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## At Kithaeron Mountain

Stefan Zweig's Approach to the Daemonic

Kleist is the strongest formal poetic influence that Germany brought forth in the Romantic age; he is Germany's only indigenous tragedian. It was his fate, actually a form of his fate, to stumble with this essential 'sur-tendency' into a counter-dramatic people and time. Kleist is also one of Germany's most powerful storytellers, the real master of the monstrous. And, finally he is, along with Hölderlin and Nietzsche, one of the almost mythic carriers of German fate, one of the few genuinely tragic German figures in the history of ideas (»Geistesgeschichte«). He will perhaps [...] live longer as a poem, as a myth than as a poet [...] – a being that must forever remain dear to the Germans, if not through fulfillment of a German idea, as with Goethe or Schiller, then as the penitent bearer of a German curse, the nationless loneliness of the creative genius.<sup>1</sup>

This assessment of the essence and fate of Heinrich von Kleist under the banner of tragedy and brilliant creativity stems not from Stefan Zweig, but from Friedrich Gundolf, one of the great philologists of the circle around Stefan George, along with, for example, Max Kommerell and Norbert von Hellingrath. The latter initiated the reappraisal of Hölderlin's late work with the publication of the fourth volume of his historical-critical edition in 1916. Gundolf's remarks on Kleist could, however, just as well have appeared in Zweig's study *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon. Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche* (»The Struggle with the Daemon. Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche«), which appeared in 1925, because of the attention given to essences and the tendency to define the life and work of an author as an expression of a super-individual figure of the mind. Zweig himself writes, programmatically, in the

<sup>1</sup> »Kleist ist die stärkste dichterische Gestaltungskraft, die Deutschland im romantischen Zeitalter hervorgebracht hat, unser einziger ursprünglicher Tragiker. Es war sein Verhängnis, eine Form seines Verhängnisses, daß er mit dieser Ur-anlage in ein widerdramatisches Volk und Zeitalter geriet. Kleist ist außerdem einer unserer mächtigsten Erzähler, der eigentliche Meister des Ungeheuerlichen. Und er ist endlich neben Hölderlin und Nietzsche einer der fast mythischen Träger des deutschen Verhängnisses, eine der wenigen echt tragischen Gestalten unserer Geistesgeschichte. Er wird vielleicht [...] als Gedicht, als Mythe länger leben denn als Dichter [...] – ein Wesen, das den Deutschen immer teurer sein muß, wenn nicht durch Erfüllung einer deutschen Idee, wie Goethe oder Schiller, so doch als stührender Träger eines deutschen Fluchs, der volklosen Einsamkeit des schöpferischen Genius.« Friedrich Gundolf: Heinrich von Kleist. Berlin: Georg Bondt 1922, 172. All quotations in this text are original in German and translated by Nell Zink.

introduction to his daemon-book: »I seek no formulae of the mental; instead, I shape the forms of the mind.«<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he states his intention to collect his portraits of poets in a series of books under the title, »The Architects of the World: A Typology of the Mind«.<sup>3</sup> It is in the atmosphere created by the history of ideas movement, in German »Geistesgeschichte«, founded by Wilhelm Dilthey and developed to a high art in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by researchers of the George-circle, that Stefan Zweig's book on the three German »daemonic« poets takes shape. In Stefan George himself we find, referring to Hölderlin, the conception of the »daemon« that dominates Zweig's book. George writes, in an essay on Hölderlin that appeared in 1919 in the *Blätter für die Kunst*, among other things: »We are strong enough to be allowed to know that beyond the reasonable and healthy, the daemon does its work.«<sup>4</sup> Along with Rudolf Unger, Friedrich Gundolf, Max Kommerell, and Hermann August Korff, this circle included Fritz Strich, whose volume on *German Classicism and Romanticism or Perfection and Infinity. A Comparison* appeared for the first time in 1924.<sup>5</sup> Stefan Zweig's juxtaposition of the three »daemonic« German authors on one side and Goethe on the other corresponds to Strich's typological dramaturgy. Thus, it is not surprising that conspicuously placed in Zweig's essay on Kleist, in the concluding paragraph, Strich's dominant notions of perfection and infinity appear along with Gundolf's conception of the tragic essence of Kleist:

Kleist is the great tragic poet of the Germans not by design, but by designation, and only because he himself was compulsively tragic, and his whole existence was a tragedy: Dark, inhibited, hemmed in, and at the same time driven, the Promethean nature of his being creates the inimitability of his dramas [...]. The essence of his being was tension and stress, the ineluctable meaning of his fate was self-destruction by immoderation [...]. Kleist, the true tragedian [...] graphically raises his suffering as an immortal monument to his defeat; all suffering becomes meaningful when it experiences the grace of being given form. Then it becomes life's highest magic. For only one who has been ripped in pieces knows the longing for completeness. Only one who is driven will continue into infinity.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> »Ich suche keine Formeln des Geistigen, sondern ich gestalte Formen des Geistes.« Stefan Zweig: Der Kampf mit dem Dämon. Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer 2002 (Gesammelte Werke in Einbänden), 9.

<sup>3</sup> »Die Baumeister der Welt, eine Typologie des Geistes.« Zweig, Der Kampf mit dem Dämon (note 2), 10.

<sup>4</sup> »[...] wir sind heil genug um wissen zu dürfen, dass jenseits von vernünftige und gesund der dämon seine wirkung tut.« Stefan George: Hölderlin. In: Hölderlin. Beiträge zu seinem Verständnis in unserm Jahrhundert. Hg. von Alfred Kellert. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1961, 2f. Published originally in: Blätter für die Kunst, Folge 11 und 12 (1919), S. 11–13.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Strich: Deutsche Klassik und Romantik oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit. Ein Vergleich. München: Meyer & Lessen 1924.

<sup>6</sup> »Kleist ist der große tragische Dichter der Deutschen nicht aus eigenem Willen, sondern aus einem Gewolltwerden, einzig darum, weil er zwanghaft eine tragische Natur und seine Existenz eine Tragödie war: gerade dies Dunkle, Verschränkte, Versperrte

To all appearances, Zweig found a model and inspiration for his portraits of the »daemonic« German poets, Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche, in the sphere of influence of the history of ideas movement inspired by the George-circle. For his essay on Kleist, the aforementioned study by Friedrich Gundolf is an obvious source. For Hölderlin and other topics, it is Strich's typological opposition of Classicism and Romanticism. With regard to Nietzsche, one must take into consideration the extraordinarily successful book by Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*, which was first published in 1918 and reached six editions by 1922.<sup>7</sup> All these authors wrote not for an academic audience, but for the broader educated public, which they reached in great numbers. This was the same audience for Stefan Zweig as well. In spite of his conceptual and linguistic proximity to the George-circle and the history of ideas, to their perceptions of the poet and of creative genius and the precarious nature of its relationship with its bourgeois habitat, particularly in Germany, Zweig does not take up a position in these ranks. He dedicates his book neither to George, nor to any other personality from the George-circle (as a matter of fact, he had no personal contact with any of them), nor even to one of the leading figures of the history of ideas movement. Rather, he dedicated it to Freud.<sup>8</sup> That he did so in spite of his manifest proximity to the George-circle is a clear sign of conscious distancing.

Zweig sees the life, work, and fate of his three authors – and here he recognizes their commonality – as »a struggle with the daemon.« In Greek, the conception of the daemon is value-neutral. It is spirit connecting one to the god, which can lead the subject to happiness or unhappiness. In Goethe's »Urworte, Orphisch«, the »Dämon« stands for the laws laid down for each human being at the moment of his birth. Zweig reduces this broad conception of the daemonic to the urge towards the (self-)destructive loss of boundaries. The daemonic is for him the urge towards boundlessness that works in each human being. It may

und gleichzeitig Aufgetriebene, das Prometheische seines Wesens schafft das Unmachalmsche seiner Dramen [...]. Seines Wesens Wesen war Spannung und Gespanntheit, seines Schicksals unabweisbarer Sinn Selbsterstörung durch Übermaß [...]. Kleist, der wahrhafte Tragiker [...] erhöht plastisch sein Leiden in das unsterbliche Denkmal eines Untergangs; alles Leiden aber wird sinnvoll, wenn es die Gnade der Gestaltung erlebt. Dann wird es höchste Magie des Lebens. Denn nur der ganz Zerstückte kennt die Sehnsucht nach Vollendung. Nur der Getriebene erreicht die Unendlichkeit.« (Zweig, Der Kampf mit dem Dämon [note 2], 200f., analogously, see also 16)

<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Fritz Adolf Hühlich from April 9, 1923 Zweig asks – in connection with studies for his »book on the daemons« – for some books, emphasizing that he still has the Nietzsche-book of Bertram (Stefan Zweig: Briefe: 1920–1931. Hg. von Knut Beck und Jeffrey B. Berlin. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer 2000, 89).

<sup>8</sup> Zweig exchanged letters with Freud, see: Stefan Zweig: Briefwechsel mit Hermann Bahr, Sigmund Freud, Rainer Maria Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler. Hg. von Jeffrey B. Berlin, Hans-Ulrich Lindner und Donald A. Prater. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer 1987, 161–265. Zweig sent Freud the next volume of his portraits of authors, *Drei Dichter ihres Lebens: Casanova, Stendhal, Tolstoi*, which appeared in 1928, with the dedication: »In unveränderlicher Liebe und Verehrung« (»In unchangeable Love and Adoration«).

become especially productive in creative people, who however can be carried by it into the abyss, as his three chosen authors demonstrate. In this vein, Zweig takes up themes suggested by his first author, Hölderlin, who in his late hymn »Memnosyne«, for example (not specifically mentioned by Zweig, who generally avoids analysis of particular works), speaks of a self-destructive drive towards boundlessness, mindful of the notion of »divine madness«<sup>9</sup> that comes out of neo-Platonism. Hölderlin refers to the activity of this madness in the oft-quoted lines: »Und immer / Ins Ungebundene gehet eine Sehnsucht.«<sup>10</sup> (»And always / There goes a longing into the unbound.«) He expresses the latently tragic fate of those seized by such a madness in the verse: »Himmliche nämlich sind / Unwillig, wenn einer nicht die Seele schonend sich / Zusammengenommen, aber er muß doch.«<sup>11</sup> (»The heavenly are / Unwilling, when one does not, wishing to spare his own soul / Pull himself together, but one must.«)

Zweig offers a somewhat more communicative view of the daemonic:

The daemonic, I call the inquietude natural and essential to every person, that drives him out of himself, beyond himself into the infinite, the elemental, as though nature had left in each individual soul an inalienable, restless part of its own original chaos that seeks to return into the superhuman, suprasensory element.<sup>12</sup>

His three »heroic figures« (»heroische Gestalten«) were thus »hounded by an overwhelming, and in some sense supernatural, power out of their own cozy existence into a crushing cyclone of passion. [...] Disconnected from their times, misunderstood by their cohorts, they shoot meteorically with a brief, brilliant light into the night of their calling. They themselves do not know their path, their meaning, because they are in transit from an infinite distance into infinity.«<sup>13</sup> The theme of the book, which is not exactly an original theme, is the daemon as the ever-dangerous source of creativity. Once more, Zweig:

<sup>9</sup> Programmatic in this context is: Marsilio Ficino: »De divino furore«. Regarding the influence of neo-Platonic ideas in »Memnosyne«, see the commentary on the poem by Jochen Schmidt in: Friedrich Hölderlin: Gedichte, Hg. von Jochen Schmidt. Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1992, 1036–1039.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>12</sup> »Dämonisch nenne ich die ursprünglich und wesentlich jedem Menschen eingeborene Unruhe, die ihn aus sich selber heraus, über sich selbst hinaus ins Unendliche, ins Elementarische treibt, gleichsam als hätte die Natur von ihrem einstigen Chaos ein unveräußerliches unruhiges Teil in jeder einzelnen Seele zurückgelassen, das mit Spannung und Leidenschaft zurück will in das übermenschliche, über sinnliche Element.« (Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* [note 2], 10)

<sup>13</sup> »[Sie werden] von einer übermächtigen, gewissermaßen überweltlichen Macht aus ihrem eigenen warmen Sein in einen vernichtenden Zyklon der Leidenschaft gejagt [...] Unverbunden mit der Zeit, unverstanden von ihrer Generation, schließen sie theoretisch mit kurzem strahlenden Licht in die Nacht ihrer Sendung. Sie selbst wissen nicht um ihren Weg, um ihren Sinn, weil sie nur vom Unendlichen her in Unendliches fahren.« (*Ibid.*, 10 f.)

Only in the creator can the daemonic wrestle its way out of the shadow of feeling into language and light, and we recognize its passionate features most clearly in those who lose the fight, in the figure of the poet laid low by the daemon, for which I have chosen the figures of Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche as the most significant in the German world.<sup>14</sup>

The irritating redundancies and inflationary style of Zweig show themselves beholden to the wish to speak not only about the drive towards boundlessness, but also to evoke it through the mode of presentation – that is, to make it felt directly. But this urgently raises the question of what kind of initial position will permit such an evocation without the presentation's falling victim to what it describes. One possibility would be to strive for the experience of the sublime, both as a prerequisite for the writer and as the desired effect on the reader. The confrontation with the drive towards boundlessness, which defies comprehension, would then take place, if one follows Kant's definition of the sublime,<sup>15</sup> in order to call forth in the observer the capacity to conceive of the infinite and so to reassure himself of his own capacity for reason. Such a sublime view of the three tragic German poets would conform well to the conceptual scheme of the George-circle or the history of ideas school. Yet, Zweig does not take this route, despite his proximity to the group's conceptual tropes and linguistic gestures. Rather, his procedure consists of calling forth the immoderate, the excessive, that which explodes every limit, in his daemonic poets. He does this not merely on their own behalf, but in relation to Goethe as the author thoroughly familiar with such dispositions, who, however, knew how to tame them productively. That he »placed the figure of Goethe in opposition to the three poets and servants of the daemon«, he explains accordingly as a theoretical necessity:

I believed in the necessity of a great contrasting voice so that the exaltative, the hymnic, the titanic element which I revere demonstratively in the works of Kleist, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche would not appear to be the only or the most sublime [!] art, in the sense of a value-judgment. Indeed, its contrary appears to me as an ideal polarity problem of the highest order.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> »Nur im Schöpfer vermag sich das Dämonische aus dem Schatten des Gefühls in Sprache und Licht zu ringen, und am deutlichsten erkennen wir seine leidenschaftlichen Züge in jenen, die ihm erliegen, im Typus des vom Dämon hinabgerissenen Dichters, für den ich hier die Gestalten Hölderlins, Kleists und Nietzsches als die sinnvollsten der deutschen Welt gewählt habe.« (*Ibid.*, 13)

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Hg. von Wilhelm Weischedel. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1974 (Werkausgabe: X), 23–29; *Analytik des Erhabenen*.

<sup>16</sup> »[...] ich glaube einer großen Gegenstimme zu bedürfen, damit nicht das Exaltative, das Hymnische, das Titanische, das ich in Kleist, Hölderlin und Nietzsche darstellend vernehme, als die einzige oder als die sublimste [!] Kunst im Sinne eines Werts erscheine. Gerade ihr Widerspruch will mir als geistiges Polaritätsproblem höchsten Ranges erscheinen.« (Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* [note 2], 16)

Instead of turning towards the sublime, such a procedure allows for the possibility of tragic catharsis. The »aorgic«,<sup>17</sup> that is, the drive towards boundlessness, becomes, in making present the poet's fate, an oppressive experience. Every emotion that participates in such events is evoked, but the summons is accompanied by a stance of moderation and limitation that lends solidity and permits the invoked emotions to be »purified«. To locate such a procedure already in the literary world of representation is Goethe's strategy for avoiding the tragic. For example, the Orestes of his »Iphigenia at Tauris« is healed by a renewed invocation of the traumatic scene of matricide, in the presence of his sister Iphigenia, who gives him support. This is precisely what occurs in the analytical situation in psychoanalysis. Renewed invocation of a trauma in the presence of the supportive analyst loosens the imprint of the traumatic. Zweig's dedication of the volume to Freud thus appears not only justified, but also as a signal indicating his tragic-cathartic procedure.

Zweig calls to mind the being and destiny of the authors possessed by the daemon of boundlessness, making their way »from the infinite into the infinite«;<sup>18</sup> his reminder, he says in the cited passage, is a »representational reverence«, while he rejects the sublime treatment explicitly.<sup>19</sup> This kind of approach to his figures brings with it, however, the danger that the remembrance itself will become an experience of boundlessness; that is, that the rememberer will be drawn into the self-destructive poetic madness of his heroes. Such a destiny, as an incapable one, was given a thematic treatment by one of his heroes, Hölderlin, in his last hymn, »Mnemosyne«, probably written in 1803. It occurs in the reference to the decline of Eleutherä, the city of Mnemosyne herself, which is here made analogous to the fall of the Greek heroes forcing their way into the boundless. It is their deadly fate, as well as the destiny of the poet, who identifies himself tragically with these heroes and is carried away on waves of his own grief. Common to all these is that they do »not – wishing to spare their own souls – pull themselves together«.<sup>20</sup> Opposing, like Goethe, the drive towards boundlessness with a policy of moderation, Zweig attempts to replace the remembrance on Mount Kithaeron,<sup>21</sup> which threatens his act of reminding, with another event that likewise takes place on Mount Kithaeron. It is the story of Pentheus, who hopes to observe the women of his city Thebes as they brouac and cavort there in Dionysian ecstasy. Pentheus is the promoter of enlightenment who re-

17 Friedrich Hölderlin: Über das Tragische (Grund zum Empedokles). In: id., *Hyperion, Empedokles, Aufsätze, Übersetzungen*. Hg. von Jochen Schmidt et al. Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1994, 428–439.

18 Cf. Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* (note 2), 11.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, 16.

20 Hölderlin, *Mnemosyne* (note 11), 365.

21 Cf. »Mnemosyne«, *ibid.*, end of the third stanza: »[...] Ann Kithaeron aber lag Elevertherä, der Mnemosyne Stadt. Der auch als / Ablegte den Mantel Gott, das abendliche nachher löste / Die Locken. Himmlische nämlich sind / Unwillig, wenn einer nicht die Seele schonend sich / Zusammengenommen, aber er muß doch, dem / Gleich fehlt die Trauer.«

sists the triumphal procession of Dionysus, the god of intoxication, but through his own polarization further polarizes in reciprocal fashion the women's drive towards boundlessness. It comes to a catastrophic collision, in that the women, including Pentheus's own mother, tear Pentheus limb from limb in their macabre delirium. Euripides's tragedy »The Bacchae«, whose theme is Pentheus's fate, opposes this lethal opposition with the demand for a successful mutual interpenetration of boundlessness and caution, a demand made by the god Dionysus himself and expressed by the seer Teiresias.<sup>22</sup> That such a reconciliation is not achieved is the tragedy of the piece. At the same time, tragedy has always provided such reconciliation. That is tragedy's genesis, since it opens itself to the drive towards boundlessness (the cultic invocation of the god into the present) and simultaneously orders this drive within the drama (the transference of the presence of the god into representation through distancing play-acting). Zweig's invocation of Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche as poets of boundlessness in constant contradiction with Goethe as the pole of moderation, and thus of literary composition as well, has as its mythical model not the doom on Kithaeron itself, but rather the tragic way of surmounting it. Thus, Zweig's study is – »avant la lettre« – an attempt at a »tragic history of literature«.<sup>23</sup>

When such a tragic overcoming of the opposition between boundlessness and constructive order becomes the focal point of writing, it is not surprising that on the level of what is represented, Zweig invokes the concept of the tragic. Specifically, in his comments to specific works by Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche (a few of which are indeed scattered judiciously throughout the essays), and as a pattern for interpreting the life and work of the authors, Zweig invokes the concept of the tragic again and again.

Hölderlin's life is interpreted under the rubric of »tragic loneliness«. His ambition, writes Zweig, »to serve only the gods and not men«, contains an »unrealistic, a hubristic demand. For only the gods are permitted to exercise their powers entirely within the pure, the unadulterated«.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Zweig formulates the statement:

Hölderlin's beauty is at the same time Hölderlin's tragic guilt. Out of credulity towards the upper, the higher world he becomes a rebel against the lower, the chthonic, which he is unable to fly from except on the wings of his poem.<sup>25</sup>

22 Euripides: *Die Bakchen*. In: ders., *Tragödien*. Griechisch und Deutsch von Dietrich Ebner. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1990, vol. VI, vs. 314–318.

23 Tern according to the influential book of Walter Muschg: *Tragische Literaturgeschichte*. Bern: Francke 1948.

24 »[Hölderlins Anspruch] nur den Göttern und nicht den Menschen zu dienen, [enthält] eine irreal, eine überhebliche Forderung. Denn bloß den Göttern ist es gegönnt, ganz im Reinen, im Ungemengten zu walten.« (Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon* [note 2], 38)

25 »Hölderlins Schönheit ist gleichzeitig Hölderlins tragische Schuld: aus Gläubigkeit an die obere, die höhere Welt wird er Empörer gegen die untere, die irdische, der er nicht anders zu entfliehen vermag als auf der Schwinge seines Gedichts.« (*ibid.*, 38)

Zweig dignifies only »The Death of Empedocles« – minimally – with something like a literary analysis. He interprets the drama, no longer surprisingly, on the basis of the longing and capacity for boundlessness of its hero, who enters into no further compromise with the earthly, limited world. The piece becomes »the tragedy of poetry, indeed of creativity itself.«<sup>26</sup>

Looking at Kleist, Zweig recognizes an icon of life and creativity that corresponds rather precisely to the configuration on Kithaeron in Euripides's »Bacchae«. Driven to a catastrophic polarization, the loss of boundaries and the Dionysian frenzy stand in opposition to the rationality that would seek to secure order in the »polis«. Analogously, Zweig interprets Kleist's life as »gigantomachy«, as a »gigantic struggle of a manic nature«. His tragedy is not »that he, like most people, had too much of the one and too little of the other. Instead, he had too much of both: too much intellect with too much blood, too much morality with too much passion, too much discipline with too much wantonness [...] That is how he came to explode like an overheated pressure-cooker. His daemon was [...] his excess.«<sup>27</sup> Thus, Zweig sees his author Kleist as unavoidably consigned to tragedy: »Like a force of nature, like a compulsion, Kleist comes thus to tragedy. Only it can realize the painful contradictions in his nature.«<sup>28</sup> That Zweig speaks here of realization is a giveaway. Kleist's life and work are for him a making-real of the contradictions that tore him apart, but without his having gained either from his personal tragedy, or from any of those he created, the cathartic distance that rightly belongs to tragedy. This Zweig apparently reserves for his own recollecting invocation of the tragedian Kleist. This explains to a degree Zweig's neglect of some of Kleist's tragedies, for example the successful *Penheseleä*, in favor of the unfinished *Robert Guiskard*. In the latter, the struggle to attain tragedy is already itself a tragedy.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, Zweig definitely overreaches in maintaining that Kleist, in his last drama, *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, which is certainly no tragedy, gave »the nation its most perfect tragedy.«<sup>30</sup> One might attempt to justify such a claim, but Zweig is far from making an argument, when one considers that the hero of the drama finds out what he has averted: not victory, which indeed he has just

<sup>26</sup> »Tragödie der Dichtung, des Schaffens schlechthin.« (Ibid., 102)

<sup>27</sup> »Seine Tragik ist nicht, [...] daß er wie die meisten Menschen von dem einen Geist und von dem andern zuwenig hatte, sondern er hatte von beidem zuviel; zuviel Geist bei zuviel Blut, zuviel Sittlichkeit bei zuviel Leidenschaft, zuviel Zucht bei zuviel Zügellosigkeit. [...] Darum mußte er sich selbst zersprengen wie ein überhitzter Kessel: sein Dämon war [...] sein Übermaß.« (Ibid., 155)

<sup>28</sup> »Naturhaft, zwanghaft kommt Kleist also zur Tragödie: nur sie konnte die schmerzhafteste Gegensatzlichkeit seiner Natur verwirklichen.« (Ibid., 171)

<sup>29</sup> Cf. ibid., 167. Here Zweig comes close to the insight that for Kleist the tragedy of failure could only be fulfilled paradoxically by failing in tragedy; for this approach to Kleist's »Robert Guiskard« see: Bernhard Greiner: Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen. Experimente zum »Fall« der Kunst. Tübingen: Francke 2000, 121–147.

<sup>30</sup> Zweig, Der Kampf mit dem Dämon (note 2), 187, cf. 167.

achieved brilliantly, but the destruction of his opponent. After he recognizes this fact and affirms his opponent's death, the piece ends logically with the prospect that he will be turned »to dust«<sup>31</sup> (»in Staub«), that is, eliminated, deprived of form, in the sense of the phrase from *Penheseleä*, »killing the dead« (»das Tote töten«).<sup>32</sup> The drama invokes the drive towards boundlessness in a mood of blood lust. Zweig can then oppose this with the tragic quality of his – Zweig's – literary activity, and thus out of this harrowing play, via the medium of his writing, permit the »most perfect tragedy« to appear.

In the chapter on Nietzsche, Zweig explicitly states something that also applies to his treatment of the two other authors, namely that he will attempt to portray Nietzsche's »life not as a history, but as a play, truly as a work of art and a tragedy of the spirit.«<sup>33</sup> Thus, again, we hear about the »tragedy of existence«,<sup>34</sup> and again we find no close examination of any specific work, not even Nietzsche's work on tragedy, although it offers itself almost plaintively as a commentary to Zweig's pattern of interpretation of the tragic. Zweig dismisses the issue with a witicism: Nietzsche believed himself to be depicting »the birth of tragedy out of the spirit of music«, but experienced instead the reverse, »the birth of music out of the spirit of tragedy.«<sup>35</sup> The interpenetration of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which formed an artistic work and simultaneously caused cathartic distancing that Nietzsche practices and celebrates in his book on tragedy, Zweig attributes first to Nietzsche's last writings from 1888. This is explained as their »unheard-of miracle [...] The highest degree of clarity accompanies [it], like a sleepwalker, the highest degree of intoxication.«<sup>36</sup> Zweig recognizes this simultaneity of intoxication and mental clarity as a herald of decline. Nietzsche »burns up in his own brightness«<sup>37</sup> in these writings, so that the tragic, cathartic unity of presence and distance is reserved for writing *about* such an existence.

Zweig's approach to Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche proceeds under the banner of tragedy. It is the common vanishing point in his perspectives on the life

<sup>31</sup> Cf. The final verses of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*: »Zum Siegl! Zum Siegl! / In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgsl.« In: Heinrich von Kleist: Dramen 1808–1811. Hg. von Ilse-Marie Barth und Hinrich C. Seeba. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1987, 644. The drama *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* is an initiation into a war of extermination. See: Greiner, Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen (note 29), 253–272.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Heinrich von Kleist: *Penheseleä*. In: Kleist, Dramen (note 31), 252, vs. 2919.

<sup>33</sup> Zweig, Der Kampf mit dem Dämon (note 2), 254.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. ibid., 230.

<sup>35</sup> »Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik vermeinte er darzustellen, und erlebt die Umkehr: die Geburt der Musik aus dem Geist der Tragödie.« (Ibid., 265)

<sup>36</sup> »[...] daß ein höchster Grad der Klarheit den höchsten Grad des Rausches traumwandlerisch mitbegleitet.« (Ibid., 278; 265)

<sup>37</sup> »Er verbrannt an seiner eigenen Heiligkeit.« This precise metaphor is followed – according to Zweig's style of amplification – by a series of unsuccessful phrases: »[Nietzsche verbrannt] in einer Art Sonnenstich allerhöchster Glut, allerhöchster Leichkraft [...] Nietzsches Zusammenbruch ist eine Art Lichttod, ein Verkohlwerden des Geistes von der eigenen Stichflamme.« (Ibid., 278)

and work of his authors. At the same time, the tragic understanding of the contradiction between the loss of boundaries and insistence on moderation and order, as suggested by Greek tragedy itself, is the main reference and ideal of his own writing. Zweig attributes to his authors new tragedies with all the power of ancient Greece, which they went on to confirm through their own tragic existences, and he implies that his own reminding us of the creativity and the fate of these authors is a tragic-cathartic artistic endeavor. Thus Zweig's study is in an eminent sense a tragedy-book, attributing to three luminary examples of (bourgeois) modernity the capacity for tragedy and brilliant realizations thereof, including his own writing as an exploration of a »tragic history of literature«. Here Zweig resolutely takes sides in a contemporary debate, a »querelle« that has been on the agenda since the 19<sup>th</sup> century regarding Attic tragedy and the conditions of tragedy in modernity. Hegel must be mentioned here, given his thesis of the »mutually dulling equilibrium« of opposites in modern drama, as opposed to the collision between independently justified moral aims incarnated by the heroes of Greek tragedy.<sup>38</sup> He cites Kierkegaard's digression in *Either-Or* on »the reflex of the antique tragic in the modern tragic«, in which his own time has been divested of the tragic (guilt has been turned to sin).<sup>39</sup> In reciprocity to these syntheses there stands Nietzsche's rescue of an original tragic world experience in the space of art, formulated, as Nietzsche himself emphasizes, against the imminent scientific age that rejects tragic thinking.<sup>40</sup> Georg Lukàcs insists in his »Metaphysics of Tragedy«<sup>41</sup> that a new tragedy cannot orient itself to antiquity, while Franz Rosenzweig in his *Star of Redemption* (1921) confines the tragic hero on religious-philosophic grounds to an antiquity for which the lack of divine revelation is characteristic.<sup>42</sup> Walter Benjamin's book on the German »Trauerspiel« (>tragedy« or »mourning play«) presents itself as the sum of all these rejections of tragedy as a way of interpreting modernity. He wrote it in hope of its securing him tenure. It was summarily rejected in 1925, the same year in which Zweig's book found a large audience.

Walter Benjamin proposes a strict differentiation between ancient and »modern« (that is, Renaissance and after) appreciations of the tragic, reflected in the forced terminological distinction between tragedy and »mourning play« (in German, »Tragödie« and »Trauerspiel«), and then he denies a modern capacity for tragedy. Tragic thinking could gain validity for his own time — this is the upshot

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1980 (Theorie – Werkausgabe: 15), vol. III, 532, cf. 278.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Søren Kierkegaard: Entweder – Oder. Hg. von Hermann Diem und Walter Rest. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1988 (dtv, 6043), 177.

<sup>40</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche: Die Geburt der Tragödie. In: id., Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe. Hg. von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montanari. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, de Gruyter 1980, vol. 1 especially the Preface of the second edition.

<sup>41</sup> First publication in the *Journal Logos*, vol. 2 (1911), 79–91 under the title »Metaphysik der Tragödie«. Republished under the same title, in the volume: *Die Seele und die Formen* (1911).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Franz Rosenzweig: Der Stern der Erlösung. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1988, 83–86.

of his book — only if it does not orient itself to Greek tragedy, but rather to the »mourning play«, deriving from it, historically-philosophically, its own consequences. In common with Lukàcs, but above all with Rosenzweig, Benjamin makes his decision regarding the possibility or impossibility of tragedy in modernity based on the theological situation of the epoch. The death of the tragic hero of antiquity was a sacrifice substituted for that of all humanity as it freed itself from the power of myth. (Benjamin speaks of a »demonic world order«.)<sup>43</sup> Greek tragedy achieves an escape from the »demonic world order«. Thus, it stands for human self-assertion in the face of gods fated to seek humanity's ruin — that is, for a successful act of secularization. To deny the idea of »tragedy« in modernity, historically-philosophically, means nothing less than to deny the notion of the project of »secularization«. Benjamin's insistence on the powerlessness of the sovereign as the central figure of tragedy is aimed not only at baroque despots, but also at the bourgeois subject's self-empowerment as founder and guarantor of a reasonable ordering of the world, and at contemporary anti-democratic invocations of the sovereign in the context of a critique of democracy in the era of the Weimar Republic (especially Carl Schmitt's invocation of the »absolute sovereign«).

In the same year in which Benjamin rejected tragedy for modernity and rejected the modern project of secularization, Zweig supported, with his tragedy-book for the educated bourgeoisie, the status of tragedy as a »pattern-card« for modernity's interpretation. He did not discuss the fundamental doubts raised about tragedy, from Hegel and Kierkegaard to Rosenzweig and Benjamin. Yet, Zweig certainly did provide an answer for a certain longing on the part of the educated classes, while holding fast — in the tradition of Moses Mendelssohn — to the notion of education as a field of Jewish acculturation.

Mendelssohn had introduced the concept of education to denote a connection between ideal existence (encapsulated for him in the idea of »enlightenment«) and empirical existence (what he calls »culture«).<sup>44</sup> The concept of such a mediation was developed and defined as a problem, in the very German genre of the »Bildungsroman«.<sup>45</sup> The »Bildungsroman« contains, in the context of Jewish acculturation, the additional promise that calling on universal

<sup>43</sup> Cf.: »Die griechische, die entscheidende Auseinandersetzung mit der dämonischen Weltordnung gibt auch der tragischen Dichtung ihre geschichtsphilosophische Signatur.« Walter Benjamin: Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels. In: id., Gesammelte Schriften. Hg. von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schwepcehändler. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1974, vol. 1, 1, 288. With his understanding of Greek tragedy as an act of secularization, Benjamin comes close to Hermann Cohen's concept of tragedy. Cf. Hermann Cohen: Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer 1912, vol. 2, 80ff.

<sup>44</sup> Moses Mendelssohn: Über die Frage: was heißt aufklären? [1784]. In: Was ist Aufklärung? Thesen und Definitionen. Hg. von Ehard Bahr. Stuttgart: Reclam 1974 (Reclam Universal-Bibliothek, 9714), 3–8, here 3.

<sup>45</sup> Regarding this context see: Bernhard Greiner: Die Theatralisierung der Idee der Bildung. Zwei literarische Antworten auf Moses Mendelssohn: »Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre« und »Florentin«. In: id., Bescheinigung des Herzens: Konstellationen deutsch-jüdischer Literatur. München: Fink 2004, 75–105.

ideas of freedom and autonomy can be combined with an insistence on specific conditions of social existence, in this case those of Judaism. That is, emancipation and social equality can be demanded without giving up on being Jewish. This was, for Jewry, the allure and simultaneously the mirage of the idea of education. Even Mendelssohn gets sidetracked, in his work on education (with regard to enlightenment), from the theme of the declared »harmony« between enlightenment and culture to that of the scope of their possible conflicts. Zweig added to his contemporaries' thinking on education the idea of the tragic as a mediating figure and therewith the conception of tragic self-assertion of the subject. However, by this time the idea had already been fundamentally dismissed. And, again, Walter Benjamin was rejecting it almost simultaneously with Zweig's employment of the idea. Thus, Zweig's work on tragedy shows itself, in a positive as well as a problematical sense, to be part of the »world of yesterday«, to which Zweig later in 1942 openly consigned himself.

(Translated into English by Nell Zink, edited by Mark H. Gelber)

Mark H. Gelber

### Stefan Zweig as (Austrian) Eulogist

In the title of my essay, »Stefan Zweig as (Austrian) Eulogist«, the word »Austrian« is written in parentheses. What I hope to convey by use of the parentheses is my intention to problematize and refigure an image of Zweig as an Austrian eulogizing other Austrians, and, in this way, eulogizing Austria itself. The parentheses, which suggest something tentative in this case, appear to me to be helpful as a way to indicate that some of what I am about to discuss is by its very nature ambiguous, especially if one takes into account Zweig's famous depiction of himself in *Die Welt von Gestern*, as having multiple identities: humanist, European, Jewish, Austrian, pacifist, etc. And, the parentheses also may serve to remind that Zweig eulogized numerous non-Austrians. When I employ the terms »eulogist« and »eulogy«, I am not referring specifically to the Jewish tradition of the »hesped« or »misped«,<sup>1</sup> although there are similarities or overlappings between the two. The Jewish concept normally connotes or conveys a religious sense, which is not pertinent to Zweig. His eulogies are consistent with the classical European tradition, which has continued in modified form to the present. The term »eulogist« here in its generalized denotation applies to a person who comments or lauds someone else, but in its more specialized sense, it refers to someone who praises formally the dead. Both of these senses pertain to Zweig, and I will address both, although I am more interested here in the second meaning, that is »praise of the dead« or memorial address (»Nachruhm« or »Nachruf«). By placing the emphasis on these eulogistic texts, it is possible to analyze Harry Zohn's claim that Stefan Zweig was essentially a »Thanatologe«, a student of death and dying, or as Zohn wrote of Zweig: He was »ein unverbesserlicher Schwarzscher, ein langjähriger Selbstmordkandidat, ein Thanatologe, der seinem Dämon, der Todessehnsucht, nach langem Ringen unterlag [...]«<sup>2</sup> My reading and analysis of Zweig as an Austrian eulogist lead to a

<sup>1</sup> »Hesped.« In: Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8, 429–430.

<sup>2</sup> »an incurable pessimist, a longtime candidate for suicide, a »thanatologue«, who after a long struggle yielded to his daemon, the longing for death.« Harry Zohn: Das brennende Geheimnis des Stephen Branch oder eine Geschichte mit Moral von einem Arzt, der sich nicht selber helfen konnte. In: Stefan Zweig heute. Hg. von Mark H. Gelber. New York, Bern, Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang 1987 (New Yorker Studien zur neueren deutschen Literaturgeschichte; 7), 25–43, here 38.