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The absence of myth

Heller, Sophia

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Abstrak

In this provocative work, Sophia Heller challenges the assumption that we cannot be without myth, that myth is necessary to vital, soulful living. Indeed, Heller argues, we have been living in a world without myth for a long time. The Absence of Myth examines the loss of a religious mode of being-in-the-world and demonstrates how theorists who insist on the presence of myth deny its historical end. Absence of myth may seem obvious: evidenced by our lack of cult and ritual, and by our de-animated natural world, as well as in the emergence of conceptual thought and psychological awareness, which could only arise with the dissolution of a prereflective (mythic) mode of being-in-the-world. But what appears to be straightforward becomes complicated when myth is intentionally conflated with thought and reflection, usually in the attempt to cultivate a mythic consciousness that aims to restore meaning to life and assuage the spiritual malaise of contemporary culture. Myth cannot rest in peace. It must be continually unearthed, redefined, and recontextualized such that modern and postmodern notions of myth are made to substitute for something that has never been experienced, only imagined.