That all democracies have, by their very nature, the potential to destroy themselves is a fact too rarely documented by the acolytes of democracy. Indeed, in the brief decades since Joseph Goebbels, then as Reich Minister of Propaganda, reminded the world that it ‘will always remain one of the best jokes of democracy, that it gave its deadly enemies the means by which it was destroyed’, democrats have quickly forgotten just how precarious a thing democracy can be. The objective of this article is to entertain the underexplored notion that democratic failure is a possibility that remains very much entrenched within the idea and ideal of democracy itself. Using the breakdown of democracy during the Weimar Republic as a brief illustrative example, the article first describes the process through which a democracy can self-destruct before offering a theoretical explanation of why this is so - one which draws its inspiration from the dual notions of autonomy and tragedy. By doing this, it will hope to have shown just how a democracy can, in the course of being democratic no less, sow the seeds of its own destruction.