

[Eka to Leonardo Olschki, translated from the German by Robert Lerner]

22 Alexander Street
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Dearest Leonardo,

The microcosmic, yet every-summer catastrophe comes nearer – the necessity of cleaning off my many desks so that at least in places the wood of the table becomes visible. And as I looked sighing at my Augean stables, I ran a hand under a pile of papers of all kinds and drew out your letter from Palm Springs that by now is three months old. But matters of *die Firma* are never ephemeral or bound by time, and so it doesn't make too much difference that my response comes so late. I was on the road rather often in the spring—going to conferences for various reasons. And scarcely was I was really back home again when Lilo de' Negri packed up. It's extremely sad to have lost her: I had a genuine human being there, with a naturally bright temperament and a profound sense of humor, and adept in all the appropriate languages (except whining: of that I taught her quite a bit, but not systematically). It's good for the de' Negris to be going to California. They're both looking forward to it, and you consequently will have somewhat more "engagement" beyond the maintenance of the little Adonis-Garden that you sensibly bought yourselves.

Lilo will also be able to confirm for you that I haven't done much, and that what I did out of a sense of duty was mostly just pressed out with extreme boredom. I've attached a little, totally unimportant Symposium lecture, which I did *not* deliver because I left my kidney at the time to be worked into steak and kidney pie. It took four years (because Herr Klibansky didn't send in his contribution) for this lecture to be printed, and meanwhile most of it is better to read in the *Two Bodies*. But I'm ordering you a copy of the Panofsky *Festschrift*, in which several things may interest you. The subject of my contribution will interest you as a subject - that I know; much less likely to is what I have to say about it. I find it unsatisfying because nothing is so air-tight as I'd like. Others find it less bad – but the author knows, most likely alone, the better verdict. I just got the proofs for *Gods in Uniform*. It's also not very good, but at least it's new, and it amused me somewhat.

You see, my friend, what I'm doing is pure fooling around, and the *Synthronoi* are weighing on me like the pouting of Bardot. But if I don't get it done now, it will never be done, and I've lived long enough with abortions – something you don't know about because you finish all your work, while I have files upon files of unfinished things lying around, always three-quarters finished, never completely; always waiting, all those lectures to be published together, and then not doing. I should of course have brought them to press as they were. Now it's an ordeal that doesn't bring one anything new – in terms of life – but is just insipid.

Soon I'm going to flee from all of that and go to Athens. In August I'm meeting Bowra there and will go with him, as often before, to Mykonos and Rhodes -- in the daytime lying on the beach in the sun and at night having good conversation with plenty of wine. I also intend to interrogate him on Greek prayers, which he knows so well. In the new edition (just out) of his "Greek Lyric Poetry" he discussed in Appendix I a wonderful prayer to the Fates that is attributed to Simonides probably incorrectly but is surely from his time. When one reads this prayer, or also that of the Chryses right at the very beginning of the Iliad ("*Klythi moi Argyrotox*") and also many others, then it becomes clear how inferior – simply as prayers – all Christian prayers are, which I as "liturgist" indeed know a lot about. The disjointed "Our

Father” is totally “voiceless,” because in it, as in all Christian prayers, the dimension of fate and the divinity as effective power is missing. Hölderlin (in *Der Einzige* and also elsewhere) was able to carry this dimension into the Christian. But in actual Christian prayer of the Middle Ages all that is missing, for one spoke with the Hellenic gods -- even given all the modesty and reservation in regard to hubris -- still always as equals, if not even taking equal steps. Such could never be allowed in Christianity.

But why am I bothering you with pointless, half-baked things, just because I fell into chatter? I'm taking the Liberté at the end of June and will go on to Athens from Paris, certainly 10 lbs heavier. I want to take a long-planned trip to Salonica because of all the Byzantine and late-antique things there, and if possible another to Damascus, not in the tracks of Paul (heaven forfend) but instead to see Palmyra and Baalbek, and, after so many years in America, to come closer to the origins for at least a few hours -- and to that belong oases and camels, and, moreover, I myself.

Have you seen Giesey's book on the burial of the French kings? It's very good and covers a lot that is of interest. I saw Cherniavsky at Dumbarton Oaks; he has a call to Chicago and a book in Yale Press. Also the Ševčenkos. Margie must already be in Berkeley and you will probably see her soon. Benson can't manage the jump from desk to press while Phelan publishes a lot. But I'm relieved of the responsibility for former students, and it's only interest for them that remains.

This is a long, too long, letter, and even then it hardly scratches the surface of the agenda of die Firma, which even a long evening with you would not suffice to trim down. Health-wise everything's in order, blood pressure 134 over 70: thus infantile and juvenile delinquent. Otherwise the course of senility advances with zest. I hope all is going well with both of you and that you're enjoying the cool summer in Berkeley. Best greetings to Katherinchen and to you yourself as always everything heartfelt.

Yours

EKa. [signed]