



Sam L. Lewis

1. TRAMES has a writer, Thomas Lewis, who is an expert on the history of the language French. One of his books is "The History of the French Language" and another is "The History of the French Language in the United States".

## OTTO KAISER ZUM 75.: PREFACE TO AN ESTONIAN COLLECTION

Wolfgang Drechsler

This collection of original essays from various fields of the humanities and social sciences is dedicated to Otto Kaiser ThD DD DD, Professor and Chair emeritus of Old Testament at the University of Marburg, and twice Visiting Professor at the University of Tartu (for Spring term 1995 and Fall term 1997), on the occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on 30 November 1999.

Although a very 'round' birthday in the decimal system in which we live, it is not a classical one to occasion a Festschrift. And not for nothing has the recent *Festschriftenflut* for any which anniversary of persons and institutions been disparaged (cf., e.g., Löwisch 1998) – so, is this merely an attempt to foster this inflation? Not at all, because this is not a 'classic' Festschrift like the one for Otto Kaiser's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday five years ago, an impressive hardcover volume with 33 contributions chiefly on Old Testament topics (Kottsieper et al. 1994), nor is it a special collection of his own essays as the one edited by three of his students for the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. (Kaiser 1984a) Rather, it is an opportunity for us to thank Otto Kaiser in this modest yet, we think, appropriate way, because his contribution to Estonian and especially Tartuvian higher education and scholarship, in Theology as well as elsewhere, is significant and honor-able indeed.

To dedicate to Otto Kaiser the current issue of *TRAMES*, Estonia's one and only English-language,<sup>1</sup> refereed, and internationally indexed and abstracted journal in the humanities and social sciences, made it possible to recruit some of the most distinguished Estonian scholars in their area (meaning, scholars working in or coming from Estonia) for contribution. The scope of *TRAMES*

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<sup>1</sup> *TRAMES* has, however, always permitted the submission of articles in German or French – and as Estonian theologians traditionally communicate mainly in German, and as this was the language in which Otto Kaiser mainly taught at Tartu, almost half of the essays in this volume are in German.

issues limited the number of contributions that could be published, but its contributors were all colleagues or students of Otto Kaiser's at the University of Tartu, where all of them hold elected, regular appointments.<sup>2</sup>

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The essays, thus, come from such diverse fields as psychology, academic history, political philosophy, and classics, and not only from Old Testament studies or even Theology, although the latter naturally is a well-represented field here as well.

Whence this diversity?

Surely, Otto Kaiser is one of the most eminent, and most influential, Old Testament scholars of our times, and indeed, he has been instrumental in the development of the Faculty of Divinity at Tartu, refounded in 1990, which had been closed under Soviet occupation in 1940 after a history of over 300 years. In and from Marburg, he has continued to support young Estonian scholars with advice and council, as well as through concrete projects and thesis supervision. The University of Tartu has thus honored him by bestowing on him, with Senate vote of 31 May and the awarding on 1 December 1996, the Honorary Doctor of Divinity (see *Album* 1999, 81); he is the first non-Estonian so honored and the second DD after the reopening of the Faculty. Kaiser responded by dedicating the second volume of his magisterial *Theology of the Old Testament* to the Faculty of Divinity. (Kaiser 1998a, 2; see also 319)

<sup>2</sup> Likewise, contrary to *TRAMES* general practice, the authors of the following essays are not identified by institution, nor is an address given at the end of the respective article. This is because all of us are members of the University of Tartu, and we all can be reached under that designation and our Faculty and/or Chair, at Ülikooli 18, 50090 Tartu, Estonia.

<sup>3</sup> The editor would like to express his gratitude, next to all the contributors, to the language editor of *TRAMES*, Tiina Laats, for her most capable help and support; to Urmas Nõmmik, for his invaluable editorial and research help with the German theological essays and for supplying the portrait; and to Rainer Kattel, who has greatly helped with the creation of this issue.

As we can perhaps say in this context, however, Otto Kaiser is 'more' than 'just' an *Alttestamentler*. Otto Kaiser is also a distinguished scholar in the humanities, especially in philosophy, and his contributions to the study of the Greeks (particularly Plato), Kant, and also Nietzsche and Hegel (for a sample, see Kaiser 1969; 1994; 1996; 1997; 2000), as well as his general thoughts on the *geistige und moralische Situation der Zeit* (see, e.g., Kaiser 1976; 1984b, *passim*; 1999), are among the best on their topics in our days.

Accordingly, Otto Kaiser's merits for Estonia have been cross-, inter- and trans-disciplinary. (Hence, too, the title of this issue.) To mention but a few, he has lectured at Tartu even within a course of Kantian Political Philosophy (now Kaiser 1996), has taught a seminar on the *Nomoi* within Classics (now Kaiser 2000), and has significantly aided and supported his 'side-interest' fields, and especially several of their senior and junior scholars. And on a larger scale, he has been and remains a strong supporter of those striving for quality and excellence in Estonian scholarship and higher education, Estonia's only chance and hope in this area. (Cf. Allik 1998; Drechsler 1998, 22–23)

Finally, Otto Kaiser has become an advocate of Estonia as such as well. For instance, in Germany's leading daily, he has strongly argued for the 'West's', and especially Germany's, special duty to guarantee Estonia's political security, hereby even almost forgetting his classical realism in such questions (Kaiser 1995; cf. Graebner 1999), and for Estonia's membership in the Schengen treaty when this was an issue of much concern. (Kaiser 1998b) On the other hand, his words on the pressing issue of the ethnic disunity in Estonia (cf. "Multiculturalism..." 1998) are as wise an indirect and quiet admonition as we have. (Kaiser 1998a, 319)

These few lines cannot begin to do adequate justice to everything that Otto Kaiser has done for the University of Tartu, and – thus – for Estonia. The authors of this issue have been privileged and honored, academically and personally, to have had, and to have, the chance to be associated with such distinguished and eminent a scholar, pedagogue, and personality as Otto Kaiser. In this spirit, they offer the essays below.

*Ad multos annos!*

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