

Philia and Neikos: Huizinga's "Auseinandersetzung" with Carl Schmitt

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1.

On the very eve of World War II, a hidden dialogue emerged on the ludic nature of modern warfare. Throughout the 1930s and especially in his *Homo Ludens*, a canonical work in the philosophy of play, Huizinga formulated a vehement critique on Carl Schmitt's thought. The Dutch historian interpreted Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction in absolute terms: the enemy is he who must be exterminated. In such a view, he concluded, modern warfare could no longer be understood in terms of play, because it implies the disappearance of precisely that what keeps play going: the rule-bound taking of turns by "opponents". With the imminent war in mind, he observed that highly cultivated nation states were withdrawing from the conventions of the law of nations. Since the opponent was turned into an enemy, and no longer under the restrictions imposed by international conventions, modern combat lost its ludic character and "humanity its dignity". And, he immediately added, employing a term that is not without significance in the intellectual debates of the 1930s, times of peace have become the true exception, the real *Ernstfall* (Huizinga [1938] 1950, 241).

Schmitt was immediately triggered by Huizinga's critique. But the erstwhile German *Kronjurist*, who was otherwise known to be a bold polemicist, refrained from attacking Huizinga directly. Yet, it was, as the Italian Schmitt scholar Carlo Galli maintains, already in 1938 that he replied to Huizinga by stating that the logic of warfare requires the enemy as an indispensable partner (Schmitt [1938] 1940, 241–242; Galli 2012, 76). After the war, he provided one of the strongest analyses of the waning of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* and its containment of the negative consequences of warfare in his *Der Nomos der Erde* (1950). However, his final answer came in 1956, with his book on *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, in which he proposed a minimal definition of play as "the fundamental negation of the exception (*Ernstfall*)" (Schmitt 1956, 71). In this implicit reference to Huizinga, for whom modern warfare formed the antithesis to the exception of peacetime, the legal philosopher suggested that his own theory of play could be read as a theory of warfare – and vice versa, that his earlier works on the containment (*Hegung*) of war contain a philosophy of play, too. But before one gets there, it would be wise to reconsider the import of this hidden dialogue. Therefore, the aim of this article is to reassess the different building blocks of this hidden dialogue.

2.

The first time that Huizinga polemicized against Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen* was in 1935. For Huizinga this highly influential treatise came to stand for a specific theory of the state that was prevalent in Germany throughout the 1930s. In chapter 12 of *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*, a chapter entitled *Life and battle*, Huizinga phrased a series of arguments against Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction. While Schmitt's reasoning is often praised for its alleged clarity, Huizinga proceeds to reveal the deceptive nature of his thought. In a few broad strokes, he shows that Schmitt's treatise – or “brochure”, as Huizinga calls it somewhat deprecatorily – spins around in not one, but several vicious circles.

The Dutch historian acknowledges that all life is a matter of overcoming oppositions (whereby one could render the Dutch *tegenstanden* in more ways than one: not only in terms of opposition but in a somewhat more militaristic vein as antagonisms or hostilities, too). Having first described what the battle of life means on an individual, internal level – a battle against one's own evils – he then continues by transposing the scene of combat to the external world. More precisely, in a time in which the gods have fled from the Earth, personal struggle has been replaced by that of the public life of the community. Moreover, this battle between communities is, unlike its individual counterpart, not motivated by matters of ethics. Rather, it is for the sake of the community's well-being that it seeks to combat other communities. Analogous to the soldier's impeccability – which is characterized by his readiness to sacrifice himself and the absence of hate – German theorists of the state, that is, theorists associated with the German conservative revolutionary movement, recognized the state's right to wage war purely for the sake of its own good. Without doubt, Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*, in which the German *Kronjurist* seeks to establish the friend-enemy distinction as the basis for all human interaction, forms the strongest expression of this theory.

Interestingly, Huizinga cites the third edition from 1933, a lesser-known edition that differs markedly from its previous and later editions (Mehring 2002). While the previous editions opened with the famous line “The concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political” (Schmitt 1932, 20)¹, followed by a discussion of the concept of the state, the third edition has an altogether different opening:

The actual political distinction is the distinction between *friend* and *enemy*. It gives political meaning to human actions and motives; in the end, all political actions and motives lead back to it [...]. In so far that it cannot be deduced from other characteristics, the political corresponds to the relatively autonomous characteristics of other oppositions: good and evil in moral theory, beauty and ugliness in aesthetics, and profitable and unprofitable in economics. In any case, it is *autonomous* (Schmitt 1933, 7).

Here, it is not the relationship between the state and the political to which Schmitt draws attention, as he did in other versions of this text. Compared to earlier editions, the 1933 text that Huizinga cites radically draws our attention to the autonomous, primary existence of the friend-enemy distinction that lies behind *all* human interaction. And it is this autonomy – the *petitio principii* of the political – on which Huizinga's criticism focuses. Without doing full justice to the nuance of Schmitt's

argumentation, but penetrating through the ostensible clarity of this text nevertheless, Huizinga attacks his German opponent on no less than five different fronts. In reasoning along with Schmitt's line of argument, he pushes it to such a degree that it is driven up against its limits.

He begins by uncovering a hidden circularity; one on which Schmitt has built his thesis. The autonomy of the political, Huizinga claimed, introduces a circularity in Schmitt's argument, that, in fact, makes it spin around to such an extent that it becomes untenable. For if the autonomy of the political is derived from its separation from other domains, the separate existence of those domains, in turn, rests on the primacy of the political; that is to say, on the very autonomy that they made possible. And thus, the German jurist introduced a *circulus vitiosus* of the "ugliest kind" at the very heart of his theory.

But Huizinga would not let it rest here. He immediately continues with discussing both sides of this politically vital distinction. The second argument thus concerns the status of the enemy within Schmitt's theory, which is problematized by issues of translation. It is possible to translate enemy back into ancient Greek or Latin, in multiple ways. One could, for instance, opt for *polemios* (*hostis* in Latin) or *echtros* (Latin: *inimicus*), and, depending on the status of the enemy one is referring to, one is more precise than the other. It is well known, and both Huizinga and Schmitt were certainly aware of this, that modern jurists employed the Latin term *inimicus* to mean "private enemy". It is a term that, as Daniel Heller-Roazen explains, "remains bound in its structure to the lexical field of which it constitutes a simple negation, namely 'friend', *amicus*" (Heller-Roazen 2009, 96). Enemies designated with the term *hostes* are, according to modern authorities, of an altogether different kind: they are public enemies. Where private enemies seek to hurt and take pleasure in doing so, the public enemy is one with whom one wages war. That qualification is decisive, because public antagonists act with a sense of right. The German language doesn't know this linguistic precision and offers only one option for both: *Feind*. And thus Schmitt takes recourse to the Latin vocabulary, taking *hostis* as the name of the friend's antagonist. His enemies, Huizinga infers from this choice, are always public enemies, stripped of any moral connotation.

What is more, the second term in this division seems to be an empty designator. For what does friendship actually mean within this distinction, where the primacy lies with the enemy and where its definition is entirely dependent upon the definition of the enemy? Would it not be better, the Dutch historian continues, to speak of the weak versus the strong? Because ultimately, Schmitt's argument aims not at peaceful stabilization or consensus between multiple parties: in the end there will be no balance of power, only the strongest will survive.

A more important argument against Schmitt's theory concerns its reliance on decisionism. It is up to the state to decide who the enemy is, and how, when and by whom he is supposed to be fought. It is the state that has the privilege to declare and have enemies. But, what happens when a group of people stands up, declares itself a political entity and demands to be seen as a political opponent? The question that Huizinga brings forward as the blind spot of Schmitt's theory is an interesting one and

points to a possibility that Schmitt's defense of the strong state must mask: namely, that behind the powerful appearance of the state there is always the possibility that combatting parties decide themselves on the terms of their battle; in other words, there is always the threat of possible anarchy, or, civil war. One could, however, argue *contra* Huizinga that Schmitt was certainly aware of the possibility of extreme internal conflict and that he therefore granted the sovereign the power to decide on the exception, as he famously did in his *Politische Theologie I* (cf. Schnur 1983).

Yet, in granting the state the power to decide over matters of enmity, Schmitt furthermore introduces the possibility of arbitrariness in the regulation of behaviour between different states. If one state decides to expand its zone of control it would be possible that a smaller state becomes the plaything of the greater state's whims. This is something that, it is well known, would continue to trouble Huizinga in his essay *Patriotism and Nationalism in European History*. But here it should be noted that in this context, Huizinga also cites another figure of the conservative movement: namely, the sociologist Hans Freyer, who in his book on *Der Staat* proposes an inversion of that famous definition of war by Karl von Clausewitz: "Politics," Freyer writes, "is the continuation of war by other means." Thereby immediately adding that peacetime as a period of armistice is the exception, while war is the normal state (1926, 146).

The fifth and final argument against the friend-enemy distinction concerns again a vicious circle on which Schmitt based his theory. His theory of enmity is, as is every proper political theory according to him, based on a specific conception of the human being as an evil being. In his view, man is not an unproblematic but dangerous and dynamic being. But what, then, does this mean for the status of the enemy? Was the enemy not the one who is evil and that must, therefore, be exterminated? In other words: evil is the enemy that is evil and he must therefore be killed. To put it in Huizinga's words with which he ends this first polemic against Schmitt: "it is a completely meaningless definition of evil, which circles around in vain in the author's thesis" (Huizinga [1935] 1950, 371).

For the historian who in many of his writings lamented the loss of world harmony, in the sense that for instance Saint Augustine brought forward in his *City of God*, the theory of the friend-enemy distinction formed the ultimate expression of the reversal of this humanist ideal. By proposing a radical reversal of peacetime as the state of exception thereby clearly envisioning war as the normal state, the philosophers of the 20th century have introduced disharmony – or *noise* as it is sometimes also phrased by critics of modernity – as the ideal state of this world. With the noise of imminent war being heard in the distance, the demusicalization of the world, to evoke Leo Spitzer's famous words (1963), had definitely begun.

3.

The many argumentative circles of Schmitt's treatise may have worked to hypnotize many of his followers; not so for the Dutch historian, though. To him they pointed to the weakness of this otherwise bellicose argument. And perhaps he could have left it there. Yet, those circles would continue to attract his attention throughout the 1930s. At the very end of his *Homo Ludens*, for instance, he would suddenly take

up and continue the line of critique that he started in 1935. To be sure, this was not without significance, as if the entire treatise on play has been building up towards a critique of Schmitt. In his discussion of the law of nations and the international community of nation states as a play-community, he returns to his earlier *Auseinandersetzung* with the work of the German jurist, while this time concentrating on a different, yet important, term namely *Ernstfall*. It is certainly true, as Huizinga remarks, that this term in military vocabulary is used to describe the emergence of the state of war. And thus, “real” war – still written in quotation marks, one could not fail to note – stands in opposition to mock warfare, preparations and training, as seriousness stands to play.

When it comes to matters of politics, however, Huizinga notes that the *Ernstfall* points to a different meaning: there the term signifies that diplomacy only appears as an interlude between the seriousness of two wars. And within warfare, at least its modern variety, there is no room for play. As Huizinga had explained earlier in the treatise, warfare was based on the model of the medieval duel. It was bound to a specific location and time; it followed the rules of taking turns and was based on codes of honour. Modern combat, on the other hand, has lost all those characteristics, based as it is on the friend-enemy distinction. This distinction, then, must be interpreted in absolute terms: the enemy is he who must be exterminated. And hence, Schmitt could not allow his readers to see the enemy in terms that belong to ludic theory, namely as a rival or opponent, with whom one is playing a game. Combatting the enemy has become the norm, and, so Huizinga now infers from this theory, peacetime has become the exception. It is, he writes, only in overcoming the friend-enemy distinction that humanity could regain its dignity again.

But let us not hasten here. For now Huizinga no longer needs the work of Hans Freyer to describe peacetime as the exception. The work of Schmitt, too, provides him with a similar argument. Perhaps it would be wise to pause here for a moment to reflect upon the notion of *Ernstfall*, which, as Giorgio Agamben has noticed, “appears in Schmitt as a synonym for *Ausnahmezustand*” (2005, 53) (which opens up an intertextual link that the scope of this essay does not allow me to pursue, namely the debate with Walter Benjamin). If the Italian philosopher is right, we are, then, referred back to an earlier work of Schmitt, namely *Politische Theologie I*, his treatise on the relationship between the sovereign and the state of exception. However, despite the numerous terms that Schmitt in this treatise employs to refer to the state of exception, the reader will not find the term *Ernstfall* there (cf. De Wilde 2008, 66–74). In *Der Begriff des Politischen*, on the other hand, it appears only six times, but in important contexts nevertheless. The first time Schmitt mentions *Ernstfall* is to describe that though the people are no longer conscious of the state of emergency (“wo das Bewußtsein des ‘Ernstfalles’ ganz verloren ging”) (1932, 30), their everyday use of language reveals the political import of the concrete antagonism. The second time the word occurs it is used to describe war as still the *Ernstfall*. And in the other instances it is used in the context of sovereignty. The political entity that decides over the *Ernstfall*, we read, is sovereign. And this, of course, leads us back to the definition of the sovereign in *Politische Theologie I*. It thus seems that Agamben was right. But

one must move not too fast here, as an important qualification is attached to this term: what, then, could it possibly mean that the people have completely lost the awareness of the state of exception?

The only answer to this question could be that the state of exception has become so ordinary that it, in fact, has become the norm. In his reconstruction of the dialogue between Walter Benjamin and Schmitt – a dialogue that runs parallel to the one that this essay discusses – Giorgio Agamben has drawn attention to the conditions for the exception to become the norm in the 1930s. It is well known that the Weimar Republic allowed the declaration of states of emergency under the infamous Article 48. There we read: “If security and public order are seriously disturbed or threatened in the German Reich, the President of the Reich may take the measures necessary to reestablish security and public order, with the help of armed forces if required” (cited in Agamben 2005, 14). An additional law would specify the conditions and limitations under which the president was allowed to exercise his power. However, this law was never passed and as a consequence the president’s emergency powers remained indeterminate. Adolf Hitler’s jurist made clever use of the imprecise conditions of such a radical measure when after the Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933 a state of emergency was declared, only never to be repealed. And thus the Weimar constitution was suspended for the whole duration of the Third Reich. This, then, would explain perfectly well what Schmitt meant when he wrote that the people have completely lost their awareness of the *Ernstfall*, while their everyday communication continually reveals the concrete antagonism.

Huizinga was right in his observation that Schmitt’s “inhuman cerebations” aimed at the reversal we also found in Hans Freyer’s theory: indeed, “peacetime” has become the exception or, to put it more precisely, the state of exception has become the normal state. But make no mistake, while the Dutch historian hopefully envisioned the overcoming of the friend-enemy distinction as the true exception, the German jurist’s political theory drew the state of war so close to peacetime that the two have almost become indiscernible; as if hidden behind the status quo of peacetime one could discern the contours of war as a status, that is, war not as actual combat but as structure of social intercourse. Huizinga must have been aware of this when he wrote that warfare remains bound in the demonic bonds of play, while immediately conceding that modern combat has, in fact, lost every connection with it. What is left is the appeal to a new ethos, one that “transcends the Friend-Foe antagonism and no longer recognizes its own people’s claims as the highest norm” ([1938] 1950, 242).

4.

As Carlo Galli, one of today’s greatest Schmitt scholars, argues in the introduction to the Italian translation of Schmitt’s book on Hamlet, it did not take long for the German legal scholar to counter the criticism of the Dutch historian. It was already in 1938, in a small text titled *Über das Verhältnis der Begriffe Krieg und Feind*, that Schmitt “indirectly answered Huizinga” (Galli 2012, 76). If Galli’s observation is correct, then we must read this text as Schmitt’s answer to Huizinga. One must, how-

ever, seriously doubt whether Schmitt responded to *Homo Ludens*, as Galli in fact maintains. The text to which Galli refers was published in 1938, the same year as *Homo Ludens* saw light, and one year before the German translation came out. What has slipped Galli's attention, however, is that the "hidden dialogue" between the two scholars stretches back to Huizinga's earlier criticism, which was of a similar import nonetheless, phrased in *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*. A German translation of that book came out in 1935, and within a span of three years the book would see five reissues. It seems thus possible, perhaps even likely, that the German jurist responded to *Im Schatten von morgen. Eine Diagnose des kulturellen Leidens unserer Zeit*, Werner Kaegi's translation.

In any case, the opening lines of this short essay on the relationship between the concepts of war and enemy read like a direct response to Huizinga. Here Schmitt states decidedly, showing his critics that there is no room for doubt, that: "Today the Enemy is the primary concept" ([1938] 1940, 244). And he immediately continues by noting that this does not apply to so-called agonistic forms of war, such as wars fought as a kind of duel, which were of course the kind of wars that Huizinga had in mind when he wrote about combat as a form of play. Moreover, Schmitt distinguishes between "war as action" in which one faces a direct enemy, and "war as status", which hints at a war of an altogether different kind, one that continues even after physical hostilities and combat have ceased. "Bellum manet, pugna cessat" he cites a part of a quote by the Roman author Aulus Gellius, while the whole quotation should read: "neque pax est indutiae – bellum enim manet, pugna cessat"; "for an armistice is not peace – since war continues, although fighting ceases" (1.25.4). Perhaps we may rephrase this in terms with which we, by now, are all too familiar: peace is the true *Ernstfall*.

The essay seems to respond to the possible criticism of circularity in Schmitt's argumentation. In a short passage on the etymologies of *Freund* and *Feind*, Schmitt explains that the two German words are certainly not mirror images, as they are in Romance languages. Perhaps, after all, he did hear Huizinga's criticism on the emptiness of the concept of "friend". *Freund* initially referred to a family member or blood brother. It was only in the 19th century that it gradually became "privatized and psychologized", leading to the meaning it has today, albeit often with "erotic colouring", the German jurist mysteriously added. The etymology of *Feind*, he admits, is much more uncertain, although he does connect it to *Fehde*. The enemy is one with whom one is in a feud. Having explained their asymmetrical relationship – and thus having rebutted the reproach of circularity – he continues with another one: is it war that defines peace, or vice versa, peace that defines war, he wonders somewhat rhetorically? Both concepts, he acknowledges, mirror each other, albeit negatively. But perhaps it is the wrong question. Should one not wonder then, and with Cicero's claim that between war and peace there is no intermediate state of mind (it should be noted that Schmitt refers to Grotius who cites Cicero's eighth *Phillipica*: "inter pacem et bellum nihil est medium"), whether there is a third possibility?

The rest of Schmitt's essay seeks to answer this question in the affirmative, by explaining that Europe in 1938 was indeed facing a semblance of peace behind which

war continued by other means. If we follow Schmitt's argument, it becomes clear that there are multiple reasons for this. The first concerns the Paris Peace Conference and the *Treaty of Versailles*, which established a legal means for distinguishing between victor and wrongdoer; the second is the international system for the prevention of war, comprising the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which prohibited wars of aggression; and the third concerns the expansion of the concept of war to non-military domains such as science or propaganda. After World War I, the Western World had increasingly tried to prevent new wars from arising, by signing ever new treaties and pacts. In other words, the interwar period may be characterized as a period of intense juridification of peacetime. In fact, many of those treaties are based, as Schmitt maintains, on a legal fiction: namely the idea that peace could be seen as everything that is not war; in which war, by the way, is seen in its old, military form. But what the treaties actually aimed at was the regulation of the conduct between states through legal notions – or should we say “legal weapons” – such as perjury or sanctions. And this, then, would lead Schmitt to the troubling conclusion that the juridification of peacetime allows jurists to act simultaneously peacefully, while stabbing their enemies in the back; or to use Schmitt's own formulation, they “play à deux mains” ([1938] 1940, 248).

5.

Whether Schmitt was actually responding to Huizinga's criticism, as Galli believed he was, we cannot be sure. But that he did respond, although some 20 years later, is beyond doubt. Schmitt's definitive answer came in 1956, in his book on *Hamlet oder Hekuba: Der Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel*. The importance of this little book cannot be overstated. It is here that Schmitt gives his final answer to a discussion on sovereignty and the state of exception that he had held for almost twenty years with Walter Benjamin. And, as we will see in a minute, it is also here that he formulates a final answer to Huizinga's criticism. In an elegant reading of *Hamlet*, Schmitt situates the play within historical context. In doing so, he is able to show how reality, which for Shakespeare was otherwise impossible to represent directly, found its way into the play: namely through two of its characters. In Gertrude he reads a representation of Mary, Queen of Scots, and in Hamlet, torn by the reflection over his possible deed, he sees no other than King James I.

However, the details of Schmitt's interpretation of the play need not concern us here. What must interest us though, is what he writes about play in the section titled *Spiel und Tragik*. Clearly in dialogue with Walter Benjamin, he seeks to distinguish *Trauerspiel* from tragedy. To do so, he begins by noting that the play is not only performed but as a dramatic piece constitutes itself a form of play. In describing *Hamlet* the play he notes that as a form of play it has: (1) its own reach; (2) freedom regarding subject matter; (3) freedom from any situation; (4) it emerges in its own *Spiel-Raum* and *Spiel-Zeit*; and (5) it forms a circle, a purely self-enclosed process (Schmitt 1956, 39). In this description it is not difficult to recognize the characteristics that Huizinga attaches to his own concept of play. One could easily rephrase the fifth feature as the magic circle that was so dear to Huizinga. More importantly, the two aspects

mentioned under the fourth feature – namely room-for-play and play-time – open up unexpected pathways. They are notions that appear frequently in the work of the German legal scholar, in particular in his *Der Nomos der Erde* (allowing for a reading of his book as a treatise on the play of law that the scope of this article does not permit). If he then continues to separate tragedy and *Trauerspiel* he does so by stating that tragedy will never lose its seriousness, its *Ernst*.

Having come to this point, he inserts a more general reflection on the philosophy of play: “Es gibt heute eine umfangreiche Philosophie und sogar eine Theologie des Spiels” (Schmitt 1956, 42). As part of this “extensive philosophy”, Schmitt must undoubtedly have had Huizinga in mind. But what, then, Schmitt wonders, is play? There are more ways than one in which the German word *Spiel* could be used, and the examples he provides his readers with are somewhat naïve, if not to say, rather dull. Obviously, human beings play instruments, or play with a ball according to specific rules. Or take the child that plays with a cat, not limited by any restrictions or rules, but in total freedom. And then, in a sudden lightning flash of insight, he states that despite all the opposing usages of the term, this much is sure: namely, that “im Spiel die grundsätzliche Negation des Ernstfalles liegt” (41). It is, as Galli remarks, impossible not to hear “a polemical and direct reference to Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*” (Galli 2012, 76). But perhaps Schmitt is less polemical here than the Italian philosopher would like us to believe. For the German jurist immediately adds a line that he was only able to write after the war was over: “tragedy ends where play begins,” that is, as we may rephrase this statement a little, play begins where *Ernst* falls away.

As every flash is followed by a long roll of thunder, this insight, too, must make Schmitt’s readers tremble. The true content of this insight is, however, relegated to an important endnote in which he briefly touches upon the relationship between law and play, almost as if he is talking to himself, setting himself a new task: “Perhaps the day will come when a legislator would give the following simple legal definition in order to turn into reality the relation between freedom and play, freedom and free time: play is everything that a human being undertakes in his free time, legally at his disposal, in order to organize and fill it up” (Schmitt 1956, 71). One could not but be perplexed by this almost trivial statement. Did he not just oppose play to the state of emergency? And is he now simply stating that everything one does in one’s spare time is play? But what does Schmitt actually mean when he writes about the “gesetzlich zustehenden Freizeit”?

Let us look once again at Schmitt’s remark on play as a negation of the state of emergency. It turns out that he has taken it from an article by one of his former students, Rüdiger Altmann. The full quotation from Altmann’s text reads: “Das Spiel ist die grundsätzliche Negation des Ernstfalles. Darin liegt seine existenzielle Bedeutung. Man weiß erst, was das Spiel ist, wenn man den Ernstfall kennt. Die Tatsache, daß das Spiel oft am Bild des Ernstfalles orientiert ist, ändert nichts daran” (Altmann 1955). Now a true polemical gesture is revealed, the words of this statement cannot be misunderstood. *Man weiß erst, was das Spiel ist, wenn man den Ernstfall kennt*: only when one has been familiar with the state of emergency, can one know what play is. In other words, all other attempts in defining play must remain idle. And play

may resemble war or a state of emergency, but, in the end, the world of play is also separated from the theatre of war by an unbridgeable abyss.

6.

The dossier could be closed here. But before doing so I would like to add another text, one that at first sight seems to have no connection with it. Though it may be true that after the publication of *Homo Ludens* Huizinga would no longer continue to criticize Carl Schmitt, it is equally true that the problem of enmity would not stop concerning him. Huizinga's short book *Patriotism and Nationalism in European History until the End of the 19th Century* was published 16 years before Schmitt's final answer, and seven years after that specific edition of *Der Begriff des Politischen*. This history of two terms – nationalism and patriotism – that were two of the heaviest political signifiers at the time of its conception, could and must in light of what we now know be read as Huizinga's own friend-foe theory. One that is not drenched in the military rhetoric of Nazi Germany, but a more humanistic version, as one may expect from a biographer of Erasmus. Huizinga spends numerous pages explaining how the emergence of the modern state at the same time introduced political enmity between states, and how the concepts of patriotism and nationalism receive their specific meaning at the moment when they become attached to certain political ideas of the unity of the state. Thereby the state comes to stand for the reality of political life, whereas the nation becomes the ideal. Having defined the two terms that have helped shape “the stage of practical politics of Europe” time has come to test the result against the theory “of that early Greek philosopher who tried to explain everything that happens in the cosmos through the perennial antagonism of two principles: affection and dispute” (Huizinga [1940] 1949, 551), which, we could now easily rephrase as: friendship and enmity.

This early Greek philosopher was no other than Empedocles, who indeed believed that everything in the cosmos emerges from the antagonism between *Philia* and *Neikos*. *Philia*'s domain, that is, that of friendship, is the positive one; whereas that of enmity, that is *Neikos*'s domain, is the negative one. Patriotism, obviously, falls on the positive side of the dividing line. Nationalism, on the negative side, as he writes: “It is a theory of conviction, actually largely of pride. It exists almost completely in the sphere of rivalry and opposition, that is, on the side of battle. The life of nations could be one of noble rivalry, but the fairies who gave birth to the nations have never suffered from a lack of hubris, greed, hatred and enmity” (553). Actually, *Philia* and *Neikos*, patriotism and nationalism, form the two faces of a single figure, which at the end of the 19th century certainly didn't leave the stage. And Huizinga then ends with a beautiful image: we leave as spectators who do not see the play till the very end. We pull the curtain, while the tragic developments worsen, while cries of pain, pity and fright become audible in the distance” (554). Little could he know that one day the curtains would again be opened for a moment. Indeed, the play appeared to go on one, tragic developments continued to worsen, and cries of pain continued to be heard all over the world. But as soon as the curtains were opened, it turned out that it was only done to fully shut them again. And more firmly this time. With

a single, bold polemic gesture those who have no experience of the *Ernstfall* were denied any understanding of what play really means. The hidden dialogue came to an end. Whether it was Philia or Neikos who pulled the curtain, is, as we now know, not difficult to guess.

NOTES

- ¹ Quotations (Schmitt 1932, 20; 1933, 7; Huizinga [1935] 1950, 241; Huizinga [1938] 1950, 242) translated by Geertjan de Vugt.

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Philia and Neikos: Huizinga's "Auseinandersetzung" with Carl Schmitt

Play. War. State of exception. Friend-enemy distinction.

This article reconstructs the hidden dialogue between Johan Huizinga and Carl Schmitt that emerged throughout the 1930s. Huizinga phrased an early critique on Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction. It appears that throughout the 1930s the Dutch historian had a thorough *Auseinandersetzung* with Schmitt, running from his *In the shadow of tomorrow* up to his *Homo Ludens*. Schmitt, in his turn, responded to Huizinga's criticism, albeit somewhat implicitly. First, in a small text from 1938 and later in his book on *Hamlet*. In mapping the emergence of this "dialogue" it appears that their disagreement concerns the relationship between play and war. In particular, they have conflicting ideas on the state of exception, or, to use the German word on which the entire dialogue hinges: *Ernstfall*. To properly assess the possible relationship between play and war it is first necessary to reconstruct this dialogue and to consider the role of the state of exception within it.

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