"Von der Überlegung": Of Wrestling and (Not) Thinking*

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Socrates famously chastised the rhapsodist, Ion, for *not thinking*. When reciting Homer, Ion, like the men whose poems he "chant[s]," becomes an empty vessel. He is inspired by forces beyond himself and, as such, "possessed" to the point of no longer being "in [his] senses" (Plato, *Collected Dialogues* 219, 220 [*Ion* 532d, 533e-534a]). Socrates' criticism of poets and rhapsodists, which continues in book ten of *Republic*, has had remarkable staying power in Western thought. It went largely unchallenged until the Romantics—taking cues from Plotinus' Ancient "On the Intellectual Beauty" and Philip Sidney's Renaissance "Apology for Poetry"—established a neo-Platonic position that ultimately overturned Socrates' censure. The Romantics embraced precisely the mindlessness that Socrates had criticized. Poets were inspired and irrational, but this was what allowed them to see behind appearances and gain access to the Platonic ideals of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. The poets become, as Percy Bysshe Shelley writes at the end of "A Defense of Poetry," the "unacknowledged legislators of the world." Aspects of Shelley's defense of not-thinking famously appeared already decades earlier, in German Romanticism, notably in well-known essays by Heinrich von Kleist such as "On the Gradual Production of Thoughts While Speaking" ("Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden," 1805-6 [published posthumously]) and "On the Marionette Theater" ("Über das Marionettentheater," 1810).

But an understudied short Kleist piece published just five days before "On the Marionette Theater" entitled "Von der Überlegung" ("On Reflection" or "On Thinking Things Over") and subtitled "Eine Paradoxe" ("A Paradox") makes the point most powerfully and succinctly, in a total of eight sentences, through the figure of the athlete—specifically, the wrestler. Kleist's narrator begins by claiming that people wrongly "celebrate the usefulness of thinking things over to the four corners of the globe" (*Man rühmt den Nutzen der Überlegung in alle Himmel*) and announces

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that he is planning to present the following counter-argument to his son: "If thinking things over—*Überlegung*—comes into play prior to an act, or in the very moment of decision, it seems only to confuse, to obstruct and to repress the power to act, which flows from the glorious wellspring of our feelings" (3:337).[1] This father-narrator then introduces his only example: the wrestler, who, the father insists, will lose if he thinks too much before or during a match.

The few scholars to comment on "Von der Überlegung" read this argument straightforwardly, as if Kleist himself and not a fictional character (the father-narrator) were speaking: the athlete, a metaphor for modern man in general, needs to learn to think less, to be more like this spontaneous wrestler.[2] But Kleist's goal is not to issue a pragmatic edict, if only because he understands, before Freud, that one cannot order oneself not to think. This is why Kleist introduces the fictional narrator between himself and the argument, and why Kleist prefaces the father's speech ironically. The anti-thinking father *thinks ahead of time* about how he will criticize thinking ahead of time: "I think I will address my son one day…as follows" (*[ich] denke meinem Sohn einst…folgende Rede zu halten*). As I will argue here, Kleist's position against thinking is not prescriptive but rather structural, and it depends specifically on the example of the wrestler—and not, say, the boxer or the fencer, whom Kleist writes about elsewhere.[3] He requires the wrestler to literalize the essay's title word: *Über-legung* (literally, "lying over or on top of"). In so doing, Kleist reveals thinking's physical past specifically in wrestling, which unsettles the ideological (that is, idea-based) suppositions on which thinking establishes itself.[4]

A close reading of "Von der Überlegung" reveals that, far from offering an edict—Thou shalt be like the wrestler!—Kleist deploys the wrestler to demonstrate the necessary fragility of all reflection. In this analysis, we must differentiate between Kleist and his narrator. Although Kleist shares many opinions with his narrator—including a faith in radical physicality—he also distances himself at times, as when the narrator overthinks his encomium on not-thinking. This distancing begins with the title word, *Überlegung*, and continues sporadically during the narrator's imagined speech about the not-thinking wrestler, from the midway point of "Von der Überlegung" through to the end; I quote here this entire four-sentence second half:

> Life itself is a contest with fate, and the same is true for ordinary action as for wrestling. The athlete, having his arms wrapped around his opponent, simply has no recourse but to act spontaneously, on inspiration; and a man who tried to calculate which muscles he should employ and which limbs he should set in motion in order to win would inevitably be disadvantaged and defeated. But afterwards, when he has won or is lying on the mat, it may be useful and appropriate to think by what application of force he threw his opponent or how he ought to have moved in order to trip him and stay upright himself. A man must, like that wrestler, take hold of life and feel and sense with a thousand limbs how his opponent twists and turns, resists him, comes at him, evades him and reacts: or he will never get his way in conversation, much less in a battle.

> (Das Leben selbst ist ein Kampf mit dem Schicksal; und es verhält sich auch mit dem Handeln wie mit dem Ringen. Der Athlet kann, in dem Augenblick, da er seinen Gegner umfaßt hält, schlechthin nach keiner anderen Rücksicht, als nach bloßen augenblicklichen Eingebungen verfahren; und derjenige, der berechnen wollte, welche Muskeln er anstrengen, und welche Glieder er in Bewegung setzen soll, um zu *überwinden*, würde unfehlbar den kürzeren ziehen, und *unterliegen*. Aber nachher, wenn er gesiegt hat oder am Boden hegt, mag es zweckmäßig und an seinem Ort sein, zu *überlegen*, durch welchen Druck er seinen Gegner niederwarf, oder welch ein Bein er ihm hätte stellen sollen, um sich aufrecht zu erhalten. Wer das Leben nicht, wie ein solcher Ringer, umfaßt hält, und tausendgliedrig, nach allen Windungen des Kampfs, nach allen Widerständen, Drücken, Ausweichungen und Reaktionen, empfindet und spürt: der wird, was er will, in keinem Gespräch, durchsetzen; vielweniger in einer Schlacht.) (3:337-38, italics mine)

Whereas the narrator employs *Überlegung* abstractly (as "thinking things over"), Kleist uses a literalization strategy to stress its original and still surviving physical meaning ("lying on top of"): He has his narrator repeat *Überlegung*'s prefix in consecutive sentences in the middle of this section—thereby breaking *Überlegung* into its physical components. In the first of these sentences, *über* (on or above) appears together with its converse prefix, *unten* (under or below): The wrestler who thinks too much about how to move "in order to win" (*um zu überwinden*) would be "defeated" (*würde…unterliegen*). Although the narrator intends here only *überwinden*'s and *unterliegen*'s primary, abstract meanings, Kleist reveals that these—especially *unterliegen*—are haunted by still-potent secondary physical meanings: the wrestler who loses will quite literally lie beneath the other man ("unter-liegen").

This strategy continues in the next sentence, where the narrator tells us that the wrestler should "think over" (*überlegen*) his tactics only after the match, and so shift to mental activity. Such a post-fight "Überlegung" will give the wrestler a better chance next time of "winning" (*überwinden*) and of being "superior" ("*überlegen*," in its adverbial/adjectival form). But Kleist's decision to place *überlegen*, *überwinden* and *unterliegen* so close to one another—while keeping his narrator unaware—demonstrates that Kleist and his narrator are again at odds. By binding "über-legen" to "über-winden" and "unter-liegen," Kleist creates an incantatory confusion that fragments the narrator's intended abstract whole into its original physical parts: winning ("überlegen sein") reverts to "lying on top of" and losing ("unterliegen") becomes again "lying beneath." The narrator's planned post-fight shift to reflection will, Kleist tells us, always carry with it the "über" and "unter" of bodies. Prefiguring his strategy in "On the Marionette Theater,"[5] Kleist uses literalization to undermine ideology: thought (*Überlegung*) attempts triumphantly to sever itself from its physical past, but this past refuses to be discarded.

In order to emphasize the fragility of abstraction even more so than in "On the Marionette Theater," Kleist does not choose here the well-known philosophical concept, "*Reflexion*," that he employs in "On the Marionette Theater."[6] Rather, he deliberately selects a word—*Überlegung*—that does not share *Reflexion*'s long history

of abstraction (Thomas of Aquinas referred to "*reflectitur*" already in the thirteenth century [*De veritate* I. 5, 6, 9).[7] Unlike *Reflexion*, *Überlegung* had gained its abstract meaning only in the eighteenth century, just decades ahead of Kleist's birth. Before this, from the Early Middle Ages onward, *Überlegung* and its verb form (*überlegen*) had denoted only the physical act of laying something on top of something else.[8]

Überlegung's present-day abstract adjectival-adverbial form, *überlegen* ("superior"), likewise did not exist before the eighteenth century. More important for my discussion of "Von der Überlegung," this abstract modifier developed from a Middle High German verb—*überligen*—which meant to "win" or "be superior to," as derived from the "image of the wrestling match" (*aus der vorstellung des ringkampfes entnommen*; Grimm 23, col. 398). Specifically, *überligen* signified "in wrestling, to come to lie on top" (*beim Ringen oben zu liegen kommen*; Götzke and Mitzka 7:195). Only after this verb *überligen* disappeared from usage was it replaced by the solely "abstract" adjectival-adverbial form "*überlegen*" that we have used from Kleist's time through today (Grimm 23, col. 383).

Überlegen's explicit etymology in wrestling—which Kleist probably knew—followed by its abstraction from this etymology in the eighteenth century reveals the second level of Kleist's literalization strategy. Not only is Kleist's wrestler's unthinking activity of lying on top of others at "thinking's" etymological root, so too is this athlete's specific form of physical combat: wrestling itself ("*beim Ringen oben liegen zu kommen*"). By emphasizing both *Überlegung*'s general pun on lying on top of, which still exists today, and its now-forgotten literal history in the sport of wrestling, Kleist reveals "reflection's" history in people lying on other people. Along with this, he shows us the brittleness of reflection's abstract semantic status.

This tenuousness is manifest in etymologists' confusions about how *Überlegung* shifted from a physical to an abstract meaning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Grimms guessed that the missing link might be the secondary cheese-making usage, known only in Switzerland, of "turning round or over" ("*umdrehen*" or "*wenden*"), which could have led to the idea of turning things over in one's mind (23, col. 385). Götzke and Mitzka (editors of *Trübners Deutsches Wörterbuch*) frankly admit that the link cannot be determined, but they speculate that the abstraction could have been a mental metaphor for "carefully laying things on top of one another" (7:194). Drosdowski's *Duden* echoes this speculation, citing the process of "adding up" (6:2656), which, as the Grimms note, was traditionally achieved by laying reckoning stones—calculi—on top of one another. But the Grimms correctly point out there is no evidence that the German *überlegen* follows the Latin *calculare*'s path toward abstraction (23, col. 385). This uncertain development provides more ammunition to Kleist's critique of the vaunted usefulness of reflection. How can we "celebrate" something when we do not even know what it is or where it comes from? Something that sits atop a broken chain of signifiers pointing back only toward agonistic bodies?

Kleist emphasizes this instability by focusing on one specific aspect of wrestling:

the body's intertwining—its "über-legen"—with other bodies. In this, Kleist temporarily joins forces with his narrator, who, when describing his paradigmatic wrestling match, ignores the opening stages of feints and stabs, as well as the securing of grips. Rather, he begins with the wrestlers already wrapped around one another: "The athlete, having his arms wrapped around his opponent, simply has no recourse but to act spontaneously, on inspiration" (*Der Athlet kann, in dem Augenblick, da er seinen Gegner umfaßt hält, schlechthin nach keiner anderen Rücksicht, als nach bloßen augenblicklichen Eingebungen verfahren*). Kleist's wrestler starts here: always already one with the other body, already clasping or embracing ("*er [hält] seinen Gegner umfaßt*"). And this "umfassen" is what allows the wrestler to be inspired by the moment ("nach bloßen augenblicklichen Eingebungen"). The two meanings of "da" (as both "at that time" and "because") strengthen this connection between embrace and inspiration: the phrase, "in dem Augenblick, da er seinen Gegner umfaßt hält," tells us that the wrestler is *in the moment* (*in dem Augenblick*) "while" (*da*) and also "because" (*da*) he is embracing his opponent. He cannot do otherwise. Wrestling's specific act of intertwining—its *Über-legung*—is precisely what produces the apparent opposite of reflection: the body's spontaneous inspiration (*augenblickliche Eingebungen*).

Not simply athletics and not even wrestling creates this moment beyond reflection for Kleist but rather a specific instant in a wrestling match. This instant renders *Über-legung* literal, as we learn again in the essay's final sentence: "A man must, like that wrestler, take hold of life [*umfaßt halt(en)*] and feel and sense [*empfinde(n) und spür(en)*] with a thousand limbs [*tausengliedrig*] how his opponent twists and turns, resists him, comes at him, evades him and reacts." Here again, the key to exceeding reflection is the physicalization of *Überlegung*, and again this happens through the act of embracing ("umfaßt halten"). This literalization deepens through the neologism "tausendgliedrig," which means "with a thousand limbs" and implies "with every fiber of his being." By physicalizing (through "limbs") this sense of complete commitment, Kleist again insists on the material roots of abstractions and, more important, demonstrates how this material past presents us with a heightened experience of pain and pleasure: the wrestler's limbs reproduce impossibly, all in the ecstatic attempt to enwrap—"take hold of" and "feel and sense"—the other body.

Although Kleist is not advocating pure physicality beyond all thought (his ironizing of his narrator's thoughts about not-thinking is also self-irony), he is fascinated by bodies intertwined in pleasure and pain such that he (unique among the German Romantics) wrote about contemporaneous combat sports.[10] This interest along with his classical education would have led him to wrestling, that oldest and most practiced of Ancient sports. As Kleist certainly knew, the myriad depictions of wrestling on Greek vases almost never show the combatants performing early-match feints. Rather, they, like Kleist's wrestlers, are generally already wrapped around one another. We cannot distinguish whose limbs are whose. The sexual aspect of Ancient wrestling is often cited in this regard, and, although penetration is generally not depicted in wrestling scenes, we do see a striking new body technology that is both

violent and erotic, as in Kleist's portrayal: two individuals come together in an all-encompassing embrace. The result is what seems to be a new fantastical creature: one single continuous body that is encircled—"umfaßt"—in its own unidentifiably mixed-up arms and legs.

Many Ancient accounts of wrestling feature this same scene of two bodies violently and ecstatically becoming one. Consider just a few of the most famous examples from the Greek tradition and beyond. When Hercules wrestled the god Achelous, they became one, soldered together: "foot locked with foot, fingers with fingers clenched, brow against brow" (Ovid 2:5 [*Metamorphoses* 9.42-45]). Odysseus and Telomonian Aias at Patrocles' funeral games in *The Iliad* resembled a single structure when they "grappled each other in the hook of their heavy arms, as when rafters lock, when a renowned architect has fitted them in the roof of a high house" (Homer 469). When Gilgamesh wrestled with Enkidu, "huge arms gripped huge arms, foreheads crashed like wild bulls, the two men…grappled each other, limbs intertwined, each huge body straining to break free from the other's embrace" (*Gilgamesh* 89).[11] And, in Genesis, Jacob succeeded in wrestling the angel simply by embracing him the entire night. When the angel realized that he could not throw Jacob, the angel cried, "Let me go, for day is breaking," but Jacob responded, "I will not let you go" (*New English Bible*, *Genesis* 32.26). This overlapping of bodies often led to the same sensual extremes that Kleist describes, specifically through the lethal embrace, as when the god Cercyon clasped his opponents and "in wrestling killed them" (Apollodorus 2:131 [*Epitome* 1.3]) or when Hercules wrapped his arms around Antaeus, "hugged him, lifted him aloft, broke and killed him" (Apollodorus 1:223 [2.5.11]). As J.G. Frazer notes, the more literal translation would be "lifted him aloft with hugs," for which Apollodorus uses "*hamma*," the technical Greek sporting term for a "wrestler's hug" (Apollodorus 1:223, n. 2).[12]

This agonistic, erotic and destructive *hamma* appears not only between men—in the oft-cited combination of wrestling and homosexuality—but also between men and women. Consider the notorious rape of Thetis by one of the greatest mythological wrestlers, Peleus, the father of Achilles. Here, the second meaning of *überlegen*'s Middle High German root, *überligen*, comes to the fore: *überligen* means not only "in wrestling, to come to lie on top" but also "coitus, to lie with a woman" (*coire, eine Frau beschlafen*; Grimm 23, col. 398). Among the many rapes in Greek mythology, Thetis' is peculiar because the aggressor (Peleus) takes a beating from his victim, and because Peleus succeeds by simply holding on to her—never letting go, no matter what happens. As Proteus instructs Peleus: "Though she take a hundred lying forms, let her not escape thee, but hold her close, whatever she may be." Peleus does as told. "Entwining [her] neck with both his arms," he "held fast" and "did... tightly cling" to her while she transformed into water, water, a serpent, a tiger and a cuttlefish (Ovid 2:139, 137 [*Metamorphoses* 11.221-265]). Even though ultimately soaked, scorched, bitten, clawed and coated with gluey sepia ink, Peleus "did not let her go" (Apollodorus 2:67 [iii.13.5])[13] until she, realizing that he could not be shaken,

submits—allowing him to "embrace" her and so "beg[e]t on her" the warrior Achilles (Ovid 2:139 [*Metamorphoses* 11.263-265]).

This wrestling-rape consisting of a clinch holding through Thetis' hundred forms reveals what is at stake in Kleist's description of the wrestler who "feels and senses with a thousand limbs how his opponent twists and turns, resists him,…evades him." Wrestling becomes Kleist's paradoxical experiment: it allows him to "think" through a radically physical and primal form of not-thinking, similar to the not-thinking of orgasm. Only in this way, Kleist tells, can we properly prepare for a "battle." And this erotic battle eventually takes Kleist back not only to Ancient wrestling but also to Achilles' mythological fight with Penthesilea, to which Kleist adds a culminating sexual murder (in his own *Penthesilea*).

Although Kleist presents in "Von der Überlegung" a narrative ending in salutary physical primacy, he does so in a way opposed to similarly utopian contemporaneous "philosophies of history" (*Geschichtsphilosophie*). For Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and, to a certain degree, Marx, history possessed an internal rationality that guided it towards an ideal end.[14] Kleist parodies this kind of *geschichtsphilosophisch* hope in "On the Marionette Theater": his characters agree, naively, that the "final chapter of the history of the world" will feature a return to a perfect "state of innocence." Although "Von der Überlegung" seems to lead us toward a similarly longed-for condition, it does so through a diametrically opposed trajectory. The narrator of "On the Marionette Theater" argues idealistically that we can only return to paradise by "eating again from the tree of knowledge" (3:345).[15] "Von der Überlegung," on the other hand, insists that we can get to this state only by completely undermining this very knowledge. By radically literalizing the idealist concept of "thinking" or "reflection," "Von der Überlegung" reasserts the physicality of this concept and, by implication, of all concepts.[16]

Kleist condenses this physicalization in the Ancient body technology that fully destabilizes thinking (*Überlegung*): the *hamma* of wrestling, which miraculously transforms two bodies into one. The *hamma* subverts *Überlegung*'s abstract power by demonstrating that *Überlegung* has never successfully shed its physical history. What is more, it now devolves, through its past in the *hamma*, to something before and beyond the parameters of Socratic (and German Idealist) "thinking." *Überlegung* is something performed vehemently not by the Socratic individual consciousness—*not* separate from others.

To close, let us return to Socrates' antipathy to not-thinking and consider how Socrates, a wrestler himself, deals with wrestling's exemplary position beyond thought. It is not surprising to learn that Socrates went out of his way to turn wrestling—that most famous and dangerous of mythical agons—into a safe, thinking-man's sport. He derides the mythical wrestlers such as Antaeus for unclear reasons, citing "idle vainglory," but we quickly see that his main criticism concerns their acting without thinking *and* outside of a system of rules (Plato, *Collected Dialogues* 1367 [*Laws* 7:796a]). Competitors should follow the laws of wrestling set forth in "our code,"

Socrates says, and this tightly governed wrestling will serve as a model for all sports: "we shall follow the precedent set by existing authorities on wrestling in their rules for the proper conduct of that sport" and thus "award the prizes of victory to those who best fulfill the demands of our regulations" (1368, 1399 [*Laws* 7:796b, 8:834a]). Within this framework, the thinking man will always have the advantage over, say, the rageful Hercules because thinking wrestlers "deliberate" before the match about "with whom they should wrestle close, and with whom only at arm's length, and in what manner" (*Plato's Works* 12:113 [*Alcibiades* 1:107e]).

Socrates' wrestler opposes Kleist's both mentally—Kleist's wrestler should "not think prior to an act"—and physically: Socrates' wrestler should avoid the non-thinking position of overlapping bodies in which Kleist's wrestler thrives. Socrates instead advocates "stand-up wrestling," consisting only of the clean throw, with the general goal, Socrates insists, of disentanglement: he defines wrestling as "exercises in the disengaging of neck, arms, and ribs" (*Collected Dialogues* 1368 [*Laws* 7:796b]). Stand-up wrestling, unlike Kleist's entangled bodies, is a form of "analysis" in the German sense of "zergliedern": meaning both to "analyze"/"dissect" as well as to "dismember"—literally, to separate limbs (*Glieder*). In this sense, "Von der Überlegung" opposes "On the Marionette Theater"—regardless of whether we read the latter in the traditional *geschichtsphilosophisch* manner or in the modern deconstructive sense of the text dismembering itself like the body of the marionette ("*Gliedermann*").[17] "Von der Überlegung," conversely, presents us with a body-technology of joined people and limbs that is a radical form of body-knowledge, resistant both to an affirmative model of history and to a dismembering analysis of deconstruction.[18] The "Zergliederung" of individuals—and of individual parts—is overwhelmed by thought's history in overlapping bodies.

Socrates' attempt to disentangle thinking from not-thinking by disentangling wrestlers offers a final paradox to Kleist's essay—as well as a clue to the hidden meaning of its subtitle, "Eine Paradoxe." The German word for reflection that Kleist examines, *Überlegung*, never achieves the disentangling that Socrates proposes because of this word's own history not only in wrestling but also in a specific Ancient argument. This argument concerned wrestling *and* thinking; specifically, Socrates' paradoxical attempt to invent, on the backs of agonistic bodies, a form of thinking that was divorced from these same bodies, or at least from these bodies' knottedness with other bodies. Kleist's exposure around 1800 of thought's hidden history in this knot gives the lie to the hopeful *Geschichtsphilosophien* of his day, from Kant's to Schiller's to Hegel's, as well as to the more modern, deconstructive hope of unraveling this knot. Regardless of how loudly we "celebrate" *Überlegung* "to the four corners of the globe," we can never escape its historical entanglement in violent and ecstatic bodies that refuse to be separated—both from it and from themselves.

Notes

* I wish to thank Lara Pehar for her bibliographic assistance.

1. "Wenn sie [die Überlegung] vorher, oder in dem Augenblick der Entscheidung selbst, ins Spiel tritt, so scheint sie nur die zum Handeln nötige Kraft, die aus dem herrlichen Gefühl quillt, zu verwirren, zu hemmen und zu unterdrücken." I use the English translations by both David Constantine ("Reflection") and Philip B. Miller ("On Thinking Things Over"), taking the most accurate parts of each and making emendations wherever necessary.

2. Blamberger, for example, disregards the work's fictional conceit, claiming that Kleist, not the narrator, speaks directly to us of the analogy of sports and life: Kleist advises us towards a "non-cognitive, so to speak seismographic capacity to feel states of the organism, of one's own and the opponent's organism—precisely not body movements steered by the mind"; Kleist is here a "theoretician" of sports and of life, arguing that reflex must come before "reflection" because "thinking can only delay action" ("Der Fußballer" 7-8). The sports sociologist, Swen Körner, writing together with Blamberger, comes to a similar conclusion about Kleist and "Von der Überlegung" (Blamberger and Körner, esp. 27-28, 28 n. 11).

3. See Kleist's Nov. 22, 1810 anecdote on "two famous English boxers" as well as his essay, "On the Marionette Theater," which closes with the description of a fencing match (Dec. 12-15, 1810) (3:270-71, 344-45).

4. Kleist employs this literalization strategy in other works, too, as Paul de Man (289-90) and Helmut J. Schneider ("Deconstruction" 209-26) demonstrate in the example of "On the Marionette Theater." Using the physical metaphors of "standing" and "falling," Schneider reveals similar tactics in additional Kleist texts (e.g., *Robert Guiskard, Der Prinz von Homburg, Penthesilea*) ("Standing"). Gerhard Neumann delineates Kleist's play with body metaphors around the Biblical "fall" in "On the Marionette Theater" and *Der zerbrochene Krug* (*The Broken Jug*) (17-26). Although Schneider briefly suggests the possibility that Kleist undertakes a similar strategy in "Von der Überlegung," Schneider does not follow through with an interpretation ("Standing" 509).

5. See the preceding note.

6. Kleist's use of "*Reflexion*" in "On the Marionette Theater" (3:345) points to his well-known readings in Kant—as well as in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel—all of whom contributed to *Reflexion*'s new philosophical currency around 1800. On the various theorizations of *Reflexion* around 1800, especially in Kant, see Schnädelbach (61-133).

7. On the history of the concept of reflection, see Schnädelbach 13-35.

8. As the Grimms point out, *überlegen*'s abstract meaning began appearing regularly in the seventeenth century but only became part of "general" usage in the eighteenth (23, col. 385). For more on *überlegen* and *Überlegung*, see 23, cols. 384-89 and 389-90, respectively.

9. A similar etymology appears in *Duden* ("im Ringkampf oben liegen zu kommen"; Drosdowski 6:2657).

10. On Kleist's interest in boxing and fencing, see note 3 above.

11. N.K. Sandars' more literal version reads: "they grappled, holding each other like bulls.…they snorted like bulls locked together" (*Epic of Gilgamesh* 67).

12. On *hamma* as a wrestling technique, see Plutarch 3:187, 4:7 (*Fabius Maximus* 23.2; *Alcibiades* 2.2).

13. For the various sources describing Thetis' transformations into what J.G. Frazer's catalogues as "fire, water, wind, a tree, a bird, a tiger, a lion, a serpent, and a cuttlefish," see Frazer's explanatory note to his translation of Apollodorus 2:67-68 n. 6. Regarding Peleus' injuries while attempting to rape Thetis, see Pausanias: "Peleus is taking hold of her, and from the hand of Thetis a snake is darting at Peleus" (Pausanias 487 [v.18.5]).

14. On "the unparalleled constellation of affirmative philosophies of history (*Geschichtsphilosophie*)" around 1800 (Kant, Fichte, Hegel) as well as on Marx's later agreement with this classical *Geschichtsphilosophie*'s main idea (*Leitgedanke*), see Angehrn 76-119 (here, 76).

15. Traditional interpretations conflated the voice of this fictional narrator with Kleist's, claiming that Kleist advocated a return, through complete knowledge, to a "lost paradise" (see von Wiese, esp. 217). More recent interpretations have correctly followed Paul de Man's claim that Kleist ironizes this position by having his narrator mouth it offhandedly—while "distracted" (de Man 263-90).

16. Following de Man's lead, Helmut J. Schneider demonstrates that "On the Marionette Theater" employs a similar strategy of literalization to demonstrate "the shaky character of philosophical language" ("Deconstruction" 210).

17. Schneider brings this reading to its apogee in "Deconstruction" (for his discussion of "zergliedern," see 215). A decade earlier, de Man similarly pointed out that the word "zerstreut" (distracted) at the end of "On the Marionette Theater" secondarily signifies "dismembered," thereby signaling the text's larger program of self-deconstruction (289).

18. I thus disagree with Schneider's implication that a literalizing reading of "Von der Überlegung" would lead to a self-deconstruction similar to the one he proposes for "On the Marionette Theater" ("Standing" 509, n. 7).

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