notions of space and time,

numeric systems, legal thought, notions of community, economy, art, technology, are 'genetically related' to mythic thought.[8] If this proposition was to be accepted, however, then it was questionable why a philosopher should study mythic thought as a symbolic form in paribus with others, if in fact it had chronologically preceded (and even to an extent comprised the embryonic forms of) the others. Perhaps this should be left to anthropologists or historians.

Following this sceptical introduction, Cassirer proceeded to rule out both problems by designating boundaries within which these problems could be solved. Mythic thought was, in fact, an object of study, he argued, with particular reference to Schelling's work on this subject, because it was a system of thought and perception, which possessed a coherence of its own, and a certain way of shaping the world. [9] 'Philosophy', Cassirer wrote, 'that is the thinking contemplation of being, can never aim at or long for life as such, before and beyond its formation; from its point of view, life and form constitute a unity' ['Für die Philosophie, für die denkende Betrachtung des Seins, kann daher niemals das Leben selbst, vor und außerhalb aller Geformtheit, das Ziel und die Sehnsucht der Betrachtung bilden; sondern für sie bilden Leben und Form eine untrennbare Einheit'].[10] Myth, in short, was not a primitive life form, but a system of thought and a symbolic form, and could therefore be subject to a critique in the Kantian sense. Because of the impossibility for philosophy to attain knowledge without self-reflection, 'the critique of reason turns into a critique of culture' as the system in which philosophy itself is rooted.[11] Symbolic forms as *geistige Bildwelten* ('spiritual image-worlds'), of which mythic thought forms one group, are the only modes in which culture is accessible to the philosopher.[12] In Cassirer's reading, therefore, Kant's critique of reason widened into a critique of culture, and Hegel's phenomenology of spirit was narrowed down to a phenomenology of symbolic forms.

The second problem, whether it was legitimate to study myth in an a-historical manner despite the fact that it chronologically preceded later symbolic forms such as religion or science, seemed more difficult to circumvent. But Cassirer turned the apparent problem into its solution: the genetic theory of human culture and philosophy, which roots it in mythic thought, did not imply, for Cassirer, that the first stages of development, once they have been overcome, actually belonged exclusively to the past. Rather, that genetic connection tied myth forever with each of the symbolic forms. Kant's chief contribution here was 'not his negative warning that we cannot find the "thing in itself" but his positive implication that cognition has found firm foundations in the study of itself [*daß sie nunmehr ihren festen Grund in sich selber gefunden hat*]'.[13]

The study of myth was therefore a reflection of the human intellectual apparatus itself. The structure of Cassirer's work on mythic consciousness, then, can be seen as a replica, an Urmodel, of his entire philosophy of symbolic forms. Mythic thought had its own conceptual and categoric apparatus, its own notion of identity, and even its own dialectical system. It was both the most fundamental layer in all other thought, and it still coexisted simultaneously with the growth of scientific rationalism. Conversely, elements of mythic thought could always be discerned within each of the other symbolic forms. To give evidence of this, Cassirer drew both on historical, and on contemporary anthropological examples from indigenous societies, not always in order to give a teleological account of the growth of science and to promote a myth of the Enlightenment (an accusation levelled against him by the Russian philosopher Alexei Losev), but rather in order to position these elements of mythic thought within its own system of giving shape to the world.[14] For example, he argued that even linguistic analysis made it necessary to go back to totemistic imagery from the period when mythic thought was the dominant symbolic form.[15] Goethe's works and letters served Cassirer to exemplify instances now of scientific, now of mythic thought. Cassirer found evidence of mythic thought in Goethe's letter to Riemer of 23 June 1809, in Goethe's tendency to identify in the different phases of his life a 'shedding of an old skin', a Vita Nuova in Dante's sense (ECW 12, pp. 193–94).

For Cassirer, a philosophical analysis of mythic thought was inextricably tied to the double relationship between philosophy and history. Due to this relationship, two things could be ontological opposites even if they were historically related. Mythic thought was genetically related to philosophy. Nevertheless, as a way of conceiving the world, it was also opposed to philosophy. As John Michael Krois puts it, for Cassirer 'the antithesis between mythic and non-mythic ways of conceiving the world' was the most fundamental of the conflicts underlying culture as a whole.[16]

The purpose of historical study (which comprised the study of hero-worship, which so often is indistinguishable from hero-worship itself) was not just cognitive, but also therapeutic. As Cassirer put it, historical facts could not be just reconstructed but actually 'remembered'.[17] Writing history was a psychological process. This reflected the historical understanding of his former colleagues attached with Warburg, who had written in an introduction to the first bibliography published by the Warburg Institute (in a kind of mission statement):

> History [. . .] proceeds in crises, and the decisive events in history are those 'pauses for recollection', which are followed by phases of action. In these crises the creative power of *memory* has to prove its worth, by grasping and reviving old symbols it can give a call to reflection or action and cause a turnover of events. In the crisis of decision the remembered symbol has the effect of an idol

> or a warning, in the pauses of doubt it motivates or reins in. Hence for the historian of the symbol, 'memory' is the *central problem of a philosophy of history*: not only because memory itself is an organ of historical knowledge, but because — in its symbols — it creates the reservoir of powers which are being discharged historically in a given situation.[18]

In the 1930s, humanity certainly found itself at a point of crisis which required a new cognitive attitude and new uses of the historical past, which included the persistence of mythic thought. The philosopher and historian were, therefore, not just scholars of symbolic forms; they were also holders of symbols which could be discharged in historical situations — a double responsibility, which no doubt still resounded in Gombrich's words when he spoke in 1969 as director of the Warburg Institute.

2. *The Methods of Cassirer's Critique*

In his critique of mythic thought, Cassirer used at least three methods: a genealogical analysis of the relation of mythic thought to other symbolic thought, a functional and structural analysis of mythic thought, and an etymological analysis. The genealogy of the human intellect is one of the core elements of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. He used this method not for the purpose of a teleological justification of philosophy as a victory of scientific thought, but in the strictly Nietzschean understanding of genealogy as the only honest way to trace the emergence of a phenomenon in all its contingencies.[19] In Cassirer's work, genealogy most often took the shape of a historiographical overview, one could even say, a bibliography, of a problem (as in *Das Erkenntnisproblem* or *The Problem of Knowledge* [1922–1923]). Nietzsche's notorious dictum that 'only something which has no history can be defined' allows us to understand Cassirer's definition of philosophy a-historically as a way of conceiving the world which was opposed to mythic thought.[20] But at the same time, in his historical analysis, he reflected on its genetic debt to the analytical opposite of itself. An outright and clean 'exorcism' of mythic thought was therefore impossible, even if in an ideal definition the two conceptual worlds ought to have been entirely separate. In this sense, paradoxically, Gombrich, who wanted the intellectual sphere to be kept clear of myth, remained a true Kantian, whilst Cassirer, though sailing under Kantian flags, had secretly approached the shores of Nietzsche's methodological realm.

This ambiguous relationship between philosophy and history risked the problem of tautology, or an isomorphic structure between the subject of an investigation and the intellectual method of addressing it. As Cassirer's colleague Erwin Panofsky underlined in a comment on Cassirer's lecture, this was a fundamental problem of any intellectual discipline which wanted to

present its subject of investigation (such as style, as in Panofsky's example, or indeed mythic thought) as a given thing to be analysed, but was actually creating it prior to this seemingly external analysis. Panofsky remarked in that instance that, just like the notion of space for the philosopher, for example, the art historian's concept of style could not be wholly freed from an accusation of tautology.[21] A concept of style such as 'Gothic' was the result of a bargain between a priori perceptions and selective interpretation. In the same sense, the idea of a national character, or an individual hero, was also an outcome of such a bargain.

Cassirer avoided this problem by affirming the capability of the human intellect to emancipate itself from its own origins. But this emancipation could only occur through a reflection of its own history. When Cassirer agreed with a statement by José Ortega y Gasset that 'man has [. . .] no nature, what he has is [. . .] history', he seemed to find in history the empirical reality of the intellect which Kant had denied him in physical reality.[22] Aware of the narrow boundary within which any subject could be said to have been a 'given' by nature, or artificially created by a self-deceiving philosopher, Cassirer suggested that history conceived of as meta-history was the best cure for this problem. Seeing the different Platos: mystic, neo-Platonic, Christian, Kantian, etc., and the different Caesars, which people created for themselves, told more about the respective 'presents' than about the historical figure. Paraphrasing Comte, Cassirer argued that 'humanity is not to be explained by man, but man by humanity. The problem must be reformulated and re-examined; it must be put on a broader and sounder basis. Such a basis we have discovered in sociological and historical thought. "To know yourself", says Comte, "know history"'.[23] The historian — in Friedrich Schlegel's phrase, a 'backward-looking prophet' (*rückwärts gewandter Prophet*) — always interpreted from his position in the present, and therefore the 'process of interpretation never comes to a complete standstill', and 'as soon as we have reached a new center and a new line of vision in our own thoughts we must revise our judgments'.[24] The study of mythic thought was, then, not just a technically possible step for any philosopher, but his first duty.

History was for Cassirer what sociology was for his contemporary Karl Mannheim.[25] Both felt that no ontology could be successful that did not reflect on the conditions of its own development, prior to a reflection on the conditions of its subjects of analysis. If Mannheim had argued that philosophers needed to be questioned about the social conditions of their thought, Cassirer thought that they ought to reflect the historical roots of their discipline in mythic thought. Both, incidentally, were views which Hannah Arendt, in defence of Heidegger's position, presented as a fundamental threat to philosophy as such, since, in her view, philosophy derived its authority from its detachment from any conditional circumstances.[26] By contrast,

Cassirer saw what one could describe as a 'meta-ontology' undertaken by a philosopher as the only possible path towards further growth and emancipation of the intellect.

Mythic thought could further be analysed in greater detail by looking at each of its categories of understanding the world, from the magic of numbers to the belief in animism. Cassirer did not look at hero-worship as a narrative about great men, but analysed it at a deeper and functional level. Thus in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, the historic heroes as they are known from Plutarch's lives, for example, were hardly present. There are no references to Alexander or Hercules, Caesar is present with just one reference, and not as an 'actor', but as the 'author' of the account how the Romans followed the lunar calendar. Conversely, Plutarch as the narrator of heroic lives only interested Cassirer as a comparative source in a juxtaposition of Plutarch's concepts of a good character (εὐ΄νοια) and the notions of Vohu Manah ('good disposition', *gute Gesinnung*) and Asha Vashinta ('best honesty', *beste Redlichkeit*) in Iranian mythology.[27]

Instead, what attracted Cassirer was the mythic function underlying any identification of heroes amongst other human beings: the Greek notion of a demon, and the Italic notion of genius. The first appearance of the notion of a demonic force in archaic Greece, Cassirer tells us, was the idea of a demon, whose function Hermann Usener aptly described as that of 'a special god of the moment' (*Augenblicks- oder Sondergott*). Cassirer traced how these demons evolved from accidental gods into fateful ones:[28]

> At the same time, another process takes place, which internalises the previously external demons, turns the special gods of the moment into fateful creatures and shapes. The demon expresses not what accidentally happens to a human being, but what he is originally. He is given to him from his birth, so as to accompany him in his life and to guide his wishes and his deeds.[29]

Cassirer pursued this second stage of animist thought further, writing about Kant's understanding of genius. As he wrote in the *Essay on Man*, "'*Genius*,' says Kant in his Critique of Judgment, "is the innate mental disposition *(ingenium) through which* Nature gives the rule to Art." It is "a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learnt by rule. Hence *originality* must be its first property"'. But Cassirer adds: 'This form of originality is the prerogative and distinction of art; it cannot be extended to other fields of human activity.'[30]

In what became *The Myth of the State*, Cassirer pursued this development into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the third part of the book entitled 'The Myth of the Twentieth Century'. In this discussion he compared and contrasted Carlyle's hero-worship with the idea of the leader of a totalitarian state which emerged in the twentieth century. Defending Carlyle

against the most virulent critics who linked him straight away with Hitler, Cassirer showed to what extent Carlyle's idea of the hero was derived more from poetic sources with an ultimate ancestry in Greek animism, and referred to Carlyle's correspondence with Goethe who was equally interested in pantheism. His conclusion was that Carlyle provided some of the ideas for the dangerous twentieth-century cult of the leader, but by no means its foundations.

Cassirer developed a benign understanding of hero-worship. 'In the sharper formation of this basic understanding of the Italic concept of "genius", the genius, as his name tells us, turns out to be the actual "creator" of the human being, not his physical but his spiritual creator, the source and expression of his personal uniqueness', he wrote, 'he is now being attributed not only to the individual, but to the family and the house, the state, the people and every form of human community.' This etymological approach made it self-evident to Cassirer that genius as a spirit, *ingenium*, was also related to the verb 'to generate' or 'to beget' — *generare* — and hence the demon or genius, or the idea, generated the human being.[31]

In addition to these three approaches, towards the end of the 1930s Cassirer began to develop Goethe's notion of morphology into an intellectual method in its own right, which was to lay out the final separation (always emphasized by the neo-Kantians) between the logic of the humanities and the logic of the sciences. Only the study of forms could help the historian to avoid the trap of looking for empirical or causal problems in the humanities, and orient him towards the search for problems of meaning and structure. 'Questions of *origins* have ceased to be empirically possible and empirically significant. They have to be replaced by the question of *meaning* (structure/form)', he wrote.[32] Therefore both individual-orientated and idea-driven historical methods were, from his point of view, equally legitimate if both individuals and ideas were conceived of as forms, not as instances of a reality.

3. *Individuals in Cassirer's History of Philosophy*

Individuals made their appearances in Cassirer's work in different functions, which can be briefly outlined using six examples: Pico della Mirandola, Paracelsus, Renaissance allegories of Hercules and Prometheus, Nicholas of Cusa, post-1933 receptions of Goethe, and the idea of a character as an abstraction (which will provide the largest part of this section).

(a) Some individuals were exemplary figures in Cassirer's own value system, for example, Pico della Mirandola. Cassirer did not shy away from certain literary techniques of characterization, well known from all descriptions of heroes from Arrian to Carlyle. In Cassirer's characterization of Pico della Mirandola, Pico is presented as a path breaker for some of Cassirer's own

beliefs and a founder figure of rationalism and individualism.[33] Cassirer praised Pico's character: for example, his ability not to dismiss his intellectual opponents as 'heretics of the intellect', despite his aggressive argumentation (features that also marked Cassirer's own character). According to Cassirer, Pico had broken with scholastic logic in the sphere of historical thought, arguing that the different classes of human existence (his past, present, and future) had to be considered both synthetically and independently. 'The goods of history', Cassirer paraphrased Pico, 'are passed down in uninterrupted succession [. . .] But each historical moment has at once the right and the duty to appropriate them in independence.'[34] This idea, positively emphasized by Cassirer, is arguably related to the selective appropriation of heroes advocated by Gundolf. In a very similar vein, Benjamin had described the task of an historian as the awakening of a dead element of the past in a moment of 'danger'.[35]

(b) Other individuals were chosen by Cassirer as important nodal points in the development of a symbolic form; for example, Paracelsus, in the case of science. Paracelsus played a crucial role in the academic debates of the 1920s and 1930s as a landmark between different national or international intellectual histories. In Gundolf's view of the history of philosophy, Paracelsus was, in the first place, a German thinker who marked the beginning of a genealogy of German intellectual iconoclasts leading via Luther to Nietzsche.[36] As Carl Gustav Jung's 1929 lecture on Paracelsus confirms, the medic and alchemist was commonly invoked in nationalist academic discourses in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and in this context Gundolf adopted the 'national' appropriation of Paracelsus.[37]

Cassirer, by contrast, placed Paracelsus in the context of the Italian humanists and neo-Platonists, above all, Marsilio Ficino. He showed that Paracelsus was strongly indebted to Ficino.[38] Curiously, in contrast to Jung's first lecture on Paracelsus in Germany in 1929, his two lectures delivered in Switzerland in 1941 come rather close to Cassirer's view of Paracelsus.[39] But it is only in his later lectures that Jung acknowledged the Italian origins of some of Paracelsus' thoughts, especially Paracelsus' indebtedness to the Florentine neo-Platonists in discarding scholasticism. By 1941, he presented Paracelsus in a modernized fashion, as a universal proto-psychoanalyst.[40] These 'emphases' placed on the interpretation of historical figures were all tropes borrowed from the characterization of heroes: not just every age, but each interpreter, appropriated his historical heroes in the way that suited his needs. In this sense Cassirer certainly focused on such individuals for the purposes of positioning himself in an academic debate.

(c) According to Cassirer, in history heroes could also play the role of allegories expressing something beyond their own 'biographies'. He imported Warburg's notion of 'pathos formulae' to intellectual history, reinterpreting

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(d) There were some individuals who could have been turned into intellectual heroes of Pico's kind, but who had been prevented from such a path by individual pragmatic choices. One such was Nicholas of Cusa. To make this point in his description of the contribution made by Nicholas of Cusa to scientific thought, Cassirer surprisingly even drew a distinction between philosophy and life:

> In the great conflict between the religious and the philosophical concept of truth, between belief and knowledge, religion and secular education, Nicholas of Cusa's system provided an equilibrium. [. . .] But with his religious optimism [. . .] Nicholas had underestimated the power of his opponents. It is not so much Nicholas of Cusa's philosophy where this tragic mistake becomes evident, but in his life, in his activities in politics and the Church.[43]

Pressed by circumstances, Cassirer explained, Nicholas of Cusa had entered the services of the papal party and devoted his life to its support. 'In his own life we can recognize how the opposing forces which he sought to intertwine and combine to a systematic unity and harmony in his *thought* continued to strive apart in his life, in the immediate reality in which he was standing', Cassirer wrote.[44] Cassirer, as an historian of philosophy, acknowledged a distinction between an immediate reality and the reality of a written work, and emphasized the consequences of certain choices made by individuals in this real life onto the development of philosophy.

(e) Then again, there were individuals whose own life and work seem 'impeccable' for a ticket to the pantheon of heroes, but whose later reception in history did not allow scholars to continue treating them as heroes. Tragically for Cassirer and other Germans, by the end of the 1930s this list also included Goethe. Cassirer at first rejected the deconstruction of Goethe that Thomas Mann attempted in the early 1940s with Lotte in Weimar. In this work, Mann showed a 'petit bourgeois, provincial' Goethe, as Cassirer put it,

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(e) Then again, there were individuals whose own life and work seem 'impeccable' for a ticket to the pantheon of heroes, but whose later reception in history did not allow scholars to continue treating them as heroes. Tragically for Cassirer and other Germans, by the end of the 1930s this list also included Goethe. Cassirer at first rejected the deconstruction of Goethe that Thomas Mann attempted in the early 1940s with Lotte in Weimar. In this work, Mann showed a 'petit bourgeois, provincial' Goethe, as Cassirer put it,

and also emphasized his old age. This book, which at first remained 'alien to Cassirer', was most probably triggered by the shock of the abrupt demise of German culture in his time.[45] It is all the more striking to see how Cassirer later implicitly stated the need to distance himself from hero-worship of any sort, even if it was worship of Goethe, by admitting that perhaps Thomas Mann's attempt at a deconstruction of his hero was 'right'. 'Thomas Mann did not show us Goethe the "Olympian". His Goethe is not just human, he is all-too-human.'[46] If during the Weimar Republic, holding up the image of Goethe could be of benefit for reforming German society, after the abuse of Goethe in Nazi ideology, the careful distancing from any kind of hero-worship seemed more pertinent.

(f) On the most abstract level of the six discussed here, the characterization of individuals lent Cassirer a method of characterizing movements and epochs, such as 'humanism'. Cassirer described the crisis of modernity as a condition caused by an imbalance of symbolic forms: the symbolic form of technology, together with politics, overpowered man's cultural activities to the detriment of the whole character of human existence. If the Renaissance was the origin of modernity, and modernity at its origin had proved to be Janus-faced, then the study of the Renaissance would exemplify to human culture the fundamental dialectic of its own foundations (between mythic and non-mythic thought). By understanding the character of the Renaissance, modern man could understand himself. Therefore the first volume of the *Problem of Knowledge* begins with the chapter on 'the Renaissance of the problem of knowledge': the problem of knowledge could not be addressed by the philosopher without studying what could be called its own 'medical history'.[47]

To explain how deeply this idea of a historical period as a character was embedded in interwar German debates, it is worth drawing at some greater length on the work undertaken by Cassirer's own colleagues working at the Warburg Library, and other contemporaries. Cassirer agreed with Ludwig Klages — whom he usually criticized — that the application of psychic attributes to other realms was the result of the inability to 'to characterize forms of motion and spatial forms' otherwise. It was a limitation of language and experience that 'forms and movements have been *experienced* as psychic phenomena before they are judged by the understanding from the standpoint of objectivity, and because language can express objective concepts only through the mediation of the experience of impressions'.[48] Art historian Erwin Panofsky similarly argued that it was legitimate to characterize certain periods by way of a 'physiognomy', that is, by treating this period like an individual organism: its facial (i.e., stylistic) features, its actions and behaviour, as well as determine its birth and death. Cassirer argued that this method should be understood neither as an

attempt to find an analogy in the external world to the world of human emotions or experience, nor as a way to understand them emphatically. Rather, the process of cognition of the world ought to be understood as 'an externalization by which the original expressive characters gradually become objective characteristics and determinations and attributes of things'.[49]

Both Cassirer and the other Warburg scholars shared an interest in clinical psychology which included the sphere of culture. Cassirer's anthropology (the foundations of which were laid in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*) relied on research of human pathology and psychology. In this respect, he followed the methodology of the philologist and anthropologist Hermann Usener, who applied findings in the sciences to the humanities.[50] Just as Cassirer gave characteristics applied to individuals to whole periods of culture, or culture as a whole, his colleagues Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl began their study of Dürer's *Melencolia* with a reference to the modern medical condition of melancholy and depression in medical journals.[51]

Panofsky and Saxl focused merely on one problem of modern man: the question of melancholy. Melancholy, frenzy and depression featured prominently in early twentieth-century critiques of modernity, ranging from Expressionist poetry to Adorno and the sociologist Arnold Gehlen.[52] In this framework, the approach of *Saturn and Melancholy* seems to have found its way into Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Saxl and Panofsky mapped their concept of melancholy on the various meanings that the terms experienced: between a modern notion of a depressed state of anxiety and the idea of the 'four humours' as developed in antiquity and in the Renaissance. In their work, melancholy as a 'type of character trait' which constituted the 'system of the "four humours"', was turned into the central subject (or character) of a historical study. In the case of *Saturn and Melancholy*, the characterization was derived from a concrete historical individual. Dedicated to and written under the 'patronage' of Aby Warburg, it paid tribute to his own melancholy character.

Its findings were flattering: they established melancholy as the concept most closely associated with genius, which the Renaissance thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino had rediscovered in Plato, just as interwar German scholars were now rediscovering it in their study of the Renaissance. Warburg showed the first clear signs of a psychological illness in 1918 and spent the rest of his life until his death (in 1929) in therapies and clinics. As Warburg himself argued, memory (and by this he meant 'both that of a collective personality and the individual') could 'protect individuals from irrational fears by offering mythological or rational explanations'. In this process, 'the monstra of the imagination' could turn into 'the decisive

leaders into the future' ['zu zukunfstbestimmenden Lebensführern werden']. Warburg described the process of uncovering the continuing importance of the traditions of antiquity and paganism in modern life as 'the process of undemonizing the phobically imprinted stores of impressions' ['der Entdämonisierungsprozess der phobisch geprägten Eindruckserbmasse'].[53] 'Sometimes it appears to me', Aby Warburg wrote in his diary on 3 April 1929, 'as if I, the psycho-historian, were trying to deduct the schizophrenia of the West from the imagery of autobiographical references.'[54]

This tendency to extrapolate elements of individualist history to larger questions was set, among others, by the German historian Karl Lamprecht, whose lectures both Warburg and Cassirer had attended in Bonn in the 1890s.[55] Cassirer made explicit in his *Essay on Man* that he did not accept Lamprecht's pretensions to be able to predict the course of history. As far as the past was concerned, however, Cassirer agreed both with Lamprecht's method, 'which convinces us that the world of history is a symbolic universe, not a physical universe', and with his philosophical understanding. History, Cassirer paraphrased Lamprecht, 'must cease being a study of individuals; it must free itself from all sorts of hero-worship', for 'its main problem has to do with social-psychic, as compared and contrasted with individual-psychic factors'.[56] What Cassirer took on board from Lamprecht's theory was the 'relatedness of the single perceptive phenomenon, given here and now, to a characteristic total meaning'.[57] As we have seen, however, in his work, Cassirer sought to combine many different approaches to giving shape to the past, and one of these was focusing on individuals.

Even if Cassirer drew an analytical distinction between mythic and non-mythic thought, he found it implausible to isolate mythic elements from an intellectual context. In order to study mythic thought, it was crucial for the philosopher not to erase, but to become aware of, elements of mythic thought which persisted in modern rationalism. This was on the level on cognition. In addition, on the level of the composition of a text, seeing history in the shape of individuals was also a narrative prerequisite, which permitted turning the seemingly chaotic 'rubbish' into a 'living plant'.[58] On this level, it is understandable why Cassirer was hesitant in accusing fellow academics of falling prey to mythic thought, such as hero-worship.

4. *Cassirer as an 'Exorcist' of Mythic Thought*

But Cassirer was not cautious about all contemporary intellectuals. In speaking of the dangers of mythic thought in his contemporary intellectual world, Cassirer was most critical of all ideas which expressed a desire to place human beings in a cosmic order in which individual fate was taken out of man's

hands. For example, he singled out the vitalist philosopher Ludwig Klages, who had been close to the George Circle in its early days, for his desire to place the individual in a large cosmic context beyond his control (in Klages' book, *Vom kosmogonischen Eros*).[59] These were ideas which limited the individual range of human thought and action. Similarly, the fatalism in Oswald Spengler's concept of culture attracted Cassirer's criticism. The inadequate assessment of technology, as a mystical force beyond human control, also attracted Cassirer's critique, as did, in his later works, Hegel's subjection of the individual to the 'relentless progress of the World Spirit'.[60]

The hero myth seemed to have a far less important role in his problematization of modern myth, probably for the reason that Cassirer related it more to the progressive intellectual history of individualist principles than to the darker forces of totalitarian states. Nevertheless, Cassirer expressed some criticism of the programmatic attempts to write a new history as a 'mythology' of great men, as they were presented in the historical school of the George circle. One of its most famous examples was the book written by the historian Ernst Bertram which had an appropriate title — *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*. 'The past wants to be turned into a representation [*Bild*], life into legend, all reality into myth', Bertram wrote, but Cassirer radically opposed this view. Cassirer wrote dismissively that 'some attempts have been made recently' which were ready to give up the 'concept of historical truth — attempts that want to hand history over to myth (Bertram, Nietzsche). But a true historian will always reject these abstruse aberrations — what he wants is cognition, academic standards [*Wissenschaft*]'.[61] In the *Myth of the State*, Cassirer's own attempt to explain the phenomenon of Nazi ideology, Cassirer's critique focused on another book of the George school, Ernst Kantorowicz' soon-to-be-famous biography of the thirteenth-century king, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen.[62] Here Cassirer remarked that, whilst this book extolled the image of Frederick II as a modern leader, Frederick was 'by no means modern in his thoughts', but rather spoke 'as a mystic', and then proceeded to cite the words of his biographer, who in his own turn, and in the spirit of the George circle, used mystical language to describe his protagonist.[63]

At the same time, finding what he called 'heretics of the intellect' by the criterion of their attachment to mythic thought was a delicate matter for Cassirer. Thus in the second part of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, when discussing popular psychology (*Völkerpsychologie*) as developed by psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, whose lectures he had heard as a student at Leipzig, Cassirer never conceded that, in looking for a psychology of peoples, Wundt himself had given in to the mythic belief in a popular identity.[64] Instead, he used Wundt exclusively as a secondary, never as a primary source, discussing the history of the belief in 'demons' and other mythic forces attributed to social collectives.

Towards the late 1930s, Cassirer's careful position began to change as he concerned himself specifically with the individual responsibility of intellectuals in keeping and saving human civilization. He spoke of individual responsibility as 'a rubber ball which has lost its elasticity' in modern times.[65] Cassirer praised outstanding individuals, most notably Albert Schweitzer, for having faced the crisis more appropriately than detached Olympians like himself.[66] In his essay on Albert Schweitzer, Cassirer underlined the importance of Schweitzer's personality in realizing and then overcoming the lack of moral conviction in contemporary philosophy, one, he seemed to imply, that we all ought to emulate.

Cassirer's interest in psychopathology made him follow cultural pessimists like Burckhardt, or, in his own day, Schweitzer, in attributing to his own age a kind of sickness that had to be cured: an imbalance of symbolic forms. He longed for an ethics of intellectual life which was to restore this imbalance, and redress the progression of chauvinism in German thought. If the historical dimension was originally not dominant in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, in the *Essay on Man* he emphasized and reinterpreted his own synchronic analysis of symbolic forms as a diachronic philosophy of history in decline.[67] In fact, these strands had always been present in Cassirer's thought, however, only now they were being emphasized more strongly. In 1918, Cassirer admired his intellectual idol Goethe for finding the appropriate balance between action and contemplation in his incomplete *Festspiel*, entitled *Pandora*. Faced with the choice between the man of action, Prometheus, and the man of melancholy and passive contemplation, Epimetheus, Cassirer opted for the figure of Pandora — reinterpreted not as a bringer of care, but a bringer of reflective action. These are all the more reason, it seems, to question why Cassirer did not criticize Gundolf together with other thinkers of the George Circle.

Even if mythic thought was related to philosophy, its reflection of itself ought to permit philosophy to emancipate itself from mythic thought.

II: Cassirer and Gundolf

1. Cassirer and Gundolf: The 'Encounter in the Middle of the Path'

'Reading your work, I often had the impression that although our points of departure are different and we are perhaps aiming at entirely different ends, we encounter each other in the middle of the path', Cassirer wrote to Gundolf, having read his soon-to-be-classic biography of Goethe of 1916.[68] For somebody not acquainted with Cassirer's style and with accounts of his friendly personality, this sentence might seem somewhat sarcastic. In the midst of the First World War, Cassirer had published his *Freiheit und Form* (*Freedom and Form*), which linked the history of German idealism inextricably

with French and English thought, and other works arguing that Friedrich Schiller had received the torch of the progressive ideas in Renaissance humanism from Shaftesbury. At that time, Gundolf, together with the rest of the George Circle, engaged in militant expositions of the primacy of German culture in the world, tracing German spirit even in Shakespeare. It is hard to think how much further apart both their points of departure and estimated points of arrival could have been.

And yet, Cassirer also praised not just Gundolf's *Goethe*, but even his book on *Shakespeare and the German Spirit* [*Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist*].[69] Perhaps more surprisingly, Gundolf responded equally positively to Cassirer's treatment of Goethe in the fourth chapter of *Freedom and Form*, not just because of the 'feeling of redemption by its high level of accomplishment' ['abgesehen von dem erlösend hohen Niveau'], but also because he saw therein a confirmation of some of his own findings.[70] His own work, Gundolf admitted straight away, aimed at showing 'the eternal ideas as temporal, and German phenomena' ['die ewigen Ideen als zeitliche, zumal deutsche, Erscheinungen zu fassen']. Indeed, he accepted that perhaps he was driven in his work 'by other motives and other means' than Cassirer, 'but perhaps inspired by the same imperative and maturity of our historic moment'. 'I meet you in the middle of the path', Gundolf echoed Cassirer, surprised how a philosopher could agree with a poet and literary critic in questions of method and interpretation.[71]

In the ensuing correspondence, which continued until Gundolf's death in 1931, both found most points of agreement in their assessment of Goethe. At first Gundolf had argued that Goethe's *Pandora* was intended to be an incomplete and not altogether coherent work, because it was a work of art, not a philosophical tract. Cassirer saw in it one of Goethe's philosophically most coherent works, and distanced himself from Gundolf's view.[72] Responding to Cassirer's essay in a letter, Gundolf agreed that Goethe could be considered both as a philosopher and as poet, with different aesthetic criteria arising from both persons. 'As a structure the Pandora is a layering of different moods of the soul, as a thought it is a coherent edifice' ['Als Gebild ist die Pandora eine Schichtung verschiedener Seelenlagen, als Gedanke ein einheitlicher Bau'], Gundolf concluded in agreement with Cassirer.[73]

Gundolf wrote to Cassirer that he appreciated the way he avoided a fixed causality of the primacy of ideas or persons. 'Whilst the Hegelians extract the dialectic of the spirit out of the "characters" and turn art into a masked philosophy [. . .] you are concerned with how ideas were embedded in the irreplacable historical moment' ['Während die Hegelianer aus den "Gestalten" sich die Dialektik des Geistes herausschälten und aus der Kunst eine maskirte Philosophie machten {. . .}, gehen Sie der Einbettung der Ideen in den unersetzlichen geschichtlichen Augenblick nach'].[74] The 'encounter in

the middle of the path' was a constant negotiation about the primacy of poetry over philosophy or ideas over persons. Cassirer and Gundolf saw their mutual appreciation not just as a personal sympathy, but discovered in it a possibility for philosophy and literary study to approach each other.[75]

The agreements were strongest when Goethe was the subject of conversation, for, unlike other thinkers, Cassirer and Gundolf both saw in Goethe not only a poet and genius, but also a kind of source of infinite wisdom for all ages. Like Cassirer, Gundolf was fascinated by animism in its different manifestations, including polytheism in archaic Greece, and both owed that to Goethe's alleged polytheism. In his book on Hölderlin, Gundolf wrote that heroes and great poets were marked by 'the presence of a demon', so such poets as Hölderlin and Goethe could distinguish, and write about, gods and other great men so truthfully because they themselves shared the quality which made them great.[76]

Cassirer was attracted by the way in which Goethe captured traits of 'himself' and 'his own attitude to the world' in Caesar, Socrates, and Mohammed, 'in the character and the destiny of these great men':

> What attracts Goethe again and again is the relationship between the hero and genius with the world: the effect he has on it and what he receives from it in return. Again and again he is pushed back in these considerations to the same tragic fundamental problem. The heroic power of the will is stalled, the purest ideal intention is crossed and thwarted, as soon as they try to interfere with the events in the world. It is futile for the individual to attempt drawing these events up to himself; if he is to rule their course, he has to descend to their level. And this first step already constitutes a descent from his original mission.
>
> [Was Goethe immer wieder anzieht, das ist das Verhältnis des Heroen und des Genius zur Welt: die Art, wie er auf sie wirkt, und die Rückwirkung, die er von ihr empfängt. Immer wieder sieht er sich in dieser Betrachtung auf das gleiche tragische Grundproblem zurückgewiesen. Die heroische Kraft des Willens wird gehemmt, die reinste ideelle Absicht wird durchkreuzt und vereitelt, sobald sie in das Weltgeschehen einzugreifen versuchen. Vergeblich sucht der einzelne dieses Geschehen zu sich selbst emporzuheben; er muß, wenn er es beherrschen will, zu ihm hinabsteigen. Und dieser erste Schritt bedeutet schon den Abfall von seiner eigentlichen Mission.][77]

If hero-worship was the point of encounter in the middle of the path, it also marked a parting of the ways.

Cassirer was willing to grant Gundolf the Carlylean category of heroes as intellectual leaders and poets, which Goethe was.[78] But when Gundolf called for 'heroes' or 'geniuses' on every level, and particularly on the political one, Cassirer could not follow. For Cassirer, following Kant's Third Critique, the concept of genius was reserved exclusively to art, and he thought that any

attempt of the genius to mesh with political affairs would degrade him or her. Moreover, he did not want to create a cult of genius. In *Kants Leben und Lehre* (*Kant's Life and Thought*), for example, Cassirer argued that 'the problems of Kant's philosophy cannot be discussed merely in the framework of his personality. In them we encounter [. . .] an independent ideal content which, separated from all temporal and subjective-personal constraints, has its own objective value'.[79] Even as a biographer, Cassirer considered the scarcity of what is known about Kant's private life not as an inhibition, but as a liberation for a better understanding of his work.

For Cassirer, the boundary between mythic thought and philosophy could be drawn on the basis of the question whether a thinker believed that the individual chose his demon to become a hero or genius, or whether, in a mystic constellation, the demon chose the individual. If, in mythic thought (Cassirer argued in his chapter on the self in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*), each man is chosen by his demon, so Plato, in Book 10 of his *Republic*, used this paradigm 'in order to create a new consequence which is opposed to the mythical way of thinking and feeling. "The demon will not choose you", Lachesis is telling the souls, "but you will choose the demons [. . .]". The one who chooses is to blame, God is blameless'.[80]

In some passages, it seems that Gundolf would agree with Cassirer's non-mythic position. He argued that 'the real human being is always before the idea: ideas are the means and consequences, not the causes'.[81] However, he really came from a different starting-point and headed for a different end. For this primacy of the personality meant that he was not interested in anything beyond personality and that he was not interested in those individuals whose personality did not appeal to him. 'This might be the reasons why we agree about Goethe but differ as far a Kant is concerned', Gundolf wrote to Cassirer. 'For ideas do not capture me if I am not in human terms attracted to their holder, be this holder an individual or a people. This is a limitation I have to bear with.'[82]

Gundolf saw universal significance in those individuals whom he considered to be geniuses or heroes, and believed in their demonic calling. In his *Geistesgeschichte*, a manuscript on the philosophy of history, Gundolf wrote that 'ideas as such do not exist, at least not for our human perception, there are only human ideas [. . .] socialism for example is merely the shadow of Karl Marx: however, only those persons are creative [*schöpferisch*] whose thought contains the condensed richness of a popular spirit, just as the seed contains the richness of the tree and the forest'. Heroes and leaders were 'neither the consequences nor the users of general circumstances, as the milieu-theoreticians would have it, nor do they make history as the Carlylean Romantic hero-worship presents it'. Rather, as Hegel put it, the private ends

of great men both sum up and express the will of the World Spirit. Burckhardt called them the 'coincidence of the special and the universal', which not only resume, but also 'pre-assume' whole peoples, cultures, ages. 'In short, they are the bodies of history [*Leiber der Geschichte*].'[83]

At this point Cassirer's path would have drawn far away. In *The Myth of the State*, Cassirer evaluated Hegel's contribution to totalitarian thought, focusing on precisely the aspect which Gundolf accepted, that great men were imbued with a special authority because of their unique representative character of the World Spirit. In Hegel's original phrase, 'all states had been founded by the noble force of great men, not physical power, for many are stronger than one. [...] This is the advantage of great men, to know and to speak the absolute Will. Everyone gathers around them, he is their God'.[84] Unlike the emergence of the legal sphere, which requires *Anerkennung* (i.e., an intersubjective conflict), the state is founded by charismatic leader figures alone. Only in their singular activity can the 'absolute will' of spirit find its expression.[85]

The difference between Gundolf's and Cassirer's understanding of heroes was that Gundolf actually believed in heroes as myths. Myth was 'word and aspect of a people and of God, not the playful show of some inwardness, as creative as it may be' ['Mythos ist Wort und Schau von Volk und Gott, von wirklichem Geschehen, nicht das Bilderspiel einer wenn auch noch so fruchtbaren Innerlichkeit'].[86] Cassirer, by contrast, 'used' heroes as a way of conveying meaning. This is why Cassirer did not seek to criticize monumental history as a genre, because it could clarify aspects of the historical past which other methods would not. 'The political historians usually assumed that they ought to reject "typological" and cultural history due to their conventional "hero-worship"', Cassirer wrote, whilst cultural and social historians, by contrast, 'sought to limit the rights of "individualist" historiography.'[87] In his view, both failed to recognize that such phenomena as, for example, Puritanism, could be explained with equal value as an intellectual idea, as a mass phenomenon, and an individual trait. It is not the 'object' of investigation that determines whether a historian is an individualist or a collectivist. Once Cassirer's proposition was acknowledged — that the prime aim of history was to find the meaning, not the cause of the past — the conflict of methods would cease to be political.

2. *Gundolf as a Hero-Worshipper*

Nevertheless, Gombrich did not take out of thin air his accusation that Gundolf's hero-worship was proto-ideological. Cassirer never reflected on the fact that, as the closest member of the circle around the poet Stefan George, Gundolf had also shaped what can be called the 'George school'

of historical writing, which consciously focused on great men of history, including George himself, with a political agenda in mind.[88] Even after George had broken off contact with Gundolf due to Gundolf's marriage in 1926, Gundolf continued praising the poet in publications.[89] 'It is', he wrote —

> the duty of every living movement, to hold their heroes alive in the present, to transform them into their own being and to turn the radiance which they receive from them into a new figure [*Gebild*]. [. . .] In so doing it should not preserve what their idols [*Vorbilder*] were and did, nor take them in the way they understood themselves: no, our task is not the cult of relics, nor do we want to resurrect the past or serve authorities. The great ones are great by virtue of their never-ebbing newness, not their antiquity, by virtue of the fact that they still *persist* after a thousand years, not that they *existed* a thousand years ago.[90]

And his books treated of some of the 'great men' of history — Shakespeare, Caesar, Paracelsus, Goethe.[91] Although he was against a 'cult of the unique human being for the sake of his uniqueness', for Gundolf, history was an agonistic process of 'interaction between creative and receptive human beings'.[92] Those creative outstanding historical figures ought to be remembered, as their image would benefit any present society.

The George Circle was an exemplary case of such a movement. Marianne Weber judged its proneness to mystification and myth as follows: 'The George circle rejects ethical autonomy as an educational ideal and refused to recognize the value of the individual soul. Subordination to the authority of the hero, and for woman to be subordinate to man: that is their "faith".'[93] When, in 1928, George's sixtieth birthday was celebrated in the German press, some panegyrics spoke of the 'proud phalanx of intellectual historians which he sent out into the world', and listed 'Gundolf, who gave us Goethe, Bertram, who gave us Nietzsche, Vallentin, who taught us how to see Napoleon afresh, Friedemann, Hildebrandt, Singer, Karl Reinhardt, Salin, who founded a new way of seeing Plato, then Kantorowicz ("Frederick the Second"), and Wolfram von den Steinen (*Helden und Heilige*)'.[94] Gundolf bemoaned the fact that the present age lacked a clear idea of a hero, who would be able to grasp the modern chaos of 'factories, presses, banks, and traditions' and to form it into attractive cultural material — 'regardless of whether he will be a centralizing figure like Caesar or a universal emancipator like Goethe [. . .] as soon as such a hero came, the people would want nothing but to become his instruments'.[95]

Needless to say, even in Gundolf's choice of vocabulary Gombrich could recognize a parallel with the National Socialist movement, which kept alive its heroes (and even some of Gundolf's) in such works as Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (*Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*).[96]

(Incidentally, in his student days no other than Joseph Goebbels had approached Gundolf, with no success, asking him to supervise his doctoral dissertation, an incident which Gombrich recollected inadequately — assuming that Goebbels *was* one of Gundolf's PhD students — which at least gives evidence of the fact that his thought seemed attractive to future Nazis.[97] At the same time, given the cult which had developed around Gundolf at the time, his attraction was probably almost universal.)

Gundolf's anti-democratic and elitist values permeated his historical method. Yet his political vision did not point in the direction of National Socialism. He was George's prophet, yet he was critical in the 1920s of those prophets (such as Friedrich Wolters) whose worship of George would later lead them to Nazism.[98] He also wrote that 'merely nationally minded men cannot create culture'.[99] Gundolf connected his call for a hero with a vision of cultural and political progress. Similar to Carlyle's, Gundolf's heroes were divided in three rubrics: poets, warriors or politicians, and philosophers.[100] Even the advent of the hero was not a goal in itself, but served, rather in a Nietzschean way, the creation of new outstanding culture. Drawing a distinction between 'real' myths and hollow ideology and self-worship that he described as 'the egoistic romping of private dreams' ['das selbstige Tummeln privater Träume'], warned his readers of false heroes, megalomaniacs who would deceive humanity by presenting themselves as the true saviours.[101] To that extent, Gundolf cannot be positioned as a predecessor of Nazism.

Cassirer's outright rejection of the two main historians of George's circle makes it at first rather difficult to assess his positive reception of Gundolf. After all, Gundolf himself had not only praised Bertram's work but even provided its title, *Versuch einer Mythologie*.[102] He even compared Bertram's book with his own 'classic' Goethe biography. Both books were intended to represent George's historical school. Its aim was not just the description of a myth, but the rekindling of historical heroes prepared for modern times, and the fashioning and design of heroes for a new age (such as George himself).

Apart from the special case of Goethe and the quest for genius, Cassirer's sympathies for Gundolf are best explained if his highly selective appreciation of his work is considered. Sensitive to the thin boundary between a metamythology and an intellectual's endorsement of mythic thought, in his latest reference to Gundolf's work Cassirer praised only one book by Gundolf, his *Caesar: A History of His Fame* (*Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms*).[103] As Cassirer remarked, this was a book 'not about Caesar but about the history of Caesar's fame and the varying interpretations of his character and political mission from antiquity down to our own time'. Rather than contributing to the myth of Caesar, this book was a document of the 'continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation'. Cassirer agreed with Kant's conviction,

who, speaking of Plato, said that posterity could understand a past thinker and his intentions 'better than he has understood himself'. To this, Cassirer added, that 'what holds for the interpretation of a great thinker and his philosophical works holds also for judgments concerning a great political character', such as Caesar.[104]

Indeed, as we can see from Gundolf's archive of newspaper cuttings relating to his book on Caesar, it does not give evidence of Gundolf's hero-worship.[105] Gundolf collected 'instances' of Caesar's survival in the modern world (to use Warburgian terms), his name used as a brand for a Swiss company, comparisons of Caesar's nose with the noses of other figures, together with announcements of Mussolini's play 'Caesar' to be performed in London, and caricatures from the German press comparing Mussolini to Caesar.[106] The collection itself has the air of detached irony concerning Caesar, or the references to Caesar in contemporary press. In fact, in many ways this approach assimilated those parts of Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas where he listed modern photographs together with stamps and newspaper clippings. In this sense, Gundolf's book *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* and its archive stand out amongst his other books on heroes. This book is the only one of his series of panegyrics of great men, in which a myth is not perpetuated, but rather analysed critically. It is a meta-mythology, not a mythology like his other books. If the other books belong to the genre of monumental history, then the Caesar book is definitely an instance of critical history, a history of historiography.

Cassirer could speak to Gundolf where a conversation with other George followers would have already been impossible. Despite the caveat of the interconnection between mythic thought and philosophy, Cassirer distinguished between those scholars, such as Ludwig Klages, Ernst Bertram, or Oswald Spengler, whose kind of mythic thought threatened rationality, and few others, such as Gundolf, some, though not all, of whose publications smoothly moved between the mythic and the mytho-critical realms. Their paths crossed not in an actual indulgence in hero-worship, but rather in a discussion of hero-worship in Goethe's thought, and the role of individuals in history. Above all, Cassirer probably valued Gundolf's work for his ability to give shape to the past. As one of Cassirer's citations from Shakespeare reads,

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.[107]

III: Conclusion

Looking back at the interwar period in the late 1930s and 1940s, Cassirer remarked in his notes on history that hero-worship indeed usually attracted more thinkers of the political right. The nationally minded, conservative political historians of his time (such as Georg von Below, Eduard Meyer), were attracted to individualistic history, whilst the democratic and socialist historians (such as Karl Lamprecht) adhered to a typological, social psychological or economic viewpoint on history. In this sense Cassirer conceded that a political polarization of methods existed. At the same time, as Ulrich Raulff had put it, the 'German intellectual landscape around 1930 was not so disparate as to prevent critical historians like Warburg from communicating with anticritical hero-worshippers like Gundolf'.[108] Cassirer distinguished the role of the philosopher from that of the politician by saying that, in Plato's phrase, the state was not 'the true home of the philosopher'.[109] In an ideal world, this permitted the intellectual debate between holders of fundamentally opposing views, such as, for example, Cassirer's own notorious encounter with Heidegger at Davos in 1929. However, Cassirer added, in a situation of crisis such as the world was facing after 1933, philosophers 'must be summoned back to earth — and, if necessary, they must be compelled to participate in the life of the State'.[110] The state had to be widely conceived as 'politics' in this instance, one should add, for, in Cassirer's case, he had taken this decision somewhat too late. The 'state' he should have participated in was beyond his reach: 'it' would have killed him if he had stayed, and 'it' would not listen to him after he had emigrated.

On his return from Olympus, Cassirer's belief in the primacy of individualism as a value which, within limits, seemed to justify hero-worship, appeared to enter a conflict with his critique of mythic thought in modern politics. Cassirer saw those mythic forces as most problematic which overruled any individual impact on social and cultural life, such as the myths of race, the state, and fate. By contrast, every hero-myth bore a Janus face between radical individualism and radical authoritarianism. It was an expression of radical individualism if the hero was understood as a genius in the sphere of art and the intellect. Thus Cassirer defended the Romantic notion of genius because it was something like a one-man-show, where the prince is nothing but an artistic genius, as Friedrich Schlegel had put it, 'the artist of artists [. . .] the prince performs in an infinitely manifold spectacle where the scene and the public, the actors and spectators are one and the same, and where he himself is the author, the director, and the hero of the play'.[111] Yet as soon as the hero was conceived of as a political agent, the hero myth required a passive and obedient audience, and the hero turned into an autocratic leader. The importance of individualism as a value in Cassirer's thought made it far

more difficult for him to develop a coherent critique of hero myths, than it was to develop a critique of the belief in fate. In a post-Cassirerean world, the hero survives as a pathos formula, and hero-worship as a method of giving meaning to culture.[112]

Notes

[1] Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* [1946] (New Haven: Yale University Press, [13]1975), p. 3.

[2] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, pp. 3–4.

[3] Cassirer lists the following books as an example: Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: From the Romantics to Hitler* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941); Benjamin Harrison Lehman, *Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: its Sources, Development, History, and Influence on Carlyle's Work; A Study of a Nineteenth Century Idea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press); Herbert John Clifford Grierson, *Carlyle and Hitler, the Adamson lecture in the University of Manchester, December 1930, with some additions and modifications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); Ernest Seillères, *Un précurseur du National-Socialisme: L'actualité de Carlyle* (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1939). The following book was not listed by Cassirer but belongs in this list: Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero-Worship: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George, and D.H. Lawrence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). One could also a parallel in the implication in Carl Schmitt's attack on Hobbes' decision to use the comparison with the mythical creature Leviathan in his presentation of an otherwise rational and systematic political philosophy; see Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes: Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1938).

[4] Ernst Gombrich, *Myth and Reality in German War-Time Propaganda* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 26.

[5] Gombrich, *Myth and Reality*, p. 26, n. 7; the biblical reference is to Hosea, 8:7, 'he who sows the wind reaps the whirlwind'.

[6] Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 2, *Das mythische Denken* [Gesammelte Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe, vol. 12] (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002), p. ix (my translation) [henceforth cited as ECW 12, followed by a page reference].

[7] 'The very question of the conceptual form of the myth thus seems to imply an entirely inadmissible rationalization of it' ['Schon die bloße *Frage* nach der Begriffsform des Mythos scheint daher eine völlig unzulässige Rationalisierung desselben in sich zu schließen'] (ECW 12, p. 10).

[8] Cassirer uses the words 'genetischer Zusammenhang' (ECW 12, p. xi).

[9] See Ernst Cassirer, 'Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken' (1922), in *Gesammelte Werke*, [Hamburger Ausgabe], volume 16, *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften, 1922–1926* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), pp. 3–75 [henceforth cited as ECW 16, followed by a page reference].

[10] Cassirer, 'Der Begriff der symbolischen Form' (1923); ECW 16, pp. 75–105 [p. 104].

[11] Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 1, *Die Sprache* [Gesammelte Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe, vol. 11] (Hamburg Felix Meiner, 2001), p. 9 [henceforth cited as ECW 11, followed by a page reference].

[12] ECW 11, p. 49.

[13] Cassirer, 'Der Begriff der symbolischen Form'; ECW 16, p. 88 (my translation).

[14] See Alexei Losev, *Dialektika mifa* (*Dialectic of myth*) (1930, reprinted Moscow: Mysl, 2001), chapter 9, section 4; German edition: Alexei Losev, *Die Dialektik des Mythos* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1994). Cassirer discussed works by anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski, Leo Frobenius, James Frazer, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Karel Hendrik Eduard de Jong, and Konrad Theodor Preuß.

[15] Cassirer, 'Der Begriff der symbolischen Form'; ECW 16, p. 104.
[16] John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 172.
[17] Ernst Cassirer, *Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 174.
[18] Hans Meier, Richard Newald, and Edgar Wind (eds), *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliographie zum Nachleben der Antike*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1934), p. x (my translation).
[19] I owe this specific distinction between Nietzsche's method of genealogy and its more traditional meaning as the history of aristocratic descent to Raymond Geuss. He distinguishes between a 'pedigree', which legitimates a present order, and a 'genealogy', which gives an account of the present order as contingently evolving from a variety of sources (Raymond Geuss, 'Nietzsche and Genealogy', in John Richardson and Brian Leiter (eds) *Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 322–41.
[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 57 (Second Essay, §13).
[21] See Panofsky's comment on Cassirer's published lecture, 'Mythischer, ästhetischer und theoretischer Raum' [1931], in Cassirer, *Gesammelte Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe], vol. 17, *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften, 1927–1931* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), pp. 411–32 [henceforth cited as ECW 17, followed by a page reference].
[22] See José Ortega y Gasset, 'History as a System', in Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (eds) *Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 283–322. See also Cassirer's positive reference to Ortega's article (*Essay on Man*, p. 172).
[23] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, p. 64.
[24] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 178–80. Cassirer's reference here is to Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenäumsfragmente*, vol. 1, 2, 20.
[25] Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929).
[26] Arendt summed up Mannheim's premises as follows: 'Philosophy from a sociological point of view is no longer an answer to the question of the "being of existence", but is itself now taken to be enmeshed and entangled in the world of the existent and its motivational possibilities, to be an existent among existents. Philosophy itself is doubted here in its absolute reality, in that it is derived from an original reality that it has forgotten; indeed, its transcendence is assessed as a simple instance of having forgotten: its claim to non-determination rests on a forgetting of its historical rootedness', concluding: 'The sociologist does not inquire into "being in the world" as a formal structure of existence as such, but into the particular historically determinant world in which the person lives. This delimitation of sociology is apparently harmless, as if it were simply delineating the boundaries of its competence. It begins to threaten philosophy only when it maintains that the world cannot in principle be disclosed as a formal structure of human being, but only as the determinant content of the particular world of a particular life. This claim disputes the possibility of an *ontological* understanding of being as such' (Hannah Arendt, 'Philosophie und Soziologie: Zu Karl Mannheims *Ideologie und Utopie*', *Die Gesellschaft*, vol. 7 (1930), pp. 163–76; reprinted in part and translated in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (eds), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 301–02).
[27] ECW 12, pp. 127 and 138.
[28] ECW 12, p. 198. The reference is to Hermann Usener, *Goetternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der religioesen Begriffsbildung* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1896), pp. 291–92.
[29] ECW 12, pp. 198–99 (my translation).
[30] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, p. 227.
[31] ECW 12, pp. 198–99.
[32] Ernst Cassirer, *Geschichte: Mythos* [*Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte*, vol. 3] (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002), pp. 232–34 (my translation) [henceforth referred to as ECN 3, followed by a page reference].
[33] Ernst Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: A Study in the History of Renaissaince Ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 3 (1942), pp. 319–46.

[34] Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola', p. 324.
[35] Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte' (1940), in Michael Opitz (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Ein Lesebuch* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996).
[36] Friedrich Gundolf, *Paracelsus* (Berlin: Bondi, 1927). See also Friedrich Gundolf, 'Deutsche Geistesgeschichte von Luther bis Nietzsche', Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London, Manuscript M6, dated between 1911 and 1914.
[37] Carl Gustav Jung, *Paracelsus: Alchemie und die Psychologie des Unbewussten* (Klein-Königsförde: Königsfurt, 2001). See also C. G. Jung, 'Die Erlösungsvorstellungen in der Alchemie', *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, vol. 4 (1936), pp. 13–111.
[38] Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, in *Gesammelte Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe], vol. 14 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002), p. 130 [henceforth cited as ECW 14, followed by a page reference].
[39] C. G. Jung, 'Paracelsus: Vortrag, gehalten im Rahmen des Literarischen Clubs Zürich beim Geburtshaus von Paracelsus an der Teufelsbrücke bei Einsiedeln' (June 1929); 'Paracelsus als Arzt: Vortrag, gehalten anlässlich der Feier zum 400. Todesjahr des Paracelsus im Rahmen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaft an der Jahresversammlung der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft' (7 September 1941); and 'Paracelsus als geistige Erscheinung' (5 October 1941); all three reprinted in Jung, *Paracelsus*.
[40] For further discussion, see Paul Bishop, *The Dionysian Self: C.G. Jung's Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter), especially the section in chapter 8 on 'The Alchemical Nietzsche' (pp. 222–30).
[41] Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*; ECW 14, p. 87.
[42] Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*; ECW 14, pp. 108–09.
[43] Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*; ECW 14, p. 71 (my translation).
[44] Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*; ECW 14, p. 71 (my translation).
[45] Cassirer asked at first: 'Was soll uns dieser kleinbürgerliche, provinzielle Goethe? [...] menschlich blieb mir das Werk fremd' (Ernst Cassirer, 'Thomas-Mann-Aufsatz', 1940, draft fragment for the *Germanic Review* (1945), Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, GEN MSS 98, 913, Envelope 173, p. 4).
[46] Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, GEN MSS 98, folders 913 and 914.
[47] Cited in Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola', p. 336, cited from Pico, *In astrologiam*, Lib. III, cap. 27.
[48] Cassirer citing Klages, *Ausdrucksbewegung und Gestaltungskraft: Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1923), p. 18, in Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 3, *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* [Gesammelte Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe, vol. 13] (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002), p. 80 [henceforth referred to as ECW 13, followed by a page reference].
[49] ECW 13, p. 84 (my translation).
[50] See Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography; with a Memoir on the History of the Library by F. Saxl* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970). According to Gombrich, Karl Lamprecht explained cultural change with the Freudian concept of repression (*Verdrängung*). Aspects of popular psychology also played a role in theories of art history. Gombrich cites August Schmarsow as an example, especially his article 'Kunstwissenschaft und Völkerpsychologie', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik*, vol. 2 (1907), pp. 304–39 and pp. 469–500.
[51] Fritz Saxl, Erwin Panofsky, and Raymond Klibanksy, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964). The book had originally been written by Saxl and Panofsky, but when the typeset was destroyed in the war, Klibanksy joined the group of authors and contributed to its actual first edition. It has been argued that even Jung's collective psychoanalysis with reference to collective archetypes was a continuation of Cassirer's idea of symbolic forms. For further discussion,

see Petteri Pietikäinen, 'Archetypes as Symbolic Forms', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 43 (1998), pp. 325–43.

[52] See Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969); also Saxl, Panofsky, and Klibansky, *Saturn and Melancholy*, p. 12.

[53] Cited in Gombrich, *Warburg*, p. 289, from Warburg's introduction to his picture-atlas *Mnemosyne*. See also Aby Warburg, 'A Lecture on Serpent Ritual', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, vol. 2 (1939), pp. 277–92.

[54] 'Manchmal kommt es mir vor, als ob ich als Psychohistoriker die Schizophrenie des Abendlandes aus dem Bildhaften in selbstbiographischen [. . .] abzuleiten versuche: andererseits' (Gombrich, *Warburg*, p. 302).

[55] Cassirer papers, Beinecke Archive, GEN MSS 98, Section III personal papers, box 6, 156, Lecture notes Universität Leipzig, 1892–1993.

[56] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 200–01.

[57] ECW 13, p. 202 (my translation).

[58] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, p. 177.

[59] In Klages' own words: 'Whereas every non-human living being pulses in the *rhythm* of cosmic life, human beings been separated off from this life by the *law* of Spirit. What appears to him, as the bearer of ego-consciousness, about the world in the light of the superiority of pre-calculating thought, appears to the metaphysician, if he penetrates deeply enough, in the light of enslavement of life under the yoke of concepts!' ['Während jedes außermenschliche Lebewesen im *Rhythmus* des kosmischen Lebens pulst, hat den Menschen aus diesem abgetrennt das *Gesetz* des Geistes. Was ihm als dem Träger des Ichbewußtseins im Lichte der Überlegenheit vorausberechnenden Denkens über die Welt erscheint, das erscheint dem Metaphysiker, wenn anders er tief genug eindringt, im Lichte einer Knechtung des Lebens unter das Joch der Begriffe!'] (Ludwig Klages, *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* (Munich: Müller, 1922), p. 45); and: 'Humankind has fallen out with the planet that give birth to and nourishes it; indeed, fallen out with the eternal motion of all the stars, because it is possessed by this vampyric, soul-destroying power!' ['{Der Mensch} hat sich zerworfen mit dem Planeten, der ihn gebahr und nährt, ja mit dem Werdekreislauf aller Gestirne, weil er besessen ist von dieser vampirischen, dieser seelenzerstörenden Macht'] (Ludwig Klages, *Mensch und Erde: Fünf Abhandlungen* (Munich: Müller, 1920), pp. 40–41).

[60] Ernst Cassirer, 'Form und Technik', in Leo Kestenberg (ed.), *Kunst und Technik* (Berlin: Volksverband der Bücherfreunde, 1930), pp. 157–213.

[61] 'Es gibt freilich in neuerer Zeit auch Bestrebungen, die diesen historischen Wahrheitsbegriff opfern — die die Geschichte dem Mythos ausliefern und preisgeben wollen (Bertram, Nietzsche) — Aber das sind nur Verirrungen und Verworrenheiten, die der echte Historiker immer abweisen wird — was er will, ist Erkenntnis, Wissenschaft — und er sucht nach einem philosoph[ischen] Ideal der Erkenntnis, dem er seine Arbeit, sein objektives "Wahrheitsstreben" einordnen kann' (Cassirer, *Geschichte: Mythos*; ECN 3, p. 420). Cassirer refers to the book by Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin: Bondi, 1918), p. 6: 'All that happens becomes image, all that lives becomes legend, all that is real becomes myth' ['Alles Geschehen will zum Bild, alles Lebendige zur Legende, alle Wirklichkeit zum Mythos'].

[62] The reference is to Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second*, trans. by Emily Overend Lorimer (London: Constable, 1931), p. 253. For further discussion of the political implications of Kantorowicz' thought, see Martin Ruehl, 'In This Time Without Emperors: The Politics of Ernst Kantorowicz's "Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite" Reconsidered', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 63 (2000), pp. 187–242. I have benefited from discussions of material in this paper with Martin Ruehl.

[63] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 137.

[64] See Cassirer's student notebooks, Beinecke archive, Ernst Cassirer Papers — Addition, GEN MSS 355 57, Envelope 137, items 1119–20. Wundt, Psychologie I. Leipzig. Winter Semester 1892/1893, Psychologie II.
[65] See Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History*, p. 203.
[66] Ernst Cassirer, 'Albert Schweitzer as Critic of Nineteenth-Century Ethics', in A. A. Roback (ed.), *The Albert Schweitzer Jubilee Book* (Cambridge: Science and Art, 1946), pp. 241–57.
[67] Krois, *Cassirer*, p. 170.
[68] 'Ich habe bei der Lektüre Ihres Werkes oft den Eindruck gehabt, daß wir, von ganz verschiedenen Ausgangspunkten herkommend und vielleicht auf ganz verschiedene Ziele hingehend, uns in der Mitte des Weges begegnen' (Cassirer, letter to Gundolf of 6 October 1916, Friedrich Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London).
[69] Cassirer, letter to Gundolf, 24 November 1928.
[70] Gundolf, letter to Cassirer of 13 October 1916. Beinecke Library, Yale University, Ernst Cassirer Papers, GEN MSS 98, IV, Letters from Gundolf.
[71] '[. . .] aus andren Gründen und mit andren Mitteln wie Sie, aber vielleicht Kraft desselben Befehls und derselben Reife unsres weltgeschichtlichen Augenblicks' (Gundolf, letter to Cassirer of 13 October 1916).
[72] Ernst Cassirer, 'Goethes "Pandora"' (1918–1919), *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 13 (1918–1919), pp. 113–34; reprinted in Cassirer, *Gesammelte Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe], *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften*, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), pp. 243–67. See, too, John Michael Krois on Cassirer's discussion of Pandora (*Cassirer*, pp. 179–81).
[73] Gundolf to Cassirer, 10 August 1919, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Ernst Cassirer Papers, GEN MSS 98, IV, Letters from Gundolf.
[74] Gundolf, letter to Cassirer of 10 August 1919.
[75] See also Gundolf's essay which was to be published posthumously in the Cassirer Festschrift: Friedrich Gundolf, 'Historiography: Introduction to an Unpublished Work: German Historians from Herder to Burckhardt', in Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (eds), *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 277–82.
[76] 'Freilich ist nur ein *heroisches* Leben das Zeichen der dämonischen Berufung' (Friedrich Gundolf, *Hölderlins Archipelagus* (Heidelberg: Weiss, 1911), p. 20).
[77] Ernst Cassirer, 'Goethe und die geschichtliche Welt: Drei Aufsätze' [1932], in Ernst Cassirer, *Gesammelte Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe], vol. 18, *Aufsätze und kleine Schriften 1932–1935* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), pp. 355–434 (p. 364, my translation). See, too, the review by Friedrich Meinecke in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 149 (1933), p. 582.
[78] Carlyle's categories were as follows: 1. The Hero As Divinity (Odin. Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology); 2. The Hero As Prophet (Mahomet: Islam); 3. The Hero As Poet (Dante, Shakespeare); 4. The Hero As Priest (Luther; Reformation: Knox; Puritanism); 5. The Hero As Man Of Letters (Johnson, Rousseau, Burns); 6. The Hero As King (Cromwell, Napoleon: Modern Revolutionism).
[79] Ernst Cassirer, *Kants Leben und Lehre*, in *Gesammelte Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe], vol. 8 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), pp. 1–2.
[80] 'Dieses mythische Grundmotiv der Seelenwahl hat Platon im zehnten Buch des "Staates" aufgenommen — aber er benutzt es nur, um aus ihm eine neue, der mythischen Denkart und der mythischen Gefühlswelt entgegengesetzte Konsequenz zu ziehen. "Nicht euch wird der Dämon erlösen", so spricht Lachesis zu den Seelen, "sondern ihr werden den Dämon wählen. {. . .} Die Schuld ist des Wählenden, Gott ist schuldlos"' (ECW 12, p. 202; my translation).
[81] Friedrich Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden* (Heidelberg: Weiss, 1920), p. 25.
[82] 'Hieraus mag sich ebenso sehr unsre Übereinstimmung betreffs Goethe, als unsre Differenz betreffs Kant, erklären, da mich Ideen nicht ergreifen, wenn mich ihre Träger nicht

menschlich ergreifen, seien sie Mensch oder Volk. Das ist eine Begrenzung mit der ich mich abfinden muss' (Gundolf to Cassirer, 13 October 1916, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Ernst Cassirer Papers, GEN MSS 98, IV, Letters from Gundolf).

[83] Friedrich Gundolf, 'Deutsche Geistesgeschichte von Luther bis Nietzsche', Friedrich Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London, Manuscript M6, dated between 1911 and 1914.

[84] 'So sind alle Staaten gestiftet worden durch die erhabene Gewalt großer Menschen, nicht durch physische Stärke, denn Viele sind physisch stärker als einer. [. . .] Dies ist das Voraus des großen Menschen, den absoluten Willen zu wissen, auszusprechen. Es sammeln sich alle um sein Panier, er ist ihr Gott' (G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie: Vorlesungsmanuskripte zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes von 1805–1806* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969), p. 246; my translation).

[85] Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, ^{3}2002), p. 100.

[86] Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*, p. 7, footnote.

[87] Cassirer, ECN 3, pp. 170–71.

[88] See Barbara Schlieben, Olaf Schneider, and Kerstin Schulmeyer (eds), *Geschichtsbilder im George-Kreis: Wege zur Wissenschaft* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004).

[89] Friedrich Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit* (Berlin: Bondi, 1913).

[90] Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*, p. 24 (my translation).

[91] Friedrich Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (Berlin: Bondi, 1911); *Goethe* (Berlin: Bondi, 1916); *Paracelsus* (Berlin: Bondi, 1927); *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* (Berlin: Bondi, 1924); and *George* (Berlin: Bondi, 1920).

[92] Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*, pp. 30, 26–27.

[93] Cited in Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 478.

[94] Hans Eckstein, *Bayrische Staatszeitung*, 13 July 1928 (Stefan George Archive, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Folder George's 60th birthday). See also Bertram, *Nietzsche* [see above]; Berthold Vallentin, *Napoleon* (Berlin: G. Bondi, 1923); Heinrich Friedemann, *Platon: Seine Gestalt* (Berlin: Blätter für die Kunst, 1914); Kurt Hildebrandt et al. (eds), *Platon, Sämtliche Dialoge in deutscher Übersetzung* (1923) and later idem, *Platon: Der Kampf des Geistes um die Macht* (Berlin: G. Bondi, 1933); Kurt Singer, *Platon der Gründer* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1927); Edgar Salin, *Platon und die griechische Utopie* (Munich: Duncker und Humblot, 1921); Ernst Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite* (Berlin: G. Bondi, 1927); Wolfram von den Steinen, *Heilige und Helden des Mittelalters*, vol. 1, *Franziskus und Dominikus: Leben und Schriften*, vol. 2, *Bernhard von Clairvaux : Leben u. Briefe*, vol. 3, *Die Monarchie: Dante Alighieri*, vol. 4, *Otto der Große*, vol. 5, *Karl der Grosse: Leben u. Briefe* (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1926–1928). See also W. Christian Schneider, '"Heilige und Helden des Mittelalters": Die geschichtliche "Schau" Wolframs von den Steinen unter dem Zeichen Stefan Georges' [Vortrag an der Universität Frankfurt, Dezember 2002], in Schlieben, Schneider, and Schulmeyer (eds), *Geschichtsbilder im George-Kreis*, pp. 183–207.

[95] See Gundolf's letter to Eduard Fraenkel of 8 March 1906: 'In der Möglichkeit Ihrer Rede liegt eine schöne Widerlegung des Vorwurfs als ob unsere Zeit so antiheroisch sei. [. . .] Und gewiss sind heute erst die Wagner, Böcklin, Nietzsche, Jakob Burckhardt im deutschen Geist mächtig — eine einzige Suche nach dem Heldenhaften, Tragischen, Feierlichen, nach jeder Art gehobenen Daseins. [. . .] Aber geformt ist das neue Heldenideal freilich noch nicht, nur die Stimmung davon geht um und harrt des Stosses der sie kristallisiere [. . .]' (*Gundolf-Briefe: Neue Folge*, ed. by Lothar Helbing and Claus Victor Bock (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1965), p. 126).

[96] Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Höhenreichen-Verlag, 1930).

[97] On Gundolf's rejection of Goebbels, see Raymond Klibansky, *Erinnerung an ein Jahrhundert: Gespräche mit Georges Leroux* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2001), pp. 61–62.

[98] See Klibansky, *Erinnerung an ein Jahrhundert*, p. 70. See also Kurt Hildebrandt, *Erinnerungen an Stefan George* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1965), pp. 89–90.
[99] Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*, p. 32.
[100] See Carlyle's lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, in *The Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle*, 16 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857–1858), vol. 6 (1857).
[101] See Gundolf's handwritten manuscript entitled *Geistesgrößenwahn*, intended for publication in *Europäische Revue*, July 1929, Friedrich Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London, M 68, pp. 7–8.
[102] See the correspondence between Gundolf and Bertram held in the Ernst Bertram Papers, DLA Marbach and reprinted in Heinz Raschel, *Das Nietzsche-Bild im George-Kreis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Mythologeme* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 172, 200 and 210–11.
[103] *Caesar: Geschichte seines Ruhms* (1924) was followed by Gundolf's meta-biography of *Caesar im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Bondi, 1926).
[104] Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, pp. 180–81. Cassirer is citing the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 310.
[105] 'Caesar in Zeitungen und Drucksachen', Friedrich Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London, M 36 a.
[106] Caesar: Bijouterie- und Steinschmuckwaren, Edel-und Halbedelsteine. Lugano (Schweiz); 'Genie und Nase, Goethe und Caesar', *Das illustrierte Blatt*, no. 17, p. 418; in Friedrich Gundolf Archive, Institute of Germanic Studies, London.
[107] Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act Five, Scene 1; cited in Cassirer, *Essay on Man*, p. 153.
[108] Ulrich Raulf, 'Der Bildungshistoriker Friedrich Gundolf', postscript to Friedrich Gundolf, *Anfänge deutscher Geschichtsschreibung von Tschudi bis Winckelmann* (Amsterdam; New York: Uitgevers-Maatschappij 'Elsevier'; Nordemann, 1938; reprinted Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992), pp. 117–18.
[109] See Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 63.
[110] Cassirer, 'Plato's "Republic"', draft, holograph, corrected, Beinecke Library, Ernst Cassirer Papers, GEN MSS 98, folder 368, pp. 29–30.
[111] Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie', in *Prosaische Jugendschriften*; cited in Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, p. 184.
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