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**Modernist Sculpture Parks  
and Their Ideological Contexts—  
On the Basis of the Oeuvres by Gustav Vigeland,  
Bernhard Hoetger and Einar Jónsson**

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore the ideological contexts of sculptural works by Northern modernists: Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943) from Norway, Bernhard Hoetger (1874–1949) from Germany, and the Icelander Einar Jónsson (1874–1954). The original iconographies of the Vigelandsanlegget in Oslo, Hoetger's Platanenhein in Darmstadt, as well as Jónsson's *oeuvres* collected in Reykjavik, will be interpreted in relation to wider discourses—i.e. Nietzschean influence, a particular taste for the esoteric (theosophy) and, last but not least, a noticeable aversion to classical form.

Keywords

early Nordic modernism, sculpture parks

Anguish! Anguish! I am o'erwhelmed  
by heavenly visions and greatness of worlds  
by the motley whirl of the living.  
Myriad—voices the All rushes on me,  
confuses with thick-crowding visions—  
that I, who should in the midst of the zenith  
sit like immovable eye, solitary,  
am whirl'd on myself, like a mote among motes.

Henrik Wergeland, *To an Illustrious Poet*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in: I. Ch. Gröndahl, *Henrik Wergeland. The Norwegian Poet*, trans. I. Gröndahl, London 1919, p. 26.

The suggestive image of “the motley whirl of the living” that appears in the motto—taken from an ode written by Henrik Wergeland, a notable Norwegian poet—evokes numerous associations. It may be regarded as a reference to the Wheel of Life, a symbol of the endless cycle of beings—each of them, “like a mote among motes,” in a majestic dance growing toward the sunlight. Spatial metaphors and symbols representing the concept of infinity, wholeness and life-giving power, such as Thor’s hammer, Odin’s cross, kolovrat, dharmachakra, mandala or yin-yang, various signs which take form of a turning circle or a swirling vortex, are all characteristic of early modern imagery, especially in Northern parts of Europe. Therefore, there is a deep intellectual affinity linking, for example, Edvard Munch’s *Metabolismus* with the spirit of vitalism expressed in Gustav Vigeland’s *Wheel of Life* (*Livshjulet*; Fig. 1) or Bernhard Hoetger’s *Tree of Life* (*Lebensbaum*), dedicated to Odin, with Einar Jónsson’s *Birth of Psyche* (*Fæðing Psyche*), a bas-relief with a composition based on an equilateral cross.

Unquestionably, the notion of completeness, often referred to by early modernists, will later find its echo in the Jungian theory of archetypes, in particular with the Self, represented by the mandala. Closer to our times, this will be expressed in a beautiful poem by Allen Ginsberg—*Sunflower Sutra*. Clearly, however, it was Nietzschean thought that exerted a profound influence among the intellectuals and artists of the first decades of the twentieth century.

In his famous study *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (*The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*), published in 1872, Friedrich Nietzsche introduces a distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian—in other words, between the glory of passivity and the glory of activity, contemplation and intoxication. Thus, on the one hand, we have a dream-like world immersed in harmony and brightness, the Socratic *sophrosyne*,<sup>2</sup> “the fully wise calm of the god of images,”<sup>3</sup> while on the other, we have the domain of musical ecstasy and transgression, the “piercing scream” of generations,<sup>4</sup> “the exuberant fecundity of the world will.”<sup>5</sup> Those elements or powers, apparently antagonistic but in fact complementary, create a perfect

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<sup>2</sup> That is: “temperance”, the beauty of measure. See e.g.: P. van Tongeren, “Measure and Bildung”, [in:] *Nietzsche, Culture and Education*, ed. T. E. Hart, Farnham–Burlington 2009, pp. 97–112.

<sup>3</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. I. Johnston, Arlington 2009, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 58.

unity. It is worth mentioning that in the same study, the German philosopher uses another rhetorical figure of unity—"the circle of science" in which a pure logic that "finally bites its own tail" meets a new form of knowledge referred to as "tragic insight."<sup>6</sup> *Such rhetoric, accentuating inner dualities and ambiguities, must have seemed extraordinarily appealing to those artists who had witnessed the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with all its tensions and conflicts.*

The main purpose of my article is to explore the ideological contexts of sculptural works by northern modernists: Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943) from Norway, Bernhard Hoetger (1874–1949) from Germany, and the Icelandic Einar Jónsson (1874–1954). I will focus particularly on sculpture parks created by the aforementioned artists—for example, the famous Vigeland Park in Oslo, Hoetger's Platanenpark in *Mathildenhöhe* (one of the relics of Darmstadt artists' colony established by Prince Ernst Ludwig) and Jónsson's Museum in Reykjavík, with its beautiful sculpture garden and building designed in cooperation with Einar Erlendsson. It is extremely important to stress that the role of sculpture parks far exceeds what we would call an outdoor museum, since they both reflect and shape the mentality of the epoch.

The abundant and corresponding iconographies used by Vigeland, Jónsson and Hoetger need to be interpreted in relation to wider discourses: the above-mentioned Nietzschean influence, a revival of interest in Norse mythology as well as an intellectual turn toward the Orient, along with a noticeable aversion to Greco-Roman antiquity ("classical" form as a whole)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> In a paradoxical way, the early modernist aversion to "classical" form does not comport with Nietzsche's deep and enduring fascination with "the Greeks." This fascination is probably best expressed in passage 15 of *The Birth of Tragedy*: "Almost every era and cultural stage has at some point sought in a profoundly ill-tempered frame of mind to free itself of the Greeks, because *in comparison with the Greeks*, all their own achievements, apparently fully original and admired in all sincerity, suddenly appeared to *lose their colour and life* and shrivelled to unsuccessful copies, in fact, to caricatures." *Ibidem*, p. 52.

That aversion, however, harmonizes with the *perspectivist* orientation—the orientation shared by Nietzsche and his artistic followers. Douglas Kellner, in his article dedicated to *Nietzsche's Critique of Mass Culture*, points to another interesting paradox: "While Nietzsche is a major critic of modernity, he also exemplifies its spirit and ethos. Although he argues against democracy, liberalism, and various progressive social movements, Nietzsche's attack is at least partially carried out in a modern Enlightenment style, negating existing ideas in the name of a better future. Despite his keen appreciation for past cultures like classical antiquity and defence of some premodern

and, last but not least, a particular taste for—using the Welschian term—“transcultural” eclecticism. I deliberately used the term “transcultural” in order to emphasize the fact that Scandinavian modernists provoked a significant shift within the artistic geography of Europe. At the turn of the century, Paris and London were still the main centres of art, but Oslo and Berlin<sup>8</sup> had started to gradually build their own reputations.

In Berlin, the Scandinavian bohemia, centred around August Strindberg, used to spend their evenings in *The Black Piglet* (*Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*). Among its frequenters was the charismatic Polish writer Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927). In *The Black Piglet*, Przybyszewski made acquaintances with Vigeland, Edvard Munch, Ola Hansson, Hans Jaeger, Christian Krogh along with many others and also met his future wife there—Dagny Juel. Undoubtedly, it was Przybyszewski who contributed much to the popularity of Norwegian artists in central Europe. In his substantial article of 1895—first published in 1897—*On the paths of the Soul* (*Auf der Wegen der Seele*), the Polish writer calls Vigeland a “Magus,” “a great philosopher and exuberant visionary” and, in an exaggerated tone, he states: “Magus is the only one who stands above all, who venerates as his forefather not Adam, the father of the herd, but Samyâsa, the father of the Only One.”<sup>9</sup>

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values, Nietzsche is very *future and present-oriented*, attacking tradition while calling for a *new society and culture*. An impetus toward innovation, involving negation of the old and creation of the new, is therefore at the very heart of Nietzsche's complex and often enigmatic theoretical work, which, in the spirit of modernity, affirms development and transcendence of the old as crucial values for contemporary individuals and society.” D. Kellner, “Nietzsche's Critique of Mass Culture”, [online] <https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/kell22.htm> [accessed: 5.12.2017].

<sup>8</sup> “There were many Scandinavian artists living in Berlin in the 1890s. A general German displeasure with all things French following the French-German War in 1870–1871 also contributed to the popularity of Scandinavian artists in the city.” T. O. B. Nielsen, “Gustav Vigeland and Stanislaw Przybyszewski”, trans. J. Engberg, [in:] *On the Paths of the Soul. Gustav Vigeland and Polish Sculpture around 1900 / Na drogach duszy. Gustav Vigeland a rzeźba polska około 1900 / På sjelens veier. Gustav Vigeland og polsk skulptur rundt 1900*, an exhibition catalogue, red. B. Leszczyńska-Cyganik, Kraków 2010, p. 234.

<sup>9</sup> S. Przybyszewski, “On the Paths of the Soul”, trans. E. Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, [in:] *On the Paths of the Soul. Gustav Vigeland and Polish Sculpture around 1900*, an exhibition catalogue, ed. B. Leszczyńska-Cyganik, Kraków 2010, pp. 271–272.



Fig. 1. Gustav Vigeland, *Wheel of Life*, The Vigeland Park in Oslo, photo: M. Stępnik



Fig. 2. Gustav Vigeland, *The Monolith* (detail), The Vigeland Park in Oslo, photo: M. Stępnik

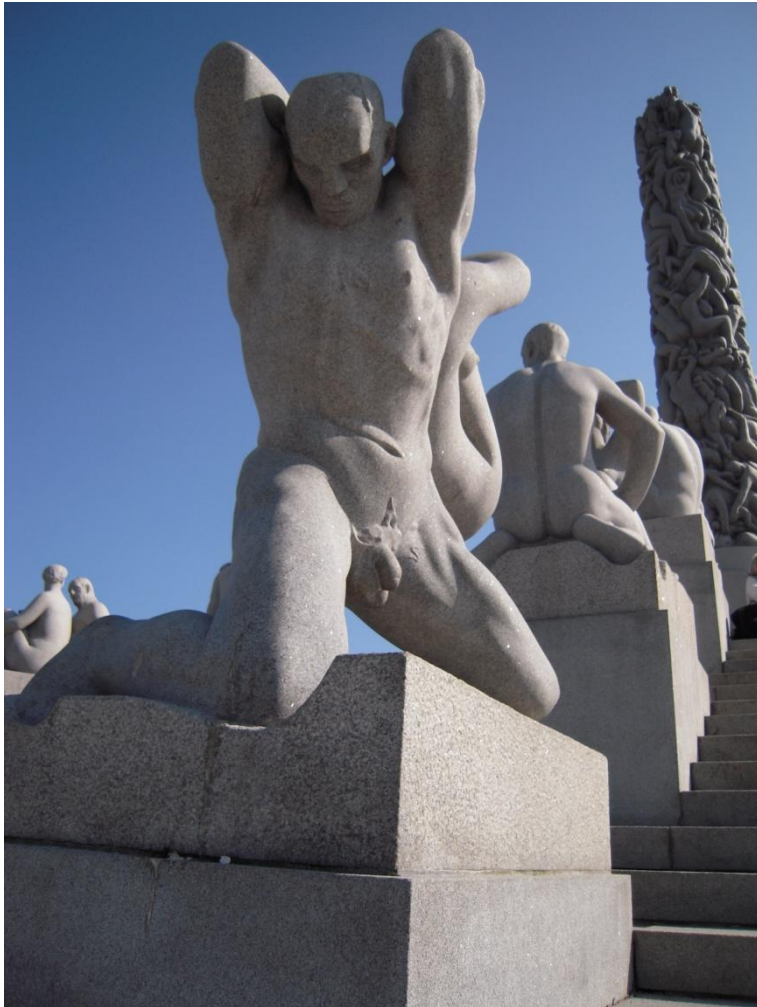


Fig. 3. Gustav Vigeland, The Vigeland Park in Oslo,  
photo: M. Stępnik



Fig. 4. Gustav Vigeland, The Vigeland Park in Oslo,  
photo: M. Stępnik



Fig. 5. Bernhard Hoetger, *The Resurrection*, The Plane Tree Grove in Darmstadt.  
Wikimedia Commons



Fig. 6. Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavik, view from the garden,  
photo: M. Stepnik





Fig. 7. Einar Jónsson, *The Birth of Psyche*,  
Courtesy Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavik.



Fig. 8. Einar Jónsson, *The Rest*,  
Courtesy Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavik.

### Vigeland—"a western dialect with soft consonants"

Among Vigeland's numerous supporters<sup>10</sup> was Gunnar Heiberg, whom he met during his stay in Paris. In his famous article *The City with the Fountain*—proclaiming the necessity of erecting a monumental sculpture in Oslo (then Kristiania)—Heiberg, in a metaphorical way, describes the artist's sculptural language as "a western dialect, with soft consonants."<sup>11</sup>

As a matter of fact, that "softness" may be interpreted as coming from an aversion towards Greco-Roman antiquity and "classical" forms in art as a whole. Indeed, even in his earliest works, such as *Hagar and Ishmael* (1889) or *Accursed* first exhibited in Copenhagen (1891–1892), Vigeland's rhetoric adopts an individual character, far from academic patterns. One might say that even the titles of the aforementioned works reveal sympathy for outcasts and outsiders. "Empty tragic group with wild hair and fluttering draperies" is how the artist described the sculpture collection of Glyptoteket, in a letter written to Sophus Larpent.<sup>12</sup> In addition, while visiting the British Museum he remarked: "No, for me, of all the Greeks there is only Phidias. And the only one after him who dared to break all the bonds of human movements was Michelangelo."<sup>13</sup> It is worth mentioning, that *Abel Monument* unveiled in 1908 has often been compared to Buonarroti's work: *Allegory of Victory*. However, in my opinion it may also be associated with Gianlorenzo Bernini's *David*. All in all, such an anti-classical attitude is followed by a deep respect for gothic art<sup>14</sup>—that beautifully "barbaric" form which he would learn when engaged in the restoration of Trondheim Cathedral.

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<sup>10</sup> Vigeland was also supported by, among others, a Norwegian art historian Jens Thiis, a writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, as well as some notable Swedes: art critics Tor Hedberg and Klas Fåhræus, and a banker Ernst Thiel.

<sup>11</sup> "I recognized the voice" says Heiberg in the same place. "It belongs to a great artist, the only titanic one of all those who have lived and who now live among us." After: R. Stang, *Gustav Vigeland. The Sculptor and His Works*, trans. A. Grosjean, Oslo 1965, p. 120. And later, in the same article, he states: "And I thought: That would be something for all the citizens of Oslo who have ambitions for their city, and want to make it a big city, if ever the day should come when Norway's capital is known the world over as 'the City with the Fountain.'" Ibidem, p. 122.

<sup>12</sup> After: T. O. B. Nielsen, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>13</sup> After: R. Stang, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> As Vigeland states in one of his letters: "It is quite certain that I have learned something from Gothic art which classical art could not have taught me." Ibidem, p. 54.

The real breakthrough came after Vigeland's visit to Auguste Rodin's studio in Paris.<sup>15</sup> Two bas-reliefs entitled *Hell* (the first version completed in 1894) and *Resurrection* (1900)<sup>16</sup> bear a notable resemblance to the famous *La Porte de l'Enfer*. To me, however, Vigeland's *Resurrection* could be compared to Blakean imagery, especially to the visions of *The Last Judgment*—compositions which evoke a sensation of revolving movement. (Obviously, one might have the same *impression when looking at* the *Monolith* or the *Wheel of Life* in Frogner Park). This resemblance, though, is probably coincidental—I have no data to ascertain whether Vigeland knew the heritage of William Blake—yet it is still a striking coincidence. In the writings of the great Englishman, Urizen, the satanic figure that represents cold Reason, is opposed to Urthona as the Zoa (“living one”) of creativity and Imagination—the power that saves the world. The original cosmological system developed by Blake, corresponds to the concept of a human being as a complete unity—*homo maximus* merged with the Universe. Moreover, it is thought provoking that Swedenborgian philosophy—so often praised by Blake—was also widely received by intellectual circles at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Hope and despair, the joys of youth and sorrows of old age, the Apollonian brightness and the Dionysian madness... The Vigeland Park may be regarded as a sculptural “microcosmos” reflecting the entire human universe. The whole complex covers an area of 80 acres (ca 32 ha) and its main axis is 850 metres long (ca 929 yd). It contains 194 sculptures in bronze, granite and wrought-iron. The long history of this *magnum opus* traces back to the year 1906 when a plaster model of a fountain was exhibited. Ragna Stang, a Norwegian historian and a daughter of Jens Thiis, in her brilliant study dedicated to Vigeland precisely describes “the moment in 1921 when, as a mature man of 52, he put his signature to the most remarkable contract ever entered into by an artist and an official body.” The uniqueness of the project lies in the fact that “Vigeland was to give the city of Oslo the rights to all he had created and all he would subsequently create. In return, the city would give him a studio large enough to permit him to bring into being all the works he carried within him.”<sup>17</sup> (He moved to the new studio in 1923).

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<sup>15</sup> Ragna Stang claims that: “Vigeland never liked to hear anyone mention Rodin's influence on him, yet there is no ignoring it. It is true that he never actually became a student of Rodin's, but he did go to his studio several times.” *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Stang on Vigeland's *Resurrection*: “There is no unifying composition here, only people floating upwards, dreamlike, with eyes closed. Like silent shadows the figures glide past.” *Ibidem*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

In 1942, the carving of *The Monolith* (one of the principal works, created by three artisans) was completed. Finally, in 1947, several years after the artist's death, Vigelandsanlegget was opened to the public.

*The Human Pillar* (Fig. 2)—as this is an alternative name for *The Monolith*—rises on the top of monumental stairs, in the middle of a vast plateau, bordered with a balustrade with beautifully designed wrought-iron gates. On the steps of the rounded stairs there are 36 granite sculptures arranged in radial order—thus, forming 12 rows—completed in years 1916–1936. Their iconography depicting life stages corresponds with the crowning 17-metre high “obelisk” or “menhir.” The pillar is entwined by naked human bodies, male and female, rising up and smoothly circulating towards the top (Fig. 3).

Its meaning may be interpreted in many ways: as a sculptural ode to immortal growth and fertility or an apotheosis of the life-giving sun. In fact, the Monolith takes the form of a sundial, and just next to it there is another sundial decorated with signs of the Zodiac. Ragna Stang points to Nietzsche's influence, namely, the suggestive image of “generation trampled on generation” that appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>18</sup> It is hard not to agree with the author, given that the pillar may be treated as an explicit symbol of male dominance. In parallel, the immediate echoes of Nietzschean philosophy may also be found in many of Munch's paintings, (here, the Oslo University Murals of 1909–1914 provide the best example).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, pp. 48–49.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Colin Trodd, in his article dedicated to Nietzsche's influence on modern art, investigates in what ways Nietzsche's vitalism and “cosmic Dionysianism” is reflected in the above-mentioned murals, commissioned by the University of Oslo: “*The Human Mountain* represents the zenith of Munch's Dionysian worldview [...]. It depicts a fragment of an endless mountain composed of knotted human forms. Some figures cling to the mountainside, others become incorporated into the rock-face, but all seek the splintered rays of light emitted by the sun. What Munch creates is a crystallization of the life-force, a mountain world where the struggle of energetic life is expressed through the pulsing interplay of geometric and serpentine lines. A pictorial hymn, then, to Zarathustra's self-vision: ‘Out of silent mountains and thunderstorms of pain my soul rushes into the valleys’ [...]. Munch's fusion of the fluxional and adamantine, which recalls Nietzsche's cosmic Dionysianism, was continued in the central panel, *The Sun*, 1909–1911 [...]. This composition, the apogee of Nietzschean vitalism [...] presents the sun as the living center that gives form to the world. In other words, the human body is not the measure of all things. In place of man, a sign of full knowing, we are given an image of ‘solar love’, a sign of full being [...]. Like Zarathustra, Munch's striving for wholeness takes him away from society to the primal oneness of the universe, a universe defined in vitalistic terms: striations of light, bands of energy, irradiated

I think that even the paved labyrinth that covers the area around *The Fountain* may be somehow associated with *Morgenröthe* (*The Dawn of Day*, 1881), where the philosopher alludes to a labyrinth as the form that best symbolizes the modern mentality. Here, in one of his aphorisms (no. 169), Nietzsche says, commenting on “the Greek genius foreign to us:”

Oriental or modern, Asiatic or European: compared with the ancient Greeks, everything is characterised by enormity of size and by the revelling in great masses as the expression of the sublime, whilst in Paestum, Pompeii, and Athens we are astonished, when contemplating Greek architecture, to see with what small masses the Greeks were able to express the sublime, and how they loved to express it thus. In the same way, how simple were the Greeks in the idea which they formed of themselves! How far we surpass them in the knowledge of man! Again, how full of *labyrinths* would our souls and our conceptions of our souls appear in comparison with theirs! If we had to venture upon an architecture after the style of our own souls (we are too cowardly for that!) a *labyrinth* would have to be our model. That music which is peculiar to us, and which really expresses us, lets this be clearly seen! (for in music men let themselves go, because they think there is no one who can see them hiding behind their music).<sup>20</sup>

But, getting back to the possible symbolic readings of Vigeland’s *Monolith*, one might be so bold as to assume that it conveys biblical meaning. By this, I mean that the number of the naked figures—which is 121—might have been inspired by Psalm 121 called “a song of ascents” or “a song of degrees.”

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lines of force.” C. Trodd, “Revitalizing Romanticism; or, Reflections on the Nietzschean Aesthetic and the Modern Imagination”, [in:] *A Companion to Modern Art*, ed. P. Meecham, Hoboken (NJ) 2017, p. 26. It is also worth mentioning that Munch’s fascination with Nietzsche is explicitly expressed in his painting of 1906—the posthumous portrait of the great philosopher. See: Edvard Munch, *Portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 1906, oil on canvas, 201/160 cm, The Thiel Gallery (Thielska Galleriet), Stockholm.

<sup>20</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, trans. J. McFarland Kennedy, New York 1911. The similar metaphor appears in the aphorism no. 230: “At the present time men’s sentiments on moral things run in such *labyrinthic* paths that, while we demonstrate morality to one man by virtue of its utility, we refute it to another on account of this utility.” Ibidem, p. 198. The topos of the labyrinth is also present, among others, in Nietzsche’s poetry, namely: his *Klage der Ariadne* (*Lament of Ariadne*), inserted in his *Dionysos-Dithyramben*, written in 1888 and first published in 1891). See also e.g. K. Reinhardt, “Nietzsche’s Lament of Ariadne”, *Interpretation*, 1977, 6(3), pp. 204–224. It is worth mentioning, that the figure of Ariadne, sleeping on Naxos, abandoned by Theseus—and very much resembling the classical marble sculpture of Ariadne, housed in Musei Vaticani—appears several times in paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, *il grande metafisico*, and a great admirer of Nietzsche. See e.g. G. de Chirico, *Le gioie e gli enigmi di un’ora strana* (*The Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour*), 1913, oil on canvas, 83.7 × 129.5 cm, private collection.

("I lift my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?"<sup>21</sup>) In this context, it is significant that Vigeland once revealed that "The column may be said to be related to Ruben's *Resurrection* and *Descent in Hell* and *Judgement Day* in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich."<sup>22</sup> On another occasion, he said that the concept came to his mind when he saw a rolled photograph of his *Resurrection* relief. Once, when asked about the meaning of the Monolith, he enigmatically replied: "It is my religion."<sup>23</sup>

Vigeland—who grew up in a very traditional family—once wrote: "My childhood is always with me."<sup>24</sup> One needs to be aware that the children sculpted by the artist, together with the most famous bronze statue of *Sinna-taggen* ("angry little boy"), so willingly photographed by amused tourists, convey a variety of possible meanings. For instance, it would be fascinating to investigate the awkward relationship between Gustav and his younger, no less gifted brother Emanuel,<sup>25</sup> although this topic deserves a thorough exploration in a separate study. Most of all, however, the above-cited statement may be regarded as a symptom or a perfect "illustration" of the mechanism of regression as described by Otto Rank in his study *The Trauma of Birth* (*Das Trauma der Geburt*, 1924). In this essential book, the Austrian psychoanalyst argues that all kinds of fears and phobias originate from the same source—the anxiety of birth. As he considers in *Der Doppelgänger* (*The Double*), first published in 1925,<sup>26</sup> the neurotic anxiety of death is just another side of the same coin.<sup>27</sup> So, in a sense, the idea of the cyclicity of existence, or rather: existences, may serve here as a spiritual remedy.

Regression, as an ego defence mechanism leading to the reversion to earlier stages of development, even to the one *in utero*, evokes obvious associations with the element of water (amniotic fluids). In this context, it is striking

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<sup>21</sup> "My Help Comes from the Lord", [online] <https://www.bible.com/pl/bible/59/PSA.121.esv> [accessed: 21.06.2017].

<sup>22</sup> R. Stang, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Emanuel Vigeland Museum official website, [online] <http://www.emanuelvigeland.museum.no/museum.htm> [accessed: 21.06.2017].

<sup>26</sup> See English editions: O. Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, trans. E. J. Lieberman, New York 1993; *idem*, *The Double. A Psychoanalytic Study*, trans. H. Tucker Jr., Chapel Hill 2009.

<sup>27</sup> As Rank reckons in his *Doppelgänger*: "One motif which reveals a certain connection between the fear of death and the narcissistic attitude is the wish to remain forever young. On the one hand, this wish represents libidinous fixation of the individual onto a definite developmental stage of the ego; and on the other, it expresses the fear of becoming old, a fear which is really the fear of death. Thus Wilde's Dorian says, 'When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.'" *Ibidem*, p. 77.

that water is the leitmotif in Bernhard Hoetger's Plane Tree Grove, where, for example, one can find an excerpt from Goethe's *Song of the Spirits over the Waters*. It is also significant that it was *The Fountain* that was made one of the most crucial pieces in the whole complex both by the Norwegian and the German sculptor.

In the middle of Vigeland's fountain there is a sculptural group of "six nude male figures lifting a bowl high above their heads,"<sup>28</sup> as he wrote in a letter to Heiberg. The rectangular basin is symmetrically flanked by twenty bronze tree-groups standing on granite parapets. The trees form "natural" frames embracing and "dialoguing" with human figures representing the different stages of life: tiny dormant babies, girls and boys chatting and joyfully playing in the branches (Fig. 4), young people waiting for their fate—like the so-called *Swallow* beautifully plunging into the unknown, mature couples struggling with one another, elderly people with bodies bent to the ground and, at the end, deadly remains. As Ragna Stang observes, the artist "purposely treated Death's skeleton body and the tree's branches in the same way [...] The skeleton's feet are placed so as to suggest the return of energy, via the trunk of life's tree, to the earth we have come from."<sup>29</sup> The same concept has been used in the design of the bas-relief frieze adorning the walls of the pool. Here, human remains are accompanied by animal skeletons, which makes us think of ourselves as belonging to the universe of Nature. (As we will see later, the Platanenpark in Darmstadt might even be interpreted as a temple of Nature). I use a capital letter here in order to indicate the pantheistic aspect of early modern imagery.

It also seems to be evident that the bronze trees incorporate the ancient symbol of Yggdrasil—the Tree of Life. And, last but not least, in one of Vigeland's poems a personified tree denotes spiritual forces. In the last stanza, we read:

Still the buds sprout on the tree of my life,  
 buds taking the sap,  
 sucking the marrow from the twigs and branches  
 which I know would endure—were  
 their nourishment not seized by the others.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> R. Stang, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 134.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 181.



## Hoetger—"lights and shadows"

We must build a city, a whole city! Anything less would be pointless!  
government should give us [...] a field, and there we shall *create a world*.

Joseph Maria Olbrich<sup>31</sup>

In an extensive catalogue published in 2013, dedicated to The Plane Tree Grove, Hoetger's *magnum opus* has been described as "a non-European *hortus conclusus*"<sup>32</sup> reflecting modern utopias, as "an idiosyncratic open-air cultic site with relief altars, pitcher-bearers, jackal vases and a tombstone as a monument to new life."<sup>33</sup> (Perhaps the latter is an allusion to a sculpture entitled *Dying Mother with Child* whose theme was inspired by the untimely death of a brilliant German painter, and Hoetger's personal friend, Paula Modersohn-Becker). In his essay, Philipp Gutbrod, the Director of the Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, recalls the early history of the grove that, "measuring approximately 125 metres by 40, was laid out in the mid-nineteenth century on the Mathildenhöhe (an elevation outside the city named after Mathilde Caroline of Bavaria, a princess who had married Grand Duke Louis III), and planted with rows of trees of equal length."<sup>34</sup> The origins of Hoetger's project trace back to the year 1911, when the sculptor was appointed to the Artist's Colony (Künstlerkolonie) by its founder, Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig (Ernest Louis), a grandson of Queen Victoria and a brother of the future Tsarina of Russia Alexandra Fedorovna. It is worth mentioning that, in the previous year, the artist created a marble torso entitled *Jugend* (*Youth*), commissioned and, in due course, enthusiastically received by the sapient duke.

<sup>31</sup> After: H. Bahr, *Bildung. Essays*, Leipzig 1900, p. 45. Olbrich's words have also been quoted by Sabine Welsch: S. Welsch, "Chronicles of the Mathildenhöhe", [online] [http://raumlabor.net/wpcontent/uploads/2014/03/mathildenho%CC%88he\\_english.pdf](http://raumlabor.net/wpcontent/uploads/2014/03/mathildenho%CC%88he_english.pdf) [accessed: 21.06.2017].

<sup>32</sup> P. Gutbrod, "Bhavagad Gita and Anti-Pietà. Bernhard Hoetger's Hieratic Total Artwork on the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt", [in:] *Bernhard Hoetger. The Plane Tree Grove. A Total Artwork on the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt / Bernhard Hoetger. Der Platanenhain. Ein Gesamtkunstwerk auf der Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt*, eds. R. Beil, P. Gutbrod, Munich 2013, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> R. Beil, "Hoetger's Hymn to Life. An Early Utopia of World Art", [in:] *Bernhard Hoetger. The Plane Tree Grove. A Total Artwork on the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt / Bernhard Hoetger. Der Platanenhain. Ein Gesamtkunstwerk auf der Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt*, eds. R. Beil, P. Gutbrod, Munich 2013, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> P. Gutbrod, op. cit., p. 24.

Before I proceed any further, it is necessary to note that the beautifully utopian project of Darmstadt's Künstlerkolonie—developed under the directorship of the prominent Joseph Maria Olbrich, the co-founder of the Vienna Secession—was strictly intertwined with the Lebensreform ("life reform") movement that originated in Germany in the mid-1890s, and among whose numerous proponents were Gusto Gräser, the charismatic initiator of Monte Verità commune, and Rudolf Steiner, to whom I will return later. The compelling traces of vitalism and pantheism that characterise Heotger's personal aesthetics have indeed much in common with the naturalistic approach shared by Lebensreform ideologists, designing a new, health-conscious,<sup>35</sup> pacifistic society. It is a sad paradox that in the 1930s some of them, connected with the *völkisch* current, began to sympathize with the Nazi ideology.<sup>36</sup>

Returning to the main topic, the Platanenhain covers a rectangular area and is oriented along the south-north axis. The entrance, marked by two massive pylons (pillars), is placed at the southern side of the grove. On the western pylon there is a sculpture group consisting of a panther—as a symbol of the night—carrying a sleepy child on its back. A corresponding sculpture depicting a puma—a Chinese symbol of the day—carrying an awakening infant, is situated on the top of the eastern pillar. Thus, again, we come across the concept of dualities transforming into a perfect Unity. Here, the Buddhist inspiration is explicit, but not alone. For, the pylon walls are covered with inscriptions chiselled in a stylized typeface that the artist designed himself in an Egyptian manner. The Occident is associated with night (fall, sleep etc.) and the water element. That is why on the western part of the entrance Hoetger carved a quote from *The Fountain Prayer*, dedicated to Thoth, a lunar deity, a patron of wisdom and knowledge; the prayer comes from Sallier I papyrus and is dated to the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. The metaphorical symmetry was maintained by a relevant inscription on the eastern pillar. Thus, the gleaming Orient is represented by an excerpt from *The Great Hymn*

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<sup>35</sup> See e.g. J. Viridi-Dhesi, "Constructing the Naked (Social) Body", [online:] <http://jaivirdi.com/2011/05/17/monday-series-constructing-the-naked-social-body-iii/> [accessed: 21.06.2017].

<sup>36</sup> In this context, the Nordic Ring, founded in May 1926 by Konopacki-Konopath, paid an especially significant role. According to Paul Weindling: "Other leading lights of the Ring were the architect Schultze-Naumburg, who led opposition to Bauhaus architecture as disfiguring the nation's racial physiognomy, and the animal breeding expert Darré. They met to rekindle the spirit of sagas, to interpret runes and to revive old customs." P. Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism. 1870–1945*, Cambridge 1993, p. 474.

to the *Aten (the Sun)* ascribed to Pharaoh Akhenaten, (18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BC). “When you rise on the eastern horizon, you fill every land with your beauty [...]. You are beautiful, you are great, you shine above every land. Your rays embrace as many lands as you have created”<sup>37</sup>—in those words the apostate Pharaoh prayed to the life-giving sun disk.

The fiery Sun and soothing Water. East and West. A unity of Contradictions... But, moreover, Hoetger’s sophisticated project both reflects and anticipates the broad process of changes within the geography of art, the great turn towards non-Western aesthetics. The shift that strongly manifested during the counterculture revolution of the 1960s and, closer to our times, gave rise to transculturally-based aesthetics, can be traced back at least to the impressionistic admiration for *ukiyo-e* prints of the Edo Period. Furthermore, it is obvious that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the European dream of the unknown was profoundly exemplified through Paul Gauguin’s idyllic and mysterious Tahitian paintings. Unquestionably, in this context, Hoetger’s *Resurrection* relief representing a rhythmic “ornament” of six standing and five crouching figures (Fig. 5), and set in the south-eastern part of the grove, may be interpreted as an echo of Gauguin’s imagery, in particular, the robust silhouettes and beautifully shaped faces of his models. The *Resurrection* from Darmstadt, so far removed from the above-mentioned *Resurrection* by Vigeland, and from Christian iconography in general, corresponds in its meaning rather with the famous: *D’où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*).<sup>38</sup>

It is as well worth mentioning the significance of the *Sonderbund* exhibition that took place in Cologne in 1912.<sup>39</sup> The “special alliance”—as this is the literal meaning of the title—gathered works by, among others, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Denis, Picasso, Mondrian and members of the two expressionist art collectives: Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter. Barbara Schaefer, a curator of the exhibition who organized a commemoration of the centennial of *Sonderbund* held by the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, points out that: “What the organizers achieved in 1912 was the first survey of modernism, and at the same time, its manifestation in Germany.”<sup>40</sup> Thus,

<sup>37</sup> This is a fragment of *The Great Hymn to Aten* translated from Egyptian by Robert Hari. After: R Hari, *New Kingdom Amarna Period*, Leiden 1985, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Similar is the interpretation by Ralf Beil. See: R. Beil, op. cit., pp. 7–8.

<sup>39</sup> See: P. Gutbrod, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Schaefer’s words quoted by Jochen Kürten. J. Kürten, “1912 Show That Shook Art World Returns to Cologne”, [online:] <http://www.dw.com/en/1912-show-that-shook-art-world-returns-to-cologne/a-16252111> [accessed: 21.06.2017].

indeed, Hoetger who contributed with his *Licht- und Schattenseiten* ("light and shadow sides") series of majolika figurines, had an opportunity to analyse this "survey" and observe all those creative appropriations from non-European cultures.

As a matter of fact, Hoetger's park reflects the fascinating "transcultural" and "transreligious" mixture of citations, therefore, in a sense, anticipating the postmodern eclecticism. However, unlike Vigeland and, as we will see later, the Icelander Jónsson, he did not reject Greco-Roman antiquity as a source of inspiration. Here, the figures of pitcher-bearers adorning the Fountain serve as the best example. According to Gutbrod: "Here, we already see, that Hoetger did not want to create a synthesis of several religions, including Christianity, but rather was concentrating entirely on his theme of cyclical nature, which in the West most readily took the form of a pantheist world-view."<sup>41</sup>

The spatial layout of the park is arranged in such a way that makes one think of a forest basilica or cathedral. Perhaps, it may be as well compared to an Egyptian temple, to be more precise, a hypostyle hall supporting a green, leafy roof. After all, the Egyptian influence seems to be preponderant in the whole project, which constitutes another difference to those by Vigeland and Jónsson. This is most likely because, at that time, the contemporary Germans were highly impressed by Ludwig Borchardt's findings in Tell el-Amarna, which included the now famous limestone bust of Nefertiti. It is also quite significant that originally the sculptures in the Platanenhain were painted, mostly in blue. In this specific case, the use of blue may be read, on the one hand, as a distinct reference to Egyptian architectural sculpture, and on another, as an allusion to the calming waters of Nirvana.

As I have mentioned previously (referring to Otto Rank), the water symbolism in Hoetger's works is very extensive. Actually, a separate study might be dedicated to an analysis of this aspect. Hence, let me only add that the stanza of Goethe's *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern* (*Song of the Spirits over the Waters*) was carved by the artist on a wall of the fountain, right above the stone cistern. There, one can read: "The soul of man is like water from heaven. It comes to heaven, it rises and down again to earth it must come in eternal alternation."<sup>42</sup>

The concept of "eternal alternation" (*ewig wechselnd*), or: eternal recurrence, as expressed by Goethe and later followed up by Nietzsche, is consistent with Steiner's anthroposophy, especially with the holistic vision of hu-

<sup>41</sup> P. Gutbrod, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> The passage from Goethe quoted in the aforementioned catalogue: *Bernhard Hoetger. The Plane Tree Grove...*, eds. P. Gutbrod, R. Beil, Munich 2013, p. 61.

man development—in other words, the holistic paradigm of education. It is truly striking to what extent Hoetger's pantheism (and animalism) fits in with the passage from Steiner's *The Kingdom of Childhood*, written on the basis of lectures delivered in Torquay in 1924, dedicated to Waldorf School: "The animal kingdom is the human being spread out, and the human being is the animal kingdom drawn together; all the animals are united synthetically in the human being, and if you analyse a human being, you get the whole animal kingdom."<sup>43</sup>

The official opening of the Plane Tree Grove in Darmstadt took place on 16 May 1914. Very soon afterwards, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophie were assassinated in Sarajevo, which, in a symbolic way, opened the new epoch—the epoch of terror and mass death unprecedented in history.

In the same year Hoetger moved to Worpswede, in Lower Saxony, where he met Ludwig Roselius, a merchant, art patron and—during the time of the Third Reich—a sympathizer of National Socialism. Unfortunately, the artist became infected by the same monstrous ideological disease. His *Lichtbringer* (*The Bringer of Light*) from 1936, a bronze, gold-coloured relief commissioned by Roselius, located at the entrance of Böttcherstraße in Bremen, at first glance may be interpreted as envisioning the figure of the Archangel fighting against the dragon. As a matter of fact, however, the work was intended to glorify the monstrous Führer.<sup>44</sup> The paradox lies in the fact that in 1937 the infamous sculpture was listed by the Nazis as an example of the *Entartete Kunst*. As we remember, such also was the case of Emil Nolde and his expressionist paintings.

In my opinion, the *Lichtbringer* hanging over the passage-way in Böttcherstraße, finds its perfect contradiction, so to speak, and ideological reverse, in a very special *passage* that one may find in the Catalan town of Portbou. Here, at the turn of 1990s the Israeli artist Dani Karavan erected his *Homage to Walter Benjamin*, a beautiful monument that takes the form of an iron gate open to the sea, commemorating the place of suicidal death of the great philosopher.

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<sup>43</sup> R. Steiner, *The Kingdom of Childhood. Introductory Talks on Waldorf Education*, trans. H. Fox, New York 1995, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. L. Gossman, *Brownshirt Princess. A Study of the 'Nazi Conscience'*, Cambridge 2009, p. 135.

### Jónsson—“that poisonous old ‘Antiquity’”

Free from any moral ambiguities is the oeuvre by Einar Jónsson, who is said to have laid the foundation for Icelandic sculpture, and whose unusually designed house located in the heart of Reykjavik is surrounded by one of the most fascinating and stunning sculpture gardens in Europe, decorated with 26 bronze casts (Fig. 6).

In 1901, two years after graduating from the Royal Danish Academy of Art in Copenhagen, at the traditional Charlottenborg Spring Salon, the artist exhibited *The Outlaws (Útlagar)*, a piece which marked a turning point in his career.<sup>45</sup> It is worth mentioning here that since the year 1920 the sculpture has been located in the main showroom at the Listasafn Einars Jónssonar (Einar Jónsson Art Museum).<sup>46</sup> In this fully mature work, Jónsson depicts a figure of a man carrying the dead body of a woman on his back and a child in his left arm, with a wolf scampering at his feet. This sorrowful scene was inspired by an old legend about a family who, having been (unjustly) convicted of a crime, in search of safety and freedom made a desperate escape to the highlands of Iceland. *The Outlaws* may be read, however, not only as the artist’s obeisance to the Icelandic folktales—or, in a wider sense, the national tradition—but also as a metaphor for the very individual feeling of un-at-homeness, a kind of “oddness,” solitude or isolation, which does not necessarily have to be “splendid.”

Furthermore, the chosen subject-matter—and even the title of the work itself—seems to reveal the artist’s sympathy and admiration for those who do not willingly obey the rules, who escape constraints, in other words: for the spiritual (and creative) outsiders. In this respect, his works bear analogy

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<sup>45</sup> Júlíana Gottskálksdóttir on (an indirect) Nietzschean influence, in the context of Jónsson’s *Útlagar* and his temporary collaboration with the Danish group of the Free Sculptors: “By this time, [the exhibition of *The Outlaws*] Jónsson had abandoned naturalism for symbolism in his art, and he had shown his work with a radical group of Danish sculptors in Copenhagen who exhibited as the Free Sculptors (De frie Billedhuggere) [...]. Central to their ideology was the requirement of originality, which in turn relates to the concept of the autonomous creative individual, known to Danish artists through the writings of Danish writer Georg Brandes about German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.” J. Gottskálksdóttir, “Monuments to Settlers of the North: A Means to Strengthen National Identity”, pp. 215–216, [online] <http://www.archipel.uqam.ca/10438/1/222023432.pdf> [accessed: 7.12.2017]. See original edition: eadem, “Monuments to Settlers of the North: A Means to Strengthen National Identity”, [in:] *Iceland and Images of the North*, eds. S. Ísleifsson, D. Chartier, Quebec 2011, pp. 187–205.

<sup>46</sup> There are two other versions of *Útlagar*: one of them in Reykjavik, near the National Museum, and another in Akureyri, in the northern part of the country.

to the uncanny imagery of Stanisław Szukalski (1893–1987), a Polish modernist sculptor and author of the pseudoscientific-historical theory of Zermatism. That great outsider may be regarded as an archetypal artistic nomad, way ahead of his time. Szukalski—not much praised in the pre-war Polish artistic milieu as he was considered too extravagant—managed to realise many of his transgressive visions during his emigration years in America. Nowadays, his abundant artistic heritage—not easily classified, indeed—is taken care of by, among others, the famous film star Leonardo DiCaprio.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, in Poland, his legacy has been thoroughly explored by the art historian Lechosław Lameński.<sup>48</sup>

Jónsson's aesthetics are, on the one hand, deeply immersed in Northern tradition, with its mythology and folklore, while on the other hand they touch upon the archetypal grounds of human experience. As the artist once declared: "The inner life of my works is universal. The forms are purely Icelandic. As our soul is universal and our body is Icelandic, so should it be with our art."<sup>49</sup>

Since a more detailed description of his abundant *oeuvre* would far exceed the scope of this article, I will only touch upon tropes and motifs such as "modernity versus antiquity," and "the whirl of existence" or "the unity of contradictions" represented in the form of a swastika (*tetraskelion*) or a vortex (*ilinx*).

In this context, *The Birth of Psyche* (1915–1918; Fig. 7) may serve as an appropriate example. This beautiful bas-relief composition, based on the shape of a tetraskelion, depicts the moment when a young goddess, with her body only partly covered with soft drapes and "floating" hairlines, is slowly awakening, surrounded by figures representing the four elements (from the upper right corner in the clockwise direction: the winged male figure of the Air kissing her forehead, the ephebe-like Water giving her a bracing splash from some waterfalls, while the last two—the Earth and the Fire—together carve her form with a chisel and mallet). Here indeed, one can find a clear allusion—even literally expressed in the title—to the Greek myth of the winged Eros awakening his lover, the goddess of the soul. The semantic con-

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<sup>47</sup> "Stanislav Szukalski, a Polish-born sculptor who divided his life between Poland and the United States, may be one of those forgotten, forever lost geniuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [...]. The finesse and technical perfection alone of the impressive sculptures completed between the two world wars should earn Szukalski a place among the greatest sculptors of the century." E. Kirsch, D. Kirsch, "The Art of Stanislaw Szukalski", [in:] *Struggle: The Art of Szukalski*, eds. S. Szukalski et al., San Francisco 2000, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g. L. Lameński, *Stach z Warty Szukalski i Szczep Rogate Serce*, Lublin 2007.

<sup>49</sup> E. Kvaran, "Einar Jónsson. Poet in Stone", *Sculpture Review*, 1998, 46, p. 18.

tent of the piece is, however, more complex. The whole compositional layout—the four-armed swastika or “spiral nebula”<sup>50</sup> revolving from right to left—may as well be interpreted both as a reference to Buddhist or Hindu symbolism and to the Norse Mjöl­nir, the hammer of Thor, used by theosophers as a symbol of creation. Somewhere within such interpretations is the fact that Jónsson “developed contact with theosophy around 1910 and the theories and ideas of theosophy became the foundation for the main body of his work from that point on.”<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, he must have been strongly inspired by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*, fashionable in modernist circles, (first published in 1888).<sup>52</sup>

As mentioned previously, Jónsson’s fascination for the esoteric, quasi-philosophical illuminations of Madame Blavatsky, as well as of the British theosophist Annie Besant, inevitably led to his rejection of classical Greco-Roman heritage. A plaster cast entitled *Rest (Hvíld, 1915–1935; Fig. 8)* represents the most emblematic example in this respect. The work depicts the giant head of a young man, supported by a small figure, perhaps intended to represent the creative genius. Admittedly, the word “genius” refers us back to Roman mythology; this very effigy, however, is—according to the work’s title—resting upon a heavy hammer, most probably again: the Mjöl­nir. The giant face is peculiarly divided, one half looking as if smoothly carved out of marble, the other half looking as if made from crude stones. Does the artist allude to the noble act of creating, bringing to light what was hidden under the apparent chaos of the phenomenal world? (The vertical forms jutting out from behind the head may resemble both basalt-like columns and life-giving sunbeams). Or maybe, there is another possible, and even, to some extent, contradictory meaning? In my view, this uncanny face might as well be interpreted as an illustration for Jónsson’s aversion towards the classic art forms, as overtly expressed in a letter written at the beginning of 1905, where we read: “that poisonous old ‘Antiquity,’” “this monster that turns everything to fossil.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>51</sup> The Birth of Psyche, [online] <http://www.lej.is/news/27/80/The-Birth-of-Psyche-1915-1918/> [accessed: 21.06.2017].

<sup>52</sup> Here is how Madame Blavatsky explains the symbolic meaning of swastika: “It is the emblem of the activity of Fohat [in theosophy: the universal, vital force], of the continual revolution of the ‘wheels,’ and of the Four Elements, the ‘Sacred Four,’ in their mystical, and not alone in their cosmical meaning.” H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 2, New York 2016, p. 1031.

<sup>53</sup> Ó. Kvaran, *The Quest for Originality: Sculptor Einar Jónsson*, Reykjavik 2003, p. 4.



The difference between Jónsson's sculpture park and those of Vigeland and Hoetger lies in the fact that the Icelandic one—quite modest in size—was not intended as an autonomous project, but rather as a place, in a way, complementary to the Museum's interior. (Therefore, I took the liberty of discussing the most emblematic pieces collected inside the building). Nevertheless, as I argued above, the subject-matter of Jónsson's works, his eclectic imagery and esoteric inclinations are—regardless of his personal style—very typical for a Nordic modernist.

*The oeuvres by Vigeland, Hoetger and Jónsson*—as beautiful and as abundant—emerged from the same crucible of ideas, enriched with Swedenborgian and Blakean mysticism, Indian, Egyptian and, most of all, old Norse mythologies, as well as theosophical thought. All of them abandoned the early fascination with Buonarroti or Rodin in favour of the search for their own, unique artistic “languages.”

On the one hand, as we would say nowadays, the “transcultural” aspect of their works corresponded not only with the imagery characteristic for Nordic modernists but with the narrative of modernism as a whole. However, on the other hand, that “transcultural” tendency—the strong shift towards the remote cultures, as well as towards the remote, mythological past—found its counterpart in the quest to define and cultivate the national idioms in arts. Obviously, there is nothing wrong with this, but, we need to remember that many artists of that time, including Hoetger, easily fell into the trap of sympathizing with the most atrociously inhumane ideology that the world has ever witnessed.

Poetically speaking, in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sacred Wheel of Life, the “motley whirl” of constant creation transformed into a vicious circle of fear and violence. The apotheosis of youth turned into the grief over the lost childhood, (see: the aforementioned Rank's study on *The Trauma of Birth*). Furthermore, the bewildering Nietzschean labyrinth was soon to be replaced by another spatial metaphor—the chessboard of history, as imagined by Benjamin in his last essay.

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