

THE SURVIVING IMAGE

Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms

Aby Warburg's History of Art

GEORGES DIDI-HUBERMAN

Translated by Harvey L. Mendelsohn

FIN
N7480
D4413
2017

Georges Didi-Huberman is the author of many works, including *Devant l'image: Question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art* (1990; translated as *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, 2005) and *Devant le temps: Histoire de l'art et anachronisme des images* (2000).

Publication of this book has been aided by a grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Publication of this book has been aided by a grant from the Millard Meiss Publication Fund of the College Art Association.



Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Didi-Huberman, Georges, author.

Title: The surviving image : phantoms of time and time of phantoms : Aby Warburg's history of art / Georges Didi-Huberman ; translated by Harvey L. Mendelsohn.

Other titles: Image survivante. English

Description: University Park, Pennsylvania : The Pennsylvania State University Press, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Summary: "Originally published in French in 2002, examines the life and work of art historian Aby Warburg. Demonstrates the complexity and importance of Warburg's ideas, addressing broader questions regarding art historians' conceptions of time, memory, symbols, and the relationship between art and the rational and irrational forces of the psyche"—Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016025527 | ISBN 9780271072081 (cloth : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Art—Historiography. | Art—Philosophy. | Warburg, Aby, 1866–1929.

Classification: LCC N7480 .D4413 2017 | DDC 707.2/2—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016025527>

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The Pennsylvania State University
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
Published by
The Pennsylvania State University Press,
University Park, PA 16802–1003

The Pennsylvania State University Press is a member of the Association of American University Presses.

It is the policy of The Pennsylvania State University Press to use acid-free paper. Publications on uncoated stock satisfy the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Material, ANSI Z39.48–1992.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

This study of Warburg was begun in 1990 and conceived—along with *Devant le temps* ["Confronting Time"]—as a sequel to *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*. It was first presented in a seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Science Sociales (1990–92), and its initial results appeared in ten articles published between 1992 and 1998. I was able to explore the subject more deeply and give the work its current form in September 1997 and June 1998 thanks to a grant from the School of Advanced Study (of the University of London) and the Warburg Institute, where I was able to work in the best possible conditions, owing, above all, to the exceptional welcome and incomparable scholarly generosity of its director, Nicholas Mann. And owing, as well, to François Quiviger—to his friendship, his constant accessibility, and his perfect grasp of the *gai savoir*. The final stage of the research was concluded in October and November 1999, while I was guest at the Courtauld Institute, whose welcome was equally warm. I also profited from the valuable advice of Elizabeth McGrath, Christopher R. Ligota, and, of course, Dorothea McEwan, curator of the Warburg Archive, whom I thank in particular for her competence and her patience. Finally, I wish to thank Hella Faust, who, for the benefit of German readers, reformulated in the nominative case my quotations from German texts, and who also made a number of corrections in my German, which is that of a perpetual beginner.

Some extracts of this work have been published in different journals and collaborative publications: "L'historien d'art et ses fantômes: Note sur J. J. Winckelmann," *L'inactuel*, n.s., no. 1 (1998): 75–88; "Sismographies du temps: Warburg, Burckhardt, Nietzsche," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no. 68 (1999): 4–20; "Histoire de l'art, histoire de fantômes: Renaissance et survivance, de Burckhardt à Warburg," in *Le corps évanoui: Les images subites*, ed. Véronique Mauron and Claire de Ribaupierre (Lausanne: Musée de l'Élysée; Paris: Hazan, 1999), 60–71; "L'image survivante: Aby Warburg et l'anthropologie taylorienne," *L'inactuel*, n.s., no. 3 (1999): 39–59; "Notre Dibbuk: Aby Warburg dans l'autre temps de l'histoire," *Part de l'oeil* 15–16 (1999): 219–35; "Plasticité du devenir et fracture dans l'histoire: Warburg avec Nietzsche," in *Plasticité*, ed. C. Malabou (Paris: Leo Scheer, 2000), 58–69; "La tragédie de la culture: Warburg avec Nietzsche," *Visio*, no. 4 (2001): 9–19; "Nachleben, ou l'inconscient du temps: Les images aussi souffrent de réminiscences," *L'animal:*

Littératures, arts et philosophie, no. 10 (2001): 40–48; and “Aby Warburg et l’archive des intensités,” *Études photographiques*, no. 10 (November 2001): 144–63.

The first version of the current text was burdened by a critical apparatus of overly abundant notes, an indication of empathy with Warburg’s own style, or, more simply, an emanation of the treasures offered by the Warburg library. It took up, just by itself, about two hundred pages. It has therefore been reduced, in order to facilitate the publication of an already voluminous work, to a telegraphic minimum.

G. D.-H.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms; Aby Warburg's History of Art*, Georges Didi-Huberman quotes very liberally from Aby Warburg's writings, and occasionally significant differences in phrasing or meaning arise between the published French and English translations of his work. In such cases, I have followed the English translation (comparing them both to the original German, whenever possible). For other authors, I have used standard English translations whenever they exist, giving preference to easily accessible editions, including those available on the Web. I have made every effort to match them exactly with Didi-Huberman's citations and quotations.

My use of italics requires a brief explanation. In this work Didi-Huberman uses them far more frequently than do most other scholars. Moreover, he often extends his penchant for them to quotations from other authors. To indicate all the instances in which his emphasis on certain words differs from that of the quoted author, whether in the original text (if he happens to provide that) or in the published French translation, would needlessly clutter the translation with many (only marginally significant) notes, adding to the already exceptional number of the author's own. In order to avoid that, as well as to preserve an important element of his style, I have always followed his usage in this respect. (There is one exception: I have not italicized his quotations from English authors, since this is merely standard procedure for any French author, and would obviously not make sense here.)

The reader will notice that I have included many French words in square brackets (without italics or quotation marks, except when the author's original is in italics or quotation marks). This reflects a conscious effort to help the English reader appreciate, to the extent it is possible, the author's rich and complex use of language, as, for example, when the words he employs are neologisms, appear in plays on words, or are otherwise stretched beyond their usual semantic boundaries. How well I have succeeded in conveying the flavor and import of the original in these cases will doubtless depend in part on the English reader's patience, knowledge of French, and tolerance for playfulness in scholarly prose. Should this effort fail to reach its goal, blame should be laid at the translator's door, not the author's.

H. L. M.

THE IMAGE AS PHANTOM

Survival of Forms and Impurities of Time

1

ART DIES, ART IS REBORN: HISTORY BEGINS AGAIN
(FROM VASARI TO WINCKELMANN)

One may ask if art history—the type of discourse that goes by that name, *Kunstgeschichte*—was really “born” one day. At the very least, let us say that it was never born all at once, on one or even on two occasions that could be considered “birth dates” or identifiable points in a chronological continuum. Behind the year 77 and the dedicatory epistle to Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* there stands, as is well known, an entire tradition of Greek historiography.¹ Similarly, behind the year 1550 and the dedication in Vasari’s *Lives* there stands, revealing its residues, a whole tradition of chronicles and eulogies written for the *uomini illustri* of a city like Florence.²

Let us boldly assert the following: historical discourse is never “born.” It always recommences. And let us observe this: art history—the discipline which goes by that name—*recommences each time*. This happens, it seems, each time that the very object of its inquiry is experienced as having died . . . and as undergoing a rebirth. This is exactly what happened in the sixteenth century, when Vasari established his entire historical and aesthetic enterprise upon the observation that ancient art had died. He writes of the *voracità del tempo* in the *proemio* of his book, and then points to the Middle Ages as the real guilty party in this process of forgetting. But, as is well known, the victim was

FIG. 1 Giorgio Vasari, frontispiece of *Le vite d' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori*, 2nd ed. (Florence: Giunti, 1568) (detail). Woodcut.



“saved,” miraculously redeemed or ransomed from death by a long movement of *rinascità* that, in broad outline, begins with Giotto and culminates with Michelangelo, recognized as the great genius in this process of recollection or resurrection.³ It appears that starting from this point—starting from this renaissance that itself emerged from a state of mourning—something could emerge calling itself the history of art⁴ (fig. 1).

Two centuries later, the whole thing starts again (with some substantial differences, of course). In a context that is no longer that of the “humanist” Renaissance but rather that of the “neoclassical” restoration, Winckelmann *invents art history* (fig. 2), by which we mean art history in the modern sense of the word “history.” In this case, art history emerges from an age of Enlightenment, soon to become the age of the grand systems—Hegelianism in the first place—and of the “positive” sciences in which Michel Foucault sees the two concomitant epistemological principles of *analogy* and *succession* at work. That is to say, the phenomena are systematically apprehended according to their homologues, and the latter, in turn, are interpreted as the “fixed forms of a succession which proceeds from analogy to analogy.”⁵ Winckelmann, whom Foucault unfortunately does not discuss, may be seen as representing, in the domain of culture and beauty, the epistemological change within thinking about *art* in the age of *history*⁶—a history that is now authentic, already “scientific.” The history under consideration here is already “modern,” and already “scientific” in the sense that it goes beyond the simple *chronicle* of the Plinian or Vasarian type. It aims at something more fundamental, which Quatremère de Quincy, in his eulogy of Winckelmann, rightly called *an analysis of time*:

FIG. 2 Johann J. Winckelmann, frontispiece of *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, vol. 2 (Dresden: Walther, 1764).



The scholar Winckelmann is the first to bring the true spirit of observation to this study. He is the first who dared to decompose Antiquity, to analyze the times, the peoples, the schools, the styles, the nuances of style. He is the first who laid out the road and set out the markers in this unknown land. He is the first one who, in classifying the various periods, included the history of the monuments, and compared the monuments with each other, discovered reliable characteristics, principles of criticism, and a method that, in correcting a mass of errors, prepared the discovery of a mass of truths. And, finally, when turning from analysis to synthesis, he succeeded in creating a body out of what had been only a pile of debris.⁷

The image is significant. While the “piles of debris” continue to be strewn around on the ground and underground in Italy and Greece, Winckelmann, in 1764, publishes a book, his great *History of Ancient Art*, that, in Quatremère’s phrase, “creates a body” from this whole dispersion. A body: an organic joining of objects, the anatomy and physiology of which amounts to something like the joining of artistic styles and the law of their biological functioning, that is to say, of their evolution. And also a “body”: a *corpus* of knowledge, an *organon* of principles, in fact a “body of doctrine.” Winckelmann thus invented art history, in the first place, by going beyond the simple *curiosity* of the antiquarians and constructing something like a *historical method*.⁸ The historian of art will no longer be satisfied just to collect and admire its objects. As Quatremère writes, he will analyze and decompose, exercise his observational and critical powers; he will classify, bring together and compare, and “turn from analysis to synthesis” in order to “discover the reliable characteristics” that will give to every *analogy* its law of *succession*. And this is how the history of art assumes the

form of a "body," of a methodical domain of knowledge, of a genuine "analysis of time."

The majority of commentators have been aware of the methodological, even doctrinal aspect of this elaboration. Winckelmann establishes an art history less through what he discovers than through what he constructs. It is not sufficient simply to see Winckelmann the "aesthetic critic" of the *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works* as being succeeded by Winckelmann the "historian" of the *History of Ancient Art*,⁹ for there is no doubt that the "aesthetic crisis" of the Enlightenment affected even the manner in which he assembled his basic archaeological material.¹⁰ In reading the exegeses of this body of work, one also senses a certain theoretical discomfort caused by a contradictory figure who, on the one hand, is supposed to be the creator of a *history*, and, on the other, is a zealous advocate of an aesthetic *doctrine*. One cannot simply say that this contradiction "is only apparent."¹¹ One must say, rather, that it is constitutive. As Alex Potts has demonstrated, *The History of Ancient Art* establishes the modern perspective of knowledge of the visual arts only by means of a series of paradoxes in which the historical position is, time and again, composed of "eternal" postulates, and in which the general conceptions, in turn, are overthrown by their own historicization.¹² These contradictions are far from delegitimizing the historical enterprise underway here—that is something that only a positivist or naïve historian would believe, imagining the existence of a history drawing its presuppositions only from its own objects of study. Rather, these contradictions are literally the enterprise's foundation.

How should this framework of paradoxes be understood? It seems to me insufficient, indeed impossible, to separate within Winckelmann's work various "levels of intelligibility"; for they are so different that, in the end, they would form a major contradictory polarity, with one term being the aesthetic doctrine, the atemporal norm, and the other, historical practice, the "analysis of time." This separation, conceived literally, would wind up rendering the very expression "art history" incomprehensible. At the very least, one can easily sense the eminently problematic nature of that expression: what conception of art must it imply in order that one might write its history? And what conception of history must it imply in order that one might apply it to works of art? The problem is difficult because the whole thing hangs together; that is to say, the position one takes with regard to a single element obliges one to take a position on all the others. There is no history of art without a philosophy of history—be it merely spontaneous and not really thought out—and without a certain choice of *temporal models*; just as there is no history of art without a philosophy of art and without a certain choice of *aesthetic models*. One must try to see how, in Winckelmann, these two types of models work in concert. This would allow one, perhaps, better to understand the dedication placed at the end of the prologue to the *History of Ancient Art*—"This history of art is dedicated to art and to time"—the almost tautological character of which remains something of a mystery to the reader.¹³

* * *

Books are often dedicated to the dead. Winckelmann first dedicated his *History of Art* to ancient art, because, in his eyes, ancient art had long been dead. Likewise, he dedicated his book to time, because the historian, in his eyes, is the one who walks in the realm of things that have passed, that is to say, have passed away. Now, what happens at the other end of the book, after several hundred pages in which ancient art has been recollected for us, reconstructed—in the psychological sense of the term—put in the form of a story? We sense a kind of depressive latching on to a feeling of irremediable loss and to a terrible suspicion: is the object whose history has just been told not simply the result of a phantasmic illusion by means of which this feeling, or the loss itself, may well have misled us?

In meditating upon its downfall [I] have felt almost like the historian who, in narrating the history of his native land, is compelled to allude to its destruction, of which he was a witness. Still I could not refrain from searching into the fate of works of art as far as my eye could reach; just as a maiden, standing on the shore of the ocean, follows with tearful eyes her departing lover with no hope of ever seeing him again, and fancies that in the distant sail she sees the image of her beloved (*das Bild des Geliebten*). Like that loving maiden we too have, as it were, nothing but a shadowy outline left of the object of our wishes (*Schattenriss . . . unserer Wünsche*), but that very indistinctness awakens only a more earnest longing for what we have lost, and we study the copies (*Kopien*) of the originals more attentively than we should have done the originals (*Urbilder*) themselves if we had been in full possession of them. In this particular we are very much like those who wish to have an interview with spirits (*Gespenster*), and who believe that they see them when there is nothing to be seen (*wo nichts ist*).¹⁴

A formidable page—its very beauty and its poetry are formidable. And a radical page. If art history recommences here, it is defined as having for its object a fallen object, one that has disappeared and been buried. Ancient art—the art of absolute beauty—thus shines in its first modern historian by a “categorical absence.”¹⁵ The Greeks themselves, at least in Winckelmann’s mind, never produced a “living” history of their art. That history begins, first revealing its necessity, at the very moment in which its object is conceived as a dead object. Such a history, therefore, will be experienced as a work of mourning (the *History of Ancient Art* is a work of mourning for ancient art) and a hopeless evocation of what has been lost. Let us immediately stress this point: the phantoms that Winckelmann speaks of will never be “convoked” or even “invoked” as powers that are still active. They will simply be evoked as past powers. They will be the equivalent of “nothing” that is existent or actual (*nichts ist*). They represent only our optical illusion, the lived time of our mourning. Their existence (be it only spectral), their survival, or their return is quite simply not envisioned.

This, then, is what the modern historian becomes: someone who evokes the past, saddened by its definitive loss. He no longer believes in phantoms (soon,

in the course of the nineteenth century, he will no longer believe in anything but the "facts"). He is a pessimist, often employing the word *Untergang*, which signifies decline or decadence. In fact, his entire enterprise seems to be organized according to the temporal schema of *greatness and decline*.¹⁶ No doubt Winckelmann's enterprise should be set in the context of the "historical pessimism" characteristic of the eighteenth century.¹⁷ We should note, too, that, in the aesthetic domain, Winckelmann's ideas inspired innumerable nostalgic writings on the "decadence of the arts," and even the "revolutionary vandalism" linked to the successive destructions of ancient masterpieces.¹⁸ The temporal model of greatness and decline proved to be so potent that it long informed the definition of art history, as can be seen, for example, in the Brockhaus *Real-Encyclopädie*: "Art history is the representation of the origin, the development, the grandeur, and the decadence of the fine arts."¹⁹ This is no different from what Winckelmann said: "The History of Art is intended to show the origin (*Ursprung*), progress (*Wachstum*), change (*Veränderung*), and downfall (*Fall*) of art."²⁰

Careful attention to this schema reveals that it is linked to two types of theoretical models. The first is a *natural model*, more precisely, a biological one. In Winckelmann's sentence the word *Wachstum* should be understood as "growth," vegetable or animal, and the word *Veränderung* also takes on the vitalist connotation implied by any notion of "mutation." What Winckelmann means by *art history* is thus not fundamentally very different from *natural history*. It is known, of course, that he read the one by Pliny, but he also read Buffon's; just as he read the treatise on physiology by J. G. Krueger, and the medical manual by Allen. And, as we learn from a letter dated December 1763, he wanted some day to move from "studies of Art" to "studies of Nature."²¹ From all that, Winckelmann drew a conception of historical science articulated not only around the typical classificatory problems of Enlightenment epistemology, but also around a temporal schema that is obviously biomorphic, constructed between the poles of progress and decline, birth and decadence, life and death.

The other side of this theoretical configuration is better known: it is an *ideal model*, and, more specifically, a metaphysical one. It thus accords very well with the "categorical absence" of its object. Think of Solon's famous saying, reported by Aristotle—*to ti en einai*—which assumes the prior death of that about which one wants to pronounce the truth, or, better, the "quiddity."²² In this sense, we could say that the very disappearance of ancient art founds the historical discourse capable of telling its ultimate quiddity. The history of art as Winckelmann conceives it, therefore, is not satisfied with describing, or classifying, or dating. While Quatremère de Quincy speaks of a simple movement backwards "from analysis to synthesis," Winckelmann himself radicalized his position from the philosophical point of view: the history of art (*die Geschichte der Kunst*) should be written in such a way that it makes explicit the essence of art (*das Wesen der Kunst*).

The History of Ancient Art which I have undertaken to write is not a mere chronicle of epochs, and of the changes which occurred within them. I use the term History (*Geschichte*) in the more extended signification which it has in the Greek language; and it is my intention to attempt to present a system (*Lehrgebäude*). . . . The History of Art (*die Geschichte der Kunst*) in a more limited sense, is [the history of its development] as far as external circumstances were concerned, but only in reference to the Greeks and Romans. . . . However, the principal object is the "essential of art" (*das Wesen der Kunst*).²³

Reading this text, one sees that it is not exactly true to say, as it is often said, that the historicity of art as Winckelmann conceives it emerges "from a compromise through which history would find a field within or at the margins of the norm."²⁴ To speak in this way gives too much credit to historical discourse as such. It is to suppose that a history becomes normative only by leaving its own domain, by straining against its "natural" philosophical neutrality, in short, by betraying its "natural" modesty in the face of pure and simple observational facts. This, however, is to fail to see that the norm is internal to the narrative itself, and even to the simplest description or mention of any phenomenon that the historian considers worth retaining. The historical narrative, it goes without saying, is always preceded and conditioned by a theoretical norm concerning the "essence" of its object. Art history, therefore, is conditioned by the *aesthetic norm* that determines the "right objects" for its narrative, those "beautiful objects" whose conjunction constitutes, in the end, something like an *essence of art*.

Winckelmann was thus right to claim for his history the status of a "system" (*Lehrgebäude*) in the philosophical and doctrinal sense of that term. To varying degrees his enterprise resonates with those of a Montesquieu, of a Vico, of a Gibbon, or of a Condillac.²⁵ This status of Winckelmannian history, moreover, was clearly recognized in the eighteenth century. Herder writes that "Winckelmann has most certainly proposed this grand, true, and eternal system (*Lehrgebäude*)" as the quasi-Platonic undertaking of an "analysis bearing on the general, on the essence of beauty."²⁶ As a thinker deeply concerned with historicity, Herder soon raised the following question: "Is this the goal of history? The goal of a history of art? Are not other forms of history possible?" But he readily recognized the need for a history of art that, going beyond the *historical collections* of Pliny, of Pausanias, and of Philostrates, was theoretically established; and this he called, with Winckelmann, a *historical system*.²⁷

He also termed it an "ideal construction."²⁸ Ideal in the sense that it was conceived in the first place to harmonize with the metaphysical principle par excellence, namely the *ideal of beauty*, that "essence of art" that the great artists of Antiquity were able to realize in their works. "Ideal beauty," of course, constitutes the cardinal point of the whole Winckelmannian historical system as of neoclassical aesthetics in general.²⁹ It provides the essence, and therefore the norm. The history of art is simply the history of its development and its

decline. It also appears to confirm aesthetic thought's long-term allegiance to philosophical idealism.³⁰

The word "ideal" suggests that the essence—here, the essence of art—is a *model*: a model *to be attained* according to the "categorical imperative" of classical beauty; and, yet, it is presented as a model that is *impossible to attain* as such. It is very significant that the chapter Winckelmann devotes to the "Essence of art" ["Von dem Wesentlichen der Kunst"] is really devoted instead to the detours that our mind must take in order to recollect for itself the ideal beauty of Greek statues.

Since the first chapter of this book is only an introduction to the latter, I will pass, after these preliminary observations, to the essence itself of art. . . . I imagine myself, in fact, appearing in the Olympic Stadium, where I seem to see countless statues of young, manly heroes, and two-horse and four-horse chariots of bronze, with the figures of the victors erect thereon, and other wonders of art. Indeed, my imagination has several times plunged me into such a reverie, in which I have likened myself to those athletes. . . . I would not, however, wish this imaginary flight to Elis to be regarded as a mere poetic fancy, but as real contemplation of the objects. And this fiction will take on a sort of reality as if I were to conceive as actually existing all the statues and images of which mention has been made by [ancient] authors. [Translation modified—Trans.]³¹

This is really very strange. The ideal is apprehended and recognized by means of a "real contemplation of objects," as Winckelmann phrases it. But not by the contemplation of real objects. The latter have disappeared and have been replaced by later copies. All that remain are the mediations of the mind in search of that point outside of time that is the ideal. And, meanwhile, the most necessary of these mediations—textual reconstruction and ideal restoration—will be called *art history*. An art history understood as standing in the service of the Idea, and presented as the narrative of avatars, of the moments of greatness and decline with respect to the *norm of art*: "beautiful nature," "noble contour," and "spiritual archetype" in the outlining of female bodies, elegant draperies, and so on.³² The *History of Ancient Art* is obviously composed of constant appeals back to the aesthetics presented ten years earlier in the *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works*.

* * *

Here, then, is our inventor of the history of art, plunged into mourning over his object, crying over the death of ancient beauties; here is our aesthete with his "esprit de système," our historian who does not believe in phantoms, paradoxically constructing the absent objects of his narrative—or, as he believes, of his science—"representing [them to himself] as if they existed," on the basis of old Latin and Greek descriptions to which he is obliged to give credence. Here he

is, finally—he who has assailed us with the “essence of art,” with a principled panegyric of “good taste” (*der gute Geschmack*) and an absolute rejection of “any deformation of the body”—in an astonishing passage of the *Reflections* in which he expresses his horror of “venereal diseases and their daughter, the English malady,” those evils that he assumed were unknown to the ancient Greeks.³³ And, as if those things were linked by some obscure common pathology, Winckelmann expresses just as radically his rejection of *pathos*, that malady of the soul that deforms bodies and thus ruins the *ideal*, which presupposes the calm that characterizes greatness and nobility of soul: “The more tranquil the state of the body the more capable it is of portraying the true character of the soul. In all positions too removed from this tranquillity, the soul is not in its most essential condition, but in one that is agitated and forced. A soul is more apparent and distinctive when seen in violent passion, but it is great and noble when seen in a state of unity and calm.”³⁴

What was presented in the *Reflections* as a general postulate will be applied, in the *History of Art*, to the specific domain of Greek art. Instead of saying “one must” (point of view of the norm), Winckelmann henceforth is satisfied to write that the Greeks “were accustomed to.” This point of view is “historical,” of course; but it is the same essence that is expressed in it, or, should I say, that shows itself in it:

Expression, in its limited as well as more extended signification, changes the features of the face, and the posture, and consequently alters those forms which constitute beauty. The greater the change, the more unfavorable it is to beauty. On this account, stillness was one of the principles observed here, because it was regarded, according to Plato, as a state intermediate between sadness and gaiety; and, for the same reason, stillness is the state most appropriate to beauty, just as it is to the sea. Experience also teaches that the most beautiful men are quiet in manners and demeanor. . . . Besides, a state of stillness and repose, both in man and beast, is that state which allows us to examine and discover their real nature and characteristics, just as one sees the bottom of a river or a lake only when their waters are still and unruffled, and consequently even Art can express her own peculiar nature (*das Wesen der Kunst*) only in stillness.³⁵

* * *

This introduction is sufficient, I believe, to show the eminently problematic nature of the moment of thought represented by the *History of Ancient Art* and its overall legacy. It erects a system, but one that constantly fails to reach completion: every affirmation of a thesis or theoretical proposition is quickly followed by a contradiction. Thus, Winckelmann contrasts art history with simple judgments of taste, but an aesthetic norm informs every step of his historical narrative. He claims his history is an objectification of the “debris” of the past, but a powerful subjective element never ceases to guide his scholarly writing:

"I imagine myself appearing in the Olympic Stadium." The art history that Winckelmann advocates oscillates ceaselessly between essence and becoming. In it the historical past is invented as much as it is discovered.

What should one make of this state of affairs? It has been said since Quatremère de Quincy, and it is still repeated today, that Winckelmann invented art history in the modern sense of the term. Is not this one more contradiction? The sociologist of images, the iconologist, the archaeologist using an electron microscope, the museum curator who is familiar with spectrometric analyses—are they still burdened with such philosophical problems? The status of art history as a "scientific" discipline seems so well established that it is hard to see what we could still owe to such a world of thought. Yet one is often unaware of the heritage of which one is the legatee. What knot of problems does this *History of Ancient Art* continue to offer us?

The very title of Winckelmann's work introduces and imposes a triple knot, a knot tied three times: a knot of *history* (how can we construct it, how write it?), a knot of *art* (how can we distinguish it, look at it?), and a knot of Antiquity (how can we recollect it, restore it?). Winckelmann's "system," of course is not philosophical in the strict sense and therefore could not be considered anything like a dialectical construction. But there exists a crucial notion, a word that holds together the three bows of the knot. It is a kind of magic word, resolving all the contradictions, or rather causing them to pass unnoticed. It is the word "imitation," and it forms the central element of the Winckelmannian system, the hinge, the pivot thanks to which all the differences are linked together and all the abysses can be crossed.

In the conclusion of his work, cited above,³⁶ Winckelmann seems to have opened a chasm: a depressive chasm, linked to the loss of ancient art and to the impossibility of the return of that "object of wishes"; a chasm separating mourning from desire (*Wunsch*); a chasm separating the "originals" (*Urbilder*) of the Greek statues and their Roman "copies" (*Kopien*). But elsewhere in his work, beginning with the *Thoughts*, of course, *imitation* throws a bridge across these chasms. Imitation of the ancients, as practiced by the neoclassical artist, has the capacity to rekindle desire beyond the mourning. It creates a link between the original and the copy that enables the *idea*, the "essence of art" to revive, as it were, and to traverse time. It is thanks to imitation that the "categorical absence" of Greek art, to use Alex Potts's expression, becomes capable of a renaissance, and even of an "intense presence."³⁷

For it is truly a matter of presence and of the present: the present time of an imitation "revives the lost original,"³⁸ thus restoring to the origin an active or current presence. That turns out to be possible only because the object of imitation is not an object, but rather the ideal itself. While the depressive side of Winckelmannian history made Greek art into an *object of mourning*, impossible to attain—"we have, as it were, nothing left but a shadowy outline of the object of our wishes"³⁹—a maniacal side, if I may be so bold as to put it that way, makes this art into an *ideal to be grasped*, into the categorical imperative of the "essence

of art," something which becomes possible only through the *imitation of the ancients*. Imitation, of course, is a highly paradoxical concept. But its paradox is precisely what allows Winckelmann to execute his famous pirouette: "The only way for us to become great, or, if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients."⁴⁰

This is a considerable achievement, and its consequences will be considerable, as well. They affect the very framework, the temporal architecture of the entire enterprise; for the art history that Winckelmann constructs winds up overlaying the *natural time* of *Veränderung* [alteration] on the *ideal time* of the *Wesen der Kunst*. And this is what allows him to have the schema of "life and death" and of "greatness and decline" coexist with the intellectual project of a "renaissance" or "neoclassical" restoration. We must stress the crucial element of this achievement: *imitation* allows this *renaissance* to imitate only the *ideal*. How can one fail to recognize here, reconfigured but still carried along, the three basic "magic words" of Vasarian idealism?⁴¹ How can one fail to recognize, in the overlaying of *natural* time on *ideal* time, the thing that constitutes the ambivalence of the humanist concept of imitation itself? Moreover, would the *modern* imitation of the inimitable *ancients* have been possible without the middle term represented, in Winckelmann's eyes, too, by the *Renaissance* imitation—by Raphael, in the first place—of these same ancients?

A difficult knot (with a tangled-up solution) now becomes one that is properly tied (with an obvious solution), consisting of three loops. The knot of Antiquity comes undone, forming a notion of the ideal; the knot of art comes undone, forming a notion of imitation; and the knot of history comes undone, forming a notion of the Renaissance. This is how Vasari's humanist history had already been constructed, and this is how Winckelmann's neoclassical history recommences. Let us, however, raise Herder's question again: "Is [this] the goal of history? The goal of a history of art? Are not other forms of history possible?"⁴²

And let us be clear about what is still at stake here, given the Winckelmannian heritage so unanimously claimed among art historians. Consider, in the first place, the "analysis of time." Might there not exist a time of images which is neither "life and death" nor "greatness and decline," nor even that ideal "Renaissance" whose values historians constantly put to their own uses? Might there not be a *time for phantoms*, a return of the images, a "survival" (*Nachleben*) that is not subject to the model of transmission presupposed by the "imitation" (*Nachahmung*) of ancient works by more recent works? Might there not be a *time for the memory* of images—an obscure game of the repressed and its eternal return—that is not the one proposed by this history of art, by this narrative? And, as for art itself: might there not be a "body" of images that escapes the classifications established in the eighteenth century? Might there not be a type of resemblance that is not the one imposed by the "imitation of the ideal," with its rejection, in Winckelmann's formulation, of *pathos*? Might there not be a *time for symptoms* in the history of the images of art? Was this history truly "born" one day?

A century and a half after Winckelmann wrote his monumental *History of Ancient Art*, Aby Warburg published, not in Dresden but in Hamburg, a minuscule text—actually, a five-and-half-page summary of a lecture—on “Dürer and Italian Antiquity.”⁴³ The image that opens this text is not that of a Christian resurrection, as in Vasari (fig. 1), or of some Olympian glory, as in Winckelmann (fig. 2). Rather, it is one in which a human being is torn apart, a passionate and violent scene, frozen at a moment of extreme physical intensity (fig. 3).

The dissymmetry between these moments of thinking about history, about art and about Antiquity, appears to be very radical. In his brief text, which is shorter than a single “Life” in Vasari, as is the case with all his published work—just as all his published work is less voluminous than the *History of Ancient Art* by itself—Warburg surreptitiously decomposes and deconstructs all the epistemic models employed in Vasarian and Winckelmannian history of art. He thus deconstructs what the history of art still today considers to be its initiatory moment.

For the natural model of cycles of “life and death” and “greatness and decline,” Warburg substituted a resolutely nonnatural, symbolic model, a *cultural model* of history in which temporal periods are no longer fashioned according to biomorphic stages, but, instead, are expressed by strata, hybrid blocks, rhizomes, specific complexities, by returns that are often unexpected and goals that are always thwarted. For the ideal model of “renaissances,” “good imitations,” and the “serene beauties” of Antiquity, Warburg substituted what might be termed a *phantasmal model* [*modèle phantomal*] of history, in which temporal periods are no longer fashioned according to the academic transmission of knowledge, but are expressed, rather, by hauntings, “survivals,” residues, and the persistent return of forms—that is to say, by notions that do not constitute knowledge, that are unthought, and by unconscious aspects of time. In the final analysis, the phantasmal model that I am speaking of is a *psychological model* [*modèle psychique*], in the sense that the psychological point of view would not constitute a return to the point of view of the ideal but to the possibility of its theoretical decomposition. What we have here, then, could be called a *symptomatic model* [*modèle symptomal*], in which the emergence and change of forms is to be analyzed as an ensemble of processes characterized by tensions—for example, tensions between the desire for identification and the constraint of alteration, between purification and hybridization, the normal and the pathological, order and chaos, and between characteristics that can be seen and others that remain unthought.

Admittedly, I have asserted all this in a very abrupt and condensed manner. We need to start over again from the beginning in order to construct this working hypothesis. But it was necessary to state the following right away: with Warburg, thinking about art and thinking about history took a decisive turn. And after him we no longer confront or *stand before the image* [*devant l'image*] or *before time* [*devant le temps*] in the same way as we did previously. [*L'image survivante*



FIG. 3 Albrecht Dürer, *Death of Orpheus*, 1494. Drawing. Hamburg, Kunsthalle.

was preceded by two other books by Didi-Huberman in which he explored themes in the methodology and epistemology of art and its history: *Devant l'image* (translated as Didi-Huberman 2005) and *Devant le temps*.—[Trans.] All the same, art history does not “commence” with him in the sense of a systematic refoundation, as one might well have expected. Beginning with him, though, art history becomes relentlessly worried about itself; *the history of art becomes unsettled and confused*, which is a way of saying—if one recalls the lesson taught by Walter Benjamin—that it comes close to reaching an origin. Warburg’s art history is very much the opposite of an absolute beginning, of a blank slate. It is more like a vortex in the river of the discipline—a troublemaking moment beyond which the course of things is inflected, indeed, profoundly changed.

Just how profoundly changed is not easy to determine, even today. Elsewhere I have attempted to characterize certain tensions, both in the history of the discipline and in its current state, that have impeded the recognition of a change of this magnitude.⁴⁴ Let me add to that the following persistent impression: *Warburg is our obsession* [*hantise*]; he haunts us. He is to art history what an unappeased ghost—a *dybbuk*—might be to the house we live in. What is such an obsession? It is something or someone that always comes back, survives everything, reappears at intervals, and expresses a truth concerning an original state of affairs. It is something or someone that one cannot forget, and yet is impossible to recognize clearly.

Warburg, our phantom: located somewhere in us, but beyond our grasp, unknown. Upon his death, in 1929, the obituaries devoted to him—penned by scholars as distinguished as Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Cassirer—displayed the great respect due to ancestors who really matter.⁴⁵ He was recognized as the founding father of a substantial discipline, iconology; but his work was soon eclipsed by that of Panofsky, so much clearer and more distinct, so much more systematic and reassuring.⁴⁶ Since that time, Warburg has been wandering through the history of art like an unmentionable ancestor, a ghostly father of iconology—without anyone ever saying exactly what should not be mentioned, nor what should be disavowed, in his work.

Why ghostly? First of all because one does not know where to get hold of him. In his obituary of Warburg, Giorgio Pasquali wrote, in 1930, that the historian, during his lifetime, “already disappeared behind the institution he had created” in Hamburg, the famous Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, which, following the exile precipitated by the Nazi menace, was able to survive and revive in London.⁴⁷ In order to tell who Warburg was, and what Warburg was, Ernst Gombrich—to whom the task fell of writing a book that was first conceived by Gertrud Bing—resolved to produce an “intellectual biography” in which he would deliberately self-censure certain psychological aspects of Warburg’s life and personality.⁴⁸ This decision was accompanied by a somewhat disembodied “elaboration” of an oeuvre in which the dimension of *pathos*, indeed of the *pathological*, proved to be essential, as much with respect to the objects studied as to the view that was brought to bear on them. Edgar Wind severely criticized this prudish reassembly, this watered-down version.⁴⁹ One should not, he thought, separate a man from his *pathos*—his empathies and his pathologies—one should not separate Nietzsche from his madness nor Warburg from those *losses of self* that led to his confinement behind the walls of a psychiatric asylum for almost five years. The symmetrical danger exits, of course: that of neglecting the work in favor of a cheap fascination with a destiny worthy of a Gothic novel.⁵⁰

Another source of this ghostly character is the impossibility, even today, of discerning the exact limits of Warburg’s oeuvre. Like a spectral body, it remains without definable contours: it has not yet found its *corpus*. It haunts every book in his library—and even every interval between the books, on account of the famous “law of the good neighbor” that Warburg instituted for their classification.⁵¹ But, above all, it is spread out in the vast maze of still unpublished manuscripts—all those notes, sketches, schemas, and journals, along with the correspondence that Warburg tirelessly kept up, never throwing anything away, and that the editors have so far been unable to bring together in a methodical fashion, so perplexing is the “kaleidoscopic fashion” of all this material.⁵² Certain of these writings, moreover, were explicitly envisaged as proposing fundamental principles, namely the *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie* (1888–1905) and the *Allgemeine Ideen* (1927). Thus, given our ignorance with respect to such a mass of texts, all our reflections

about Warburg remain subject to a certain indecisiveness. To write about this oeuvre today, we must accept that our own working hypotheses may one day be modified or brought into question by an unanticipated piece of this *floating corpus*.

But that is not all. There is a third, still more fundamental cause of the ghostly aspect of this thought, namely *style*—and, therefore, *time*. In reading Warburg we confront the difficulty of seeing the tempo of the most exhausting, or the most unexpected erudition—such as the sudden appearance, in the middle of an analysis of the Renaissance frescoes of the Schifanoia Palace in Ferrara, of an Arab astrologer of the ninth century, Abu Ma'sar⁵³—combined with the almost Baudelairian tempo of *rockets*: thoughts that simply burst out, uncertain thoughts, aphorisms, permutations of words, experiments with various concepts. All this, Gombrich assumes, is liable to put off the “modern reader,” but this is precisely what signals Warburg's modernity.⁵⁴

* * *

From what position, then, from what place and from what time, does this phantom speak to us? His vocabulary is drawn alternately from German romanticism and from Carlyle, from positivism and from Nietzsche's philosophy. He alternately displays a meticulous concern for historical detail and the uncertain inspiration of prophetic intuition. Warburg himself described his style as being like an “eel broth” (*Aalsuppenstil*).⁵⁵ Taking our cue from this remark, let us imagine a mass of serpentine, reptilian bodies, somewhere between the dangerous circumvolutions of the *Laocoön*—which obsessed Warburg for his entire life, no less than the snakes that the Indians he studied inserted into their mouths (fig. 37)—and the unformed mass, without head or tail, of a way of thinking that always stubbornly resists “cutting itself,” that is to say, defining for itself a beginning and an end.

Let us observe, in addition, that Warburg's vocabulary itself seems destined to assume the status of a specter. Gombrich notes that the most important words of this vocabulary—such as *bewegtes Leben*, *Pathosformel*, and *Nachleben*—have difficulty making their way into English.⁵⁶ It would be more to the point to say that postwar Anglo-Saxon art history, which owed such a large debt to German émigrés,⁵⁷ deliberately gave up the use of German philosophical language. The unappeased ghost of a certain philological and philosophical tradition, Warburg thus wanders through a twofold and elusive time. On the one hand, he speaks to us *from a past* that the “progress of the discipline” seems to have rendered outmoded. It is characteristic, in particular, that the term *Nachleben*—“survival,” a concept which is crucial to the whole Warburgian enterprise—fell into complete neglect and, if by chance it has been cited at all, has not been the subject of any serious epistemological critique.

On the other hand, Warburg's oeuvre can be read as a prophetic text and, more precisely, as the prophecy of a *knowledge that will come to us in the future*.

In 1964, Robert Klein wrote concerning Warburg: “[He] created a discipline that, contrary to so many others, exists but has no name.”⁵⁸ Taking up this formulation, Giorgio Agamben has shown the degree to which the “science” envisaged by such an oeuvre has “not yet been established”—indicating thereby not so much a lack of rationality as the considerable ambition and disruptive nature of this way of thinking about images.⁵⁹ Warburg said of himself that he was created less to exist than to “remain [I would say: *persist*] as a beautiful memory.”⁶⁰ Such is indeed the sense of the word *Nachleben*, this word that signifies “afterlife” or “living afterwards”; a being from the past never ceases to survive. At a certain moment, its return into our memory becomes urgent, possessing the anachronistic urgency of what Nietzsche termed the *untimely*.

Such is Warburg today: a survivor whose presence is urgent for art history. He is our *dybbuk*, the ghost of our discipline, speaking to us simultaneously of his (of our) past and of his (of our future). With respect to the past, we should rejoice in the philological work that, especially in Germany, has been devoted for some years now to Warburg’s oeuvre.⁶¹ With respect to the future, things are obviously rather trickier: the value of Warburg’s efforts as a “stimulus” having now been recognized,⁶² interpretations of his work are beginning to diverge. Not only was the heritage of the “Warburgian method” questioned right from the moment scholars began to employ it;⁶³ the current profusion of references to this supposed “method” can truly make one dizzy. Warburg, one might say, is redoubling his ghostliness at the very moment when everyone is beginning to invoke him as the guardian angel of the most diverse theoretical approaches. He is guardian angel of the history of *mentalités*, of the social history of art, and of micro-history,⁶⁴ guardian angel of hermeneutics,⁶⁵ guardian angel of a so-called antiformalism,⁶⁶ guardian angel of a so-called retro-modern post-modernism,⁶⁷ guardian angel of the New Art History, and even a major ally of feminist critique,⁶⁸ etc., etc.

FORMS SURVIVE: HISTORY OPENS UP

What remains certain is that, as Ernst Gombrich wrote—but how could he not feel himself targeted by his own statement?—“the [current] fascination exerted by Warburg’s legacy may also be viewed as a symptom of a certain dissatisfaction” with art history as it has been practiced since the end of the Second World War.⁶⁹

In his time, Warburg himself had displayed this kind of dissatisfaction, which is a way of expressing a demand that has not yet been fully formulated. In 1888, when he was only twenty-two years old, Warburg, in his private journal, was already castigating art history for “cultivated people,” the “aestheticizing” history of art of those who are content to evaluate figurative works of art in terms of beauty. He was already calling for a *Kunstwissenschaft*, a “science of art,” writing that there would come a day when, without it, it would be as futile to talk about images as for a nonphysician to comment on a symptomatology.⁷⁰

And, in 1923, Warburg still recalled that it was on account of his "down-right disgust with aestheticizing art history" (*ästhetisierende Kunstgeschichte*) that he suddenly left for the mountains of New Mexico.⁷¹ Throughout his life he insisted that the serious study of images required a much more radical questioning than all that "curiosité gourmande" of the attributionists—such as Morelli, Venturi, and Berenson—whom he termed "professional admirers." He likewise demanded much more than the vague aestheticism of the disciples of Ruskin and Walter Pater (when they were of the vulgar kind, that is to say, "bourgeois"), and of those of Burckhardt and Nietzsche, too. Thus, in his notebooks he sarcastically evokes the "tourist-superman on Easter vacation" who comes to visit Florence "with *Zarathustra* in the pocket of his loden coat."⁷²

Responding to this dissatisfaction, Warburg evinced a constant *displacement*: a displacement in thought, in philosophical points of view, in fields of knowledge, in historical periods, in cultural hierarchies, and in geographical locations. And this very displacement continues to make him phantom-like: Warburg was, in his time—though never more so than today—the will-o'-the-wisp, *the passe-muraille of art history*. His displacement *toward* art history, toward scholarship and images in general, had already been the result of a critical reaction to his family's world: a malaise with respect to upper-middle-class business circles and to Orthodox Judaism.⁷³ But, above all, his displacement *through* the history of art, to its borders and *beyond*, created in the discipline itself a violent critical reaction, a crisis, and a real *deconstruction of disciplinary frontiers*.

This reaction is already evident in the choices the young Warburg made as a student between 1886 and 1888. He studied with classical archaeologists—classical in all senses of the term—such as Reinhard Kekulé von Stradonitz and Adolf Michaelis. With the latter he studied the Parthenon friezes; in the former's course he discovered the aesthetics of the *Laocoön* and, in 1887, produced his very first analysis of a *Pathosformel*.⁷⁴ He became a disciple of Carl Justi, who initiated him into classical philology and introduced him to Winckelmann, but also to Velázquez and to Flemish painting. On the other hand, he developed an enthusiasm for the "anthropological" philology of Hermann Usener, with all the philosophical, ethnographic, psychological, and historical problems that it raised in its wake. Then, in Karl Lamprecht's lectures on history conceived as a "psychological science," he encountered several of the basic elements of his future methodology.⁷⁵

With regard to the Renaissance, the teaching of Riehl and of Thode served mainly as foils.⁷⁶ (The latter had made Italian artistic development a result of the Franciscan spirit, pushing the return of pagan Antiquity into the background.) But Hubert Janitschek led him to understand the importance of *theories of art*—those of Dante and of Alberti—as well as the role played by the *social practices* that are linked to all forms of the production of figurative art.⁷⁷ As for August Schmarsow, he quite simply initiated Warburg into the *Florentine* terrain, if I may put it that way: it was in Florence itself that the young historian took the

former's courses on Donatello, Botticelli, and the relationship between Gothic and Renaissance in Quattrocento Florence, all of them subjects we recognize today as eminently Warburgian.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Schmarsow advocated a *Kunstwissenschaft* resolutely open to anthropological and psychological questions. He elaborated a specific concept of visual communication and "information" (*Verständigung*), but, above all, he understood the fundamental role of what, in that period, was called the "language of gestures." Taking up again the topic of the expressiveness of the *Laocoön*, and going beyond Lessing, Schmarsow sought to elaborate a theory of the corporeal empathy of images, utilizing a binomial schema of "gesture" (*Mimik*) and "modeling" (*Plastik*).⁷⁹ It is not so astonishing, therefore, to see the young Warburg going from the ancient psychomachias to the reading of Wilhelm Wundt, or from Botticelli to medical courses, or even to a course on probabilities, where, in 1891, he gave a presentation on "The logical foundations of games of chance."⁸⁰

More than a domain of knowledge in formation, it was really a *domain of knowledge in motion* that, little by little, was emerging through the seemingly erratic play of the all these methodological displacements. Born in 1866, Warburg was a member of a generation of distinguished art historians (Émile Mâle was born in 1862, Adolph Goldschmidt in 1863, Heinrich Wölfflin in 1864, Bernard Berenson in 1865, Julius von Schloesser in 1866, Max J. Friedländer in 1867, and Wilhelm Vöge in 1868), but his *epistemic position* and his institutional situation totally distinguished him from these others. In 1904, nearing his fortieth birthday, he once again failed to pass his habilitation examination for a post as professor in Bonn. He had already written as early as 1897, half lucidly and half anxiously, "I have decided once and for all that I am not suited to be Privatdozent."⁸¹ He was to decline, subsequently, offers of chairs in Breslau, in Halle, and in general all public positions, refusing, for example, to represent the German delegation at the International Congress in Rome (1912), even though he had been one of its most active promoters. He was to remain a "private researcher"—and we should understand the word in all its possible senses—whose very project, the "science without a name," was unable to find a satisfactory home in the various existing disciplinary enclosures and other academic arrangements.

This, then, was his initial dissatisfaction: the *territorialization of the study of images*. In 1912, concluding his address to the Rome Congress on the astrological motifs in the frescoes of Francesco del Cossa at Ferrara, Warburg pleaded, to use his own words, for an "enlargement" of the discipline: "The isolated and highly provisional experiment that I have undertaken here is intended as a plea for an enlargement of the methodological borders of our study of art (*eine methodische Grenzerweiterung unserer Kunstwissenschaft*)" [translation modified—Trans.].⁸²

It would be correct, but very incomplete, to understand this plea as a call for "interdisciplinarity," or as the philosophically motivated extension of a point

of view about images to areas beyond the factual and stylistic problems that the traditional historian or art chooses to consider. It is certain that Warburg's desire was always to reconcile a *philological concern* (and thus the prudence and competence that it presupposes) and a *philosophical concern* (and thus the risk and even impertinence that it presupposes). But there is still more: Warburg's demands respecting art history stem from a very precise position concerning each of the two terms "art" and "history."

Warburg, I believe, felt dissatisfied with the territorialization of the study of images because he was sure of two things at least. First, we do not stand confronted with or *before an image* the way we do before a thing whose exact boundaries we can trace. The ensemble of definite coordinates—author, date, technique, iconography, etc.—is obviously insufficient for that. An image, every image, is the result of movements that are provisionally sedimented or crystallized in it. These movements traverse it through and through, each one having its own trajectory—historical, anthropological, and psychological—starting from a distance and continuing beyond it. They oblige us to think of the image as an energy-bearing or dynamic *moment*, even though it may have a specific structure.

Now, that entails a basic consequence for art history, which Warburg announces in the words immediately following his "plea": we stand before the image as we do *before a complex time*, namely the provisionally configured, dynamic time of these movements themselves. The consequence, indeed the stakes in play, of a "methodical enlargement of the frontiers" is no less than a deterritorialization of the image and of the time in which its historicity finds expression. This clearly means that *the time of the image is not the time of history* in general, that is, time that Warburg defines here in terms of the "universal categories" of evolution. What, then, is the urgent task he envisages (the one that is untimely, not current)? The history of art needs to reestablish an "evolutionary theory of its own," its own theory of time, which, one immediately notes, Warburg orients toward an "historical psychology": "Until now, a lack of adequate general evolutionary categories has impeded art history in placing its materials at the disposal of the—still unwritten—'historical psychology of human expression' (*historische Psychologie des menschlichen Ausdrucks*). By adopting either an unduly materialistic or an unduly mystical stance, our young discipline . . . gropes toward an evolutionary theory of its own (*ihre eigene Entwicklungslehre*), somewhere between the schematisms of political history and the dogmatic faith in genius."⁸³

For now, we must seek to follow Warburg in his attempt to "pass through walls": to "decompartmentalize" the *image* and the *time* that it bears within itself or that bears it. To follow the organic movement involved here, without omitting anything, would be an overwhelming task. One can at least begin to undertake an epistemological critique of this scope by considering the way or ways in which Warburg goes about initiating movement in and *displacing art history*. Once again, we observe that everything involved in this enterprise is a

matter of style—whether style of thinking, of making a decision, or of coming to know something; which is to say that is a matter of time, of tempo.

* * *

One way to displace things is to take one's time, to *postpone* [*différer*]. In Florence, Warburg is already "postponing" the history of art: he makes it take on another time than the Vasarian time of the self-glorifying "histories," or the Hegelian time of the "universal meaning of history." He creates a novel type of relationship between the particular and the universal. In order to do that, he traverses and overturns the traditional domains of art itself. As the Uffizi galleries are no longer enough for him, he decides to immerse himself in the unhierarchical world of the archives, of the *Archivio*, with its innumerable private *ricordanze*, its account books, its notarized wills, and such like. Thus, the notice of a payment for a votive image made in 1481 and based on the donor's own countenance, or the last wishes of a Florentine bourgeois, become, in his eyes, elements of a body of material, both moving and unlimited, suitable for reinventing the history of the Renaissance.⁸⁴ This is a history that could already be called "phantasmal," in the sense that in it the archive is treated as a material vestige of the sounds of the dead. Warburg writes that his aim in using the "archival documents that have been read" is "to restore the tone and timbre of those unheard voices" (*den unhörbaren Stimmen wieder Klangfarbe zu verleihen*)—voices of the deceased, yet voices that still lie waiting, coiled up, as it were, simply in the writing itself or in the particular turns of phrase of an intimate Quattrocento journal exhumed in the *Archivio*.⁸⁵

Looked at from this point of view, which might be called that of ghostly return, the images themselves are considered to be what survives of a dynamic process of anthropological sedimentation that has become partial, or virtual, having been largely destroyed by time. Thus, as a first approximation, the image—starting with those portraits of Florentine bankers that Warburg examined with a particular fervor—is viewed as *what survives of a population of ghosts*. Ghosts whose traces are scarcely visible and yet are disseminated everywhere: in an astrological theme concerning birth, in a business letter, in a garland [*guirlande*] of flowers (the very one from which Ghirlandai took his name), in a detail relating to the fashions of the time, a belt buckle, say, or the particular curl of a woman's chignon.

This anthropological dissemination obviously calls for a multiplication of points of view, approaches, and competencies. The impressive Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, in Hamburg, was destined to assume the burden of such an epistemological displacement, a burden demanding infinite patience, and one which was constantly enlarged and altered. Conceived by Warburg as early as 1889 and built between 1900 and 1906, the library constituted a kind of magnum opus in which its author, although assisted by Fritz Saxl, probably got lost as he went about constructing his "thinking

space" (*Denkraum*) in it.⁸⁶ In this rhizome-like space, which by 1929 contained sixty-five thousand volumes, art history as an academic discipline underwent an ordeal of regulated disorientation: everywhere that there existed *frontiers* between disciplines, the library sought to establish *links*.⁸⁷

But this space was still the *working library* of a "science without a name": a library, thus, *for work* but also a library that was a *work* in progress. Fritz Saxl put it very well when he said that the library was, above all, a *space of questions*, a place for documenting problems, a complex network at the summit of which—and this is extremely significant for our purposes—stood the *question of time* and of history. "It is a library of questions, and its specific character consists precisely in the fact that its classification obliges one to enter into its problems. At the library's summit (*an der Spitze*) is located the section on the philosophy of history."⁸⁸

Salvatore Settis, in a remarkable article, has reconstituted the library's practical models—beginning with the library of the University of Strasbourg, where Warburg was a student—as well as the theoretical context provided by the debates over the classification of knowledge at the end of the nineteenth century. Above all, he has traced the many stages in Warburg's incessant ruminating on the trajectories and "places" in the library, showing them to be a function of the way in which he grappled with the fundamental problems signaled by such crucial terms as *Nachleben der Antike* (survival of Antiquity), *Ausdruck* (expression), and *Mnemosyne*.⁸⁹

This helps us understand how a library conceived in this manner was able to produce its displacement effects. A *heuristic* attitude—that is to say, a thought experiment that does not assume one knows ahead of time the axiom on which the answer depends—guided the ceaseless efforts involved in its reconfiguration. How was one to go about organizing interdisciplinarity? That presupposed, once again, the difficult encounter of philological cogwheels and philosophical grains of sand. It also presupposed creating a real *archaeology of the fields of knowledge* that are linked to what today are called the "human sciences"—a theoretical archaeology centered, from the start, on the twofold question of forms and symbols.⁹⁰

At the same time, however, an enterprise of this kind generated what might be called an *aporetic* situation. In the beginning, it involved one person and one universe of questions. And, as one can still verify today, wandering among the bookshelves at the Warburg Institute in London, one has a very strange feeling using a working tool that clearly bears the mark of its builder. If Warburg's library has resisted the effects of time so well, it is because the phantoms of the questions he raised have found neither a stable home nor any rest. In his funeral oration for the historian, Ernst Cassirer wrote a magnificent page on the *auratic* character of a library at once so private and so open, "inhabited" by those "original spiritual configurations," as he put it, from which there seems to have emerged, specter-like and still "without a name," a possible *archaeology of culture*.⁹¹ It is undeniable, however, that this kind of strangeness carries with it

something like the stigmata of an aporia: Warburg multiplied the links between the fields of knowledge, that is to say, between the possible responses to the insane overdetermination of images. And with respect to this multiplication, he probably dreamed of not choosing, of postponing, of cutting nothing out, of taking the time to take everything into account—surely a kind of insanity. How does one orient oneself in the midst of this knot of problems? How does one orient oneself in the “eel soup” constituted by the problem of the determinism of images?

There is another way of posing the question, of displacing things. Another style, another tempo. Namely, to lose—or rather seem to lose—one’s time. It is to proceed along the edges of an issue, to act by impulse. It is to *bifurcate*, to branch off all of a sudden, to no longer put anything off. It is to directly confront the *differences* involved in the matter. It is to start out, as it were, at ground level. Not that the *Archivio* or the library is a pure abstraction, floating above the terrain. To the contrary, these treasure houses of knowledge and civilization bring together a great number of different strata, and one can, in fact, follow their *movements in the terrain*, from one archive to another, from one field of knowledge to another. But to bifurcate is something else: it means *moving toward the terrain*, traversing the ground, and accepting the existential ordeal provoked by the questions one raises.

In fact, it requires one to undergo a displacement in one’s point of view, more specifically, the displacement of one’s position as subject in order to give oneself the means of displacing the definition of one’s object. Warburg offered reasons for his trip to New Mexico that he himself labeled “romantic” (*der Wille zum Romantischen*), above all a powerful reaction to the inanity of the modern civilization (*die Leerheit der Zivilisation*) that he observed on the East Coast of the United States during a trip with his family. But he also invoked properly “scientific” reasons (*zur Wissenschaft*) connected with his “downright disgust with aestheticizing art history” and with his quest for a “science of art” (*Kunstwissenschaft*) open to the symbolic field—or, as he put it at that time, to the cultural field in general (*Kulturwissenschaft*).⁹²

Although Warburg’s “Indian trip” has often been studied,⁹³ the question of what exactly he was looking for—and of what he found there—has to some extent remained unanswered. There is agreement on the methodological importance of such a *displacement*, setting aside the readings of those who, bewildered or even shocked by it, interpret it as the purely negative and *inappropriate* [*déplacé*] act of an art historian in the midst of a psychological crisis. Still, one must ask *what type of object* Warburg encountered during this trip: what type of object *suitable for displacing the “art” object* contained in the very expression “art history.” Let us ask, symmetrically, *what type of time* Warburg experienced there that was *suitable for displacing “history,”* as that term is generally understood in the expression “art history.”

What sort of object, then, did Warburg encounter in the course of this experience? Something that, in 1895, probably still remained unnamed. Something

that was an *image* but also an *act* (i.e., corporeal and social) and a symbol (i.e., psychological and cultural). A theoretical “eel soup,” in short. A pile of snakes—the very thing that actually was swarming in the Oraibi ritual, and the very thing that shot forth *symbolically* its celestial lightning strokes (figs. 37 and 73 to 76); and, likewise, that which appeared as an *image* in the vision of the reptilian stalactites of New Mexico and the torsades of a Baroque retable before which Indians were observed praying at Acoma.⁹⁴

The problem raised by this “concretion” of acts, images, and symbols is not really one of knowing whether Warburg was looking to establish a parity or disparity between them and the Western European objects from the Florentine Renaissance he was working on. Was he there to establish an analogy with the Renaissance, with its festivals, representations of Apollo and of the serpent Python, and its Dionysian and pagan elements, as Peter Burke thinks?⁹⁵ Or was he perhaps there to carry out a complete reversal of the Western, classical point of view, as Sigrid Weigel contends?⁹⁶ The answer must be dialectical. It is in the “visible incorporation of strangeness,” to use Alessandro Dal Lago’s expression,⁹⁷ that Warburg no doubt looked for the foundation of the polarities that, according to him, are manifested in every cultural phenomenon; but for him this foundation should be understood not as communal and archetypal but rather as *differential* and *comparative*.

What, then, made this object suited for *displacing the “art” object* that the discipline of art history traditionally studied? Precisely the fact that it was not an object, but rather a complex of *relations*—indeed, a pile, a conglomeration, or a rhizome of relations. This is undoubtedly the main reason for the passionate engagement with anthropological questions that Warburg displayed throughout his life. Anchoring the images and works of art in the field of anthropological questions was a first step in displacing art history, but also a way of leading it to confront its own “fundamental problems.” As a historian, Warburg, like Burckhardt before him, refused to pose these problems at the most basic levels of knowledge, as a Kant or a Hegel would have done. For him, to pose “fundamental problems” was not a matter of seeking *to derive the general law* or the essence of a human faculty (the capacity to produce images) or of a domain of knowledge (the history of the visual arts). It was, rather, a matter of multiplying the pertinent singularities. In short, it meant *to enlarge the field of admissible phenomena* in a discipline whose attention until then had been riveted on its objects—to the detriment of the relationships that these objects establish, and by which they are established—like a fetishist on his shoes.

* * *

Anthropology, therefore, displaces and defamiliarizes—one might almost say, disquiets—art history. Not in order to disperse it into some eclectic interdisciplinarity without a point of view, but in order to open it up to its own “fundamental problems,” which, in large measure, remain unexamined within the

discipline. It is a matter of doing justice to the extreme *complexity* of the relationships and determinations, or, better, *overdeterminations*, of which images are constituted. But it is also a matter of offering a new formulation of the *specificity* of these relationships and of the *formal work* of which the images themselves are constitutive elements. It is completely foolish, though often enough done, to see Warburg as someone whose sole concern was the discovery of historical "facts" and iconographic "contents," a so-called antiformalist incapable of distinguishing between a mass-produced image and a unique masterpiece. What he attempted, rather, as his final project, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, clearly attests, was *to reformulate the problem of style*, that problem of linkages and formal efficacy, by always joining the philological study of the singular case with the anthropological approach to the relationships that render these singularities historically and culturally viable.⁹⁸

It would require a whole book to determine precisely what Warburg found in the anthropology of his time that was capable of transforming his attitude as an art historian; for this involves a vast field encompassing specialized ethnographic studies and grand, philosophically inspired systems.⁹⁹ It would require, in particular, reconstructing the substantial impact on him of the thought of Hermann Usener, whose courses Warburg attended in Bonn in 1886 and 1887, and whose aim of establishing a "morphology of religious ideas" profoundly marked Warburg's methodology.¹⁰⁰ He had approached ancient myths in the same spirit as Warburg was soon to do in his study of Renaissance frescoes, linking philological inquiry—with its emphasis on details, specifics, and singularities—to the most fundamental problems of psychology and anthropology. For example, in studying the forms of Greek metrics, Usener conceived of the latter as a symptom of overall culture, seeking for survivals up through the period of medieval music; and, reciprocally, he approached acts of belief generally as forms that, in every specific case, had to be addressed with the tools of the philologist.¹⁰¹

One could also look for what Warburg borrowed from the overly general anthropology of images that Wilhelm Wundt attempted in his gigantic *Völkerpsychologie*.¹⁰² Or one could trace Warburg's references to Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, for example with respect to the "law of participation," the "survival of the dead," and the notion of causality in "primitive mentality."¹⁰³ But it is important to bring to light not only what Warburg owes to the anthropology of his day; one must also ask, reciprocally, what anthropology in general and *historical anthropology* in particular owe to an approach of this type.

For various reasons—mainly historical reasons, of course, linked to the long years of the two world wars—French scholarship displayed a particular ignorance regarding this German tradition.¹⁰⁴ Hermann Usener, whom Mauss, however, read very closely,¹⁰⁵ remains unknown to Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne.¹⁰⁶ As for Warburg, he has been ignored not only by positivist art historians, but also by historians sympathetic to structuralism, even by the best scholars of the *Annales* school.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Jacques Le Goff generously

accords Marc Bloch sole credit for the “creation of historical anthropology”; observing, moreover, that the latter’s *Rois thaumaturges* includes only about ten pages—and not very analytical ones, at that—of “iconographic material” [“dossier iconographique”], he concludes that the “renovation of art history is one of the priorities of historical research today.”¹⁰⁸

Rereading Warburg today requires that one invert one’s customary perspective. His way of practicing art history, of *opening it up*, which is so particular and so radical, has had the effect, it seems to me, of raising anew the questions of historical anthropology—a discipline he conceived of in the form he inherited from Jacob Burckhardt and Hermann Usener—on the basis of an inquiry into the symbolic efficacy of images. It is not art history that has to “renew” itself on the basis of “new” questions raised by the overall discipline of history in the domain of the *imaginaire*;¹⁰⁹ it is the discipline of history itself that has to recognize that at a given moment in its own history the “guiding” notions, the “novelty” comes from thinking in specific ways about the powers inherent in the image.

For Warburg, in fact, the image constituted a “total anthropological phenomenon,” a particularly significant crystallization or condensation of what a “culture” (*Kultur*) was at a given moment in its history. This is what one must understand, first of all, by the idea, dear to Warburg, of the “mythopoetic power of the image” (*die mythenbildende Kraft im Bild*).¹¹⁰ And this is why, in his work on the “emotive formulas” of the Renaissance—the *Pathosformeln*, those gestures that are intensified in representation through the artists’s recourse to the visual formulas of classical Antiquity—he felt that there was no “disciplinary” contradiction in orienting his research toward such topics as social mimicry, choreography, fashions in clothing, behavior during festivals, and codes governing the way people greet each other.¹¹¹

In short, the image should not be dissociated from the overall *actions and way of acting (agir)* of the members of a society; nor from *the knowledge and ways of thinking [savoir]* of an epoch; nor, of course, from *beliefs and ways of believing [croire]*. Here resides another essential element of Warburgian invention, which was that of opening up art history to the “dark continent” of the magical efficacy of images—but also to their liturgical, juridical, and political efficacy: “It is one of the prime duties of art history (*Kunstgeschichte*) to bring such forms out of the twilight of ideological polemic and to subject them to close historical scrutiny. For there is one crucial issue in the history of style and civilization (*eine der Hauptfragen der stilerforschenden Kulturwissenschaft*)—the influence of Antiquity on the culture of Renaissance Europe as a whole—that cannot otherwise be fully understood and resolved.”¹¹²

The slippage in the vocabulary is significant: we move from art history (*Kunstgeschichte*) to a science of culture (*Kulturwissenschaft*), and this move simultaneously opens up the field of objects to be studied and sharpens the formulation of the fundamental problems. For example, *Kunstgeschichte* tells us that a genre of fine arts called the “portrait” emerged in the Renaissance thanks

to the humanistic triumph of the individual and to progress in mimetic techniques; but Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft* tells another story, involving the much more complex time of the intersection—an interlacing, an *overdetermination*—of ancient and pagan magic (survivals of the Roman *imago*) and of medieval and Christian liturgy (the practice of *ex voto* in the form of effigies), as well as of the specific circumstances of artistic and intellectual activity in the Quattrocento. As a result, the portrait is transfigured before our eyes, becoming the anthropological support of a “mythopoietic power” that the Vasarian version of art history had shown itself to be incapable of explaining.¹¹³

The *Kunstwissenschaft*, the “science of art” that Warburg so ardently wished for during his youth, thus took the form of a specific investigation of images within the framework of a nonspecific, endlessly open *Kulturwissenschaft*.¹¹⁴ It was necessary to *open up the field* of objects capable of interesting the art historian, inasmuch as the work of art was no longer envisaged as an object fully enclosed its own history, but rather as the dynamic point of encounter—Walter Benjamin would later call it the *lightning flash*—of heterogeneous and overdetermined historical factors. In a magisterial article on Warburg's concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*, Edgar Wind wrote that “any attempt to detach [even the artistic] image from its ties to religion and poetry, to cult and drama, amounts to cutting it off from its own lifeblood.”¹¹⁵ Countering any notion of an autonomous history of images—which does not mean that their specific formal qualities must be ignored—Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft*, therefore, ultimately *opens up the time* in which this history occurs. By having the Greek word for memory (*Mnemosyne*) engraved in capital letters above the entry door to his library, Warburg indicated to the visitor that he was entering into the territory of *another time*.

NACHLEBEN, OR THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF TIME: WARBURG WITH TYLOR

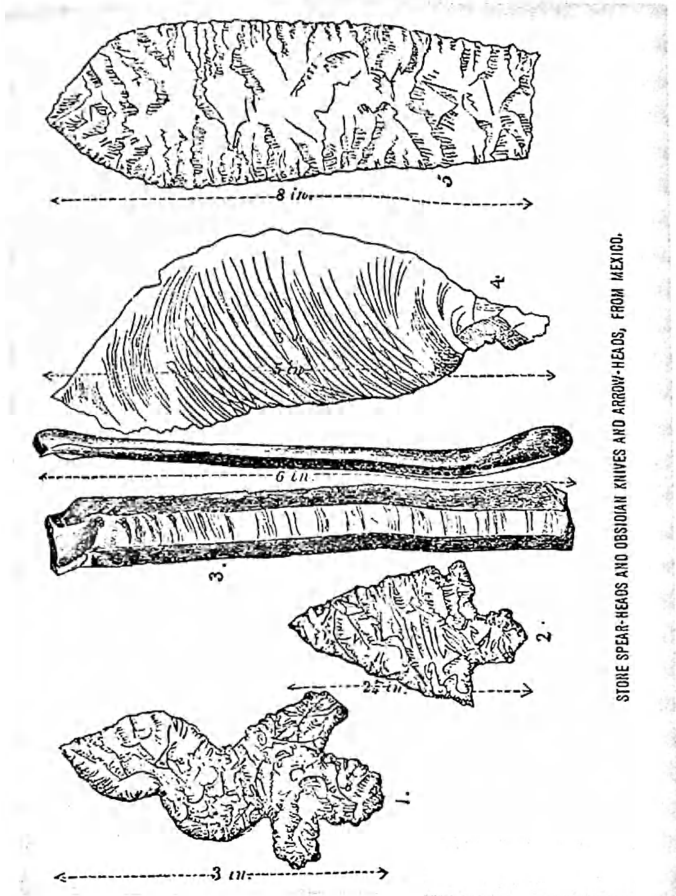
The name of this other time is “survival” (*Nachleben*). We know the key expression, the mysterious watchword of Warburg's entire enterprise: *Nachleben der Antike*. It is the fundamental problem, the one for which he gathered all that material in archives and libraries, seeking to understand the sedimentations and shifts that occurred in the many different terrains involved.¹¹⁶ It is also the fundamental problem that Warburg tried to confront, in the brief time he had there, on the terrain itself of his American Indian experience. Thus, before examining the notion of survival in the context of the “science of culture” that Warburg patiently elaborated on the basis of images of Antiquity and of the modern Western world, it seems worthwhile to look at the emergence of this problematic in its experimental stage on the specific, “displaced” terrain of his travels in Hopi country. The theoretical and heuristic function of anthropology—its capacity to deterritorialize the fields of knowledge and to reintroduce difference into objects and anachronism into history—will thereby appear all the more clearly.

The "survival" that Warburg invoked and investigated throughout his life was, originally, a concept of Anglo-Saxon anthropology. When, in 1911, Julius von Schlosser, who was a close friend of Warburg's and who in many respects shared an interest in his problematic,¹¹⁷ referred to the "survival" of figurative practices associated with wax, he did not employ the vocabulary that would naturally come to him from his own native language. He did not write *Nachleben*, or *Fortleben* or *Überleben*, but, rather, *survival*, in English, as Warburg also did on several occasions.¹¹⁸ This is a significant indication of a citation, of a borrowing, indeed of a conceptual displacement: what is cited by Schlosser, and what before him Warburg had already borrowed, or displaced, is nothing other than the *survival* of the great British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor. When Warburg suddenly left Europe for New Mexico in 1895, he was not undertaking "a journey to the archetypes," as Fritz Saxl believed, but rather "a trip to the survivals"; and his theoretical reference point was not James G. Frazer, as Saxl wrote, but Edward B. Tylor.¹¹⁹ Commentators on Warburg, as far as I can determine, have not really paid much attention to this anthropological source. At most, they have considered only the differences. Ernst Gombrich, for example, argued that the "science of culture" called for by Tylor could never find favor in the eyes of a disciple of Burckhardt's concerned primarily with Italian art.¹²⁰ And yet this "science of culture" was enthroned at the beginning of *Primitive Culture* (published in London in 1871), a work that had such an impact that by the end of the nineteenth century anthropology was called "Mr Tylor's science."¹²¹ Of course, a work's fame, even if it is immense, as in this case, is not sufficient to guarantee its status as a theoretical source. It is, above all, in the establishment of a specific link *between history and anthropology* that a point of contact exists between Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft* and Tylor's *science of culture*.

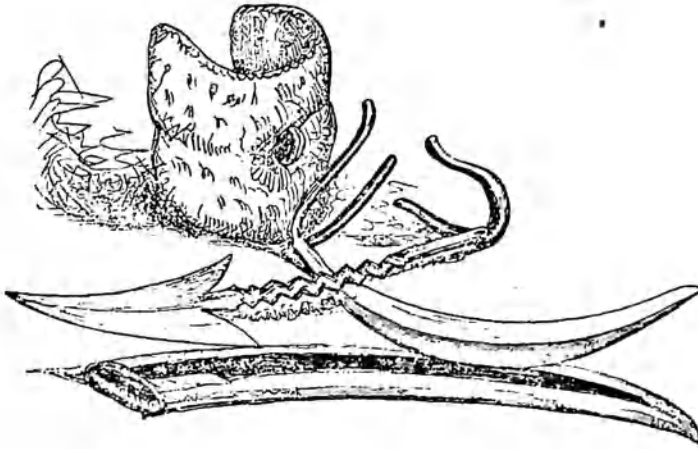
Each of them, in fact, aimed at overcoming the virtually never-ending opposition between the model of evolution required by any kind of history and the absence of a temporal dimension that is often attributed to anthropology, an opposition that Levi-Strauss was still criticizing a century later.¹²² Warburg *opened up the field* of art history to anthropology, not only in order to discover in it new objects for study, but in order *to open up time* to a new approach, as well. Tylor, for his part, wanted to carry out a strictly symmetrical operation. He began by asserting that the fundamental problem of any "science of culture" was that of its "development"; that this development was not reducible to a law of evolution that could be formulated according to the model of the natural sciences;¹²³ and that the anthropologist could not understand what "culture" means except by establishing its history, and even its archaeology: "In working to gain an insight into the general laws of intellectual movement [of culture in general], there is practical gain in being able to study them rather among antiquarian relics of no intense modern interest."¹²⁴

Warburg was certainly never to disavow this methodological principle concerning the importance of studying objects devoid of interest at the current

FIG. 4 Obsidian arrowheads. Mexico, prehistoric. Reprinted from Edward Burnett Tylor, *Anahuac; or, Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861), 96.



moment: what creates meaning in a culture is often its symptomatic, unthought, or anachronistic aspects. Here we are already in what we may call the *phantasmic time of survivals*. Tylor introduced it at the level of theory at the beginning of *Primitive Culture*, observing that the two rival theories of “development of culture”—“progress-theory” and “degeneration-theory”—need to be treated dialectically, the one intertwined with the other. The result will be a kind of *temporal knot* that is difficult to understand because within it there occur ceaseless intersections of movements tending toward evolution and movements resistant to evolution.¹²⁵ Within the space of these intersections there soon appears, as the *differential* of two contradictory temporal statuses, the concept of *survival*. In fact, in his attempts to establish a theoretical foundation for his work, Tylor devoted a major portion of his efforts to this concept.



STEEL COCK-SPURS (4 inches long), WITH SHEATH AND PADDING.

FIG. 5 Steel cockspurs with sheath. Mexico, nineteenth century. Reprinted from Tylor, *Anahuac*, 254.

But he had already used the word, as if spontaneously, in another context, and in the midst of another kind of temporal experience: during a *displacement*, namely on a trip to Mexico. Between March and June 1856, Tylor had scoured Mexico on horseback, making observations and taking thousands of notes. In 1861 he published his travel diaries—his own *Tristes tropiques*—where there appear, one after the other and seemingly to his own surprise, mosquitoes and pirates, alligators and missionary fathers, slave trading and Aztec vestiges, Baroque churches and Indian costumes, earthquakes and the use of firearms, table manners and ways of counting, museum objects and street fights, etc., etc.¹²⁶ *Anahuac* is a fascinating book because it displays its author's constant astonishment: astonishment that a single experience in the same place and at the same time could encompass this *knot of anachronisms*, this *mélange* of things past and present. Thus, during the Mexican Holy Week festivals he witnessed a number of heterogeneous commemorations, half-Christian and half-pagan. And at the Indian market in Grande he saw a system of numeration that he had previously thought could be found only in pre-Columbian manuscripts. A further example was the coexistence of ornaments of ancient sacrificial knives with the ornaments on the spurs worn by the Mexican *vaqueros*¹²⁷ (figs. 4, 5).

Confronted with all that, Tylor discovered culture's extreme variety and vertiginous complexity (which one also senses in going through Frazer); but he also discovered something even more overwhelming (which one never senses in going through Frazer): the *vertiginous play of time* in the present, in the current "surface" of a given culture. This vertigo finds expression, first of all,

in the powerful sensation that *the present is woven from multiple pasts*. (This is something which is obvious in itself, but its methodological consequences are less so.) That is why Tylor thinks that the anthropologist must become the historian of each of his observations. The "horizontal" complexity of what he sees is rooted, above all, in the "vertical" or, to use a linguistic term, "paradigmatic" complexity of time:

Progress, degradation, survival, revival, modification, are all modes of the connexion that binds together the complex network of civilization. It needs but a glance into the trivial details of our own daily life to set us thinking how far we are really its originators, and how far but the transmitters and modifiers of the results of long past ages. Looking round the rooms we live in, we may try here how far he who only knows his own time can be capable of rightly comprehending even that. Here is the "honeysuckle" of Assyria, there the fleur-de-lis of Anjou, a cornice with a Greek border runs round the ceiling, the style of Louis XIV and its parent the Renaissance share the looking-glass between them. Transformed, shifted, or mutilated, such elements of art still carry their history plainly stamped upon them; and if the history yet farther behind is less easy to read, we are not to say that because we cannot clearly discern it there is therefore no history there.¹²⁸

It is characteristic that this example of survival—one of the very first offered in *Primitive Culture*—pertains to the formal elements of ornamentation, those "primitive words" found in all discussions of the notion of style.¹²⁹ It is likewise characteristic that this *survival of forms* is expressed in terms of an imprint or *stamp*. To say that the present bears the mark of multiple pasts is above all to assert the indestructibility of the stamp of time—or of several time periods—on the forms themselves of our present life. Thus, Tylor writes of "the strength of these survivals," by means of which, as he states, using another metaphor, "old habits hold their ground in the midst of a new culture . . . which presses hard to thrust them out."¹³⁰ He also compares the tenacity of the survivals to "a stream once settled in a river bed [that] will flow on for ages," expressing, again in terms of stamping, what he calls the "permanence of culture."¹³¹

Here, then, we see a "fundamental problem" raised in which Warburg could have recognized his own investigation of the "permanence" and "tenacity" of ancient forms during long stretches of the history of Western art. But that is not all. Tylor might have explained such permanence in terms of the "essence of culture"—as did many nineteenth-century writers on philosophical anthropology. The central interest of his thought concerning this point, as well as the closeness of his position to Warburg's approach, is due to a further, decisive point: the "permanence of culture" is not expressed as an essence, a global characteristic, or an archetype, but, on the contrary, as a *symptom*, an exceptional characteristic, something displaced. The *tenacity* of the survivals, their very "power," as Tylor says, comes to light in the *tenuousness* of minuscule, superfluous, derisive, or abnormal things. It is in the recurrent symptom, in games,

in the pathology of language, and in the unconsciousness of forms that survival as such is to be found. Accordingly, Tylor paid great attention to children's games (bows, slings, rattles, knucklebones, playing cards—survivals of very serious old practices, stemming from war and divination), just as Warburg would later pay great attention to the practices of Renaissance festivals. He examined the characteristics of language—adages, proverbs, and ways of greeting¹³²—just as Warburg later wanted to do for Florentine culture. Most importantly, however, in examining survivals Tyler considered them specifically in terms of *superstitions*. For him, the very definition of this anthropological concept could be inferred from the traditional Latin meaning of the term *superstitio*: “Such a proceeding as this would be usually, and not improperly, described as a *superstition*; and, indeed, this name would be given to a large proportion of survivals generally. The very word ‘*superstition*’ in what is perhaps its original sense of a ‘standing over’ from old times, itself expresses the notion of survival. But the term ‘*superstition*’ now implies a reproach. . . . For the ethnographer’s purpose, at any rate, it is desirable to introduce such a term as ‘*survival*,’ simply to denote the historical fact.”¹³³

This passage allows us to understand why the analysis of survivals in *Primitive Culture* culminates in a long chapter dedicated to magic, astrology, and all the various forms they assumed.¹³⁴ How can we fail to recall here that high point of the *Nachleben der Antike* reconstructed by Warburg in his analysis of the astrological activities found in the Ferrara frescoes and even in the writings of Martin Luther?¹³⁵ In both cases—and this is before the work of Freud—it is a split within consciousness, a logical error, or a nonsensical aspect of an argument that *opens a breach in the current state of some historically produced factor, allowing its survivals to appear*. Tylor, before Warburg and Freud, liked to study “trivial details” because of their capacity to make sense of—or rather serve as symptoms of—their own insignificance. (He also called them “landmarks.”) Before Warburg and his interest in the “animism” of votive effigies, Tylor attempted, along with others, it is true, to construct a general theory of this power of signs.¹³⁶ Before Warburg and his fascination with the expressive phenomena of gestures, Tylor sought to create, again, like others, a theory of “emotional and imitative language.”¹³⁷ And, in his own fashion, again before Warburg and Freud, he made a case for the exceptional capacity of the symptom—whether it be absurdity, a lapsus, illness, or madness—to act as guide to the vertiginous temporal dimensions of the survivals existing within a given culture. Might the *path indicated by the symptom* prove to be the best way of hearing the *voice of the phantoms*?

It may perhaps be complained that . . . throughout the whole of this varied investigation . . . of the dwindling survival of old culture its illustrations should be so much among things worn out, worthless, frivolous, or even bad with downright harmful folly. It is in fact so, and I have taken up this course of argument with full knowledge and intent. For, indeed, we have in such inquiries continual reason to

be thankful for fools. It is quite wonderful, even if we hardly go below the surface of the subject, to see how large a share stupidity and impractical conservatism and dogged superstition have had in preserving for us traces of the history of our race, which practical utilitarianism would have remorselessly swept away.¹³⁸

* * *

In the domain of the historical and anthropological sciences, the notion of survival, located between those of phantom and symptom, may be considered a specific expression of the *trace*.¹³⁹ Warburg, as is well known, took a great interest in the vestiges of classical Antiquity: vestiges which were in no way reducible to the objective existence of material remains, as they subsisted just as often in a society's forms, styles, behaviors, and *psyche*. One easily understands his interest in Tylor's *survivals*. In the first place, they referred to a *negative reality*, namely what appears to be a discarded element in a culture, something which is no longer of its time and no longer of any use. (For example, the Florentine *botti*, in the fifteenth century, bore testimony of a practice already cut off from the present and from the "modern" concerns behind the creation of Renaissance art.) In the second place, according to Tylor the survivals refer to a *masked reality*; something persists and testifies to a vanished stage of a society's history, but its very persistence is accompanied by an essential modification—a change in status and change in meaning. (For example, to say that the bow and arrow of ancient warfare have survived in children's games is, obviously, to say that their status and meaning have completely changed.)

In this respect, the analysis of survivals clearly appears to be a matter of analyzing symptomatic manifestations as much as phantasmal ones. Survivals refer to a level of reality that we might call "breaking and entering" [*réalité d'effraction*], a tenuous, even imperceptible reality; and thus one could also say they refer to a *spectral reality*. Thus, astrological survivals appear in Luther's writings as "phantoms," phantoms whose efficacy Warburg was able to detect thanks to their nature as intruders—and as the intrusion of a symptom—in the logic of Luther's argumentation.¹⁴⁰ It is not surprising that the first area in which Tylor's notion of *survivals* found employment was in the study of beliefs: its most numerous applications were in the history of religion.¹⁴¹ Even so, some archaeological studies concerned with long periods of time—anticipating what André Leroi-Gourhan later named "technical stereotypes"—have also succeeded in approaching the history of objects in terms of this notion of *survival*.¹⁴²

EVOLUTION'S DESTINIES, HETEROCHRONOUS STATES

It must be said, however, that the notion of survival has never had a very good press—and that is true not just in art history. In Tylor's period, *survival* was accused of being a concept that was *too structural* and abstract, a concept completely resistant to any precision or factual verification. The positivist objection

consisted in asking: how do you go about dating a survival?¹⁴³ This showed a complete misunderstanding of a concept meant, precisely, to describe a kind of temporality that is not “historical,” at least not in the trivial, factual sense of the term. Today, one would more likely accuse *survival* of being *insufficiently structural*: a concept, in short, that bears the *evolutionist* stamp. Accordingly, it is considered outmoded and irrelevant, an old scientific phantom typical of the nineteenth century. This is what one tends to assume, without giving the matter much thought, in the light of modern anthropology, which, from Marcel Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss, has supposedly produced the necessary reorientation of ethnological concepts that were too deeply marked by essentialism (as in Frazer) or by empiricism (as in Malinowski).

When one begins to examine the question more closely, however, it becomes obvious that matters are more nuanced and complex than first appeared. What is really under debate is not the notion itself of survival, but rather the use to which it was put by several late nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon ethnographers. Mauss, for example, has no hesitation in employing the term in his own work: chapter 3 of his *The Gift* [*Essai sur le don*] is entitled “Survivals of These Principles [that establish ‘the exchange of gifts’] in Ancient Systems of Law and Ancient Economies” [“Survivances des ces principes dans les droits anciens et les economies anciennes”].¹⁴⁴ There he explains that the principles of the gift and of the counter-gift are to be considered “survivals” by the historian as well as by the ethnologist. They have a general sociological value, since they allow us to understand a stage in social evolution. But there is more to them than this: they also have a bearing on social history. Institutions of this type have really provided the transition toward our own forms of law and economy. They can serve to explain historically our own societies. The morality and the exchange practiced in societies immediately preceding our own still retain more or less important traces of all the principles we have just analyzed [in the framework of so-called primitive societies].¹⁴⁵

Elsewhere, Mauss will go as far as to *extend the notion of survival* to the “primitive” societies themselves: “There is no known society that has not evolved. The most primitive men have an immense past behind them; diffuse tradition and survival therefore play a role even among them.”¹⁴⁶

This amounts to saying not only that “primitive” societies have a history—which was long denied by some, and is reflected in the expression “peoples without history”—but also that this history can be as complex as our own. It, too, is composed of conscious transmissions and of “diffuse traditions,” as Mauss writes. It, too, is constituted through the play of—or in a knot of—heterogeneous temporal phases: a knot of anachronisms. It is just that this is hard to analyze in the absence of written archives. When Mauss critiques the uses made of the notion of *survivals*, it is, therefore, not in order to question the appropriateness of employing models of time characterized by this kind of complexity. On the contrary, it is in order to refute ethnological *evolutionism* as an oversimplification of the required models of time. Thus, when Frazer

describes "survivals" of the "ancient confusion of magic and religion," and Mauss responds that "the hypothesis really explains very little," we need to understand that what Mauss is objecting to is the following hypothesis: that the confusion between magic and religion was followed by the emergence of the latter as an autonomous sphere, one which was more rational, more moral, in short, more "evolved."¹⁴⁷

Mauss also critiqued, clairvoyantly, what continues to be the other basic trap of any analysis of survivals: one could call it *archetypism*. It terminates not in the simplification of the models of time, but in their negation, pure and simple, and in their dilution in an essentialist view of culture and of the *psyche*. The key element in this trap is the decoy of analogous perception. When the resemblances become pseudomorphisms, and when they serve, beyond that, to produce a general and nontemporal meaning, then, of course, "survival" becomes involved in a myth-making process, and turns into an epistemological obstacle.¹⁴⁸ Let us note right here that Warburg's *Nachleben* has, on occasion, been interpreted in this manner and employed to such ends. But Warburg's philological effort, his perception of singularities, and his constant attempt to keep track of all the various strands, to identify each thread—even though he knew that some strands slipped from his hands, had been broken, and ran in underground channels—all of that distances his notion of *Nachleben* from any essentialism. What we might term *symptomatic* anamnesis clearly has nothing in common with *archetypal* generalization.

Lévi-Strauss's critique, set forth in the introductory chapter of his *Structural Anthropology*, seems a good deal harsher. That is because it is more radical but, at the same time, more one-sided and, at times, burdened with inaccuracies and possibly even a hint of bad faith. He begins, following Mauss, by criticizing archetypism and its erroneous use of substantialized analogies and of pseudomorphisms in the service of universalism.¹⁴⁹ Looking for traces of this approach in Tylor himself, he notes that the bow and the arrow do not form one "species," as Tylor states in language based on the biological link of reproduction: for "there will always be a basic difference between two identical tools, or two tools which differ in function but are similar in form, because one does not stem from the other; rather, each of them is the product of a system of representations."¹⁵⁰ Let us remark, in passing, that Warburg would have unhesitatingly subscribed to this first assertion; for it amounts to making the organization of symbols the foundational structure of the empirical world.

Lévi-Strauss takes a further, less well-advised, step when he writes that studies focused on the problematic of survivals "do not teach us anything about . . . unconscious processes in concrete . . . experiences." He himself invalidates this assertion a few pages later in according Tylor the status of virtual founder of the analysis of the "unconscious nature of collective phenomena."¹⁵¹ Yet, in his eyes, Tylor's anthropological work remains devoid of any concern with history, and in this regard he simply cites a brief passage of *Researches into the Early History of Mankind* (1865), without paying attention to the book's very title and, above all,

without recognizing the ideas on the historicity of primitive societies that Tylor elaborated six years later in *Primitive Culture*—ideas that Lévi-Strauss clearly wished to credit exclusively to Franz Boas.¹⁵² In 1952, the author of *Structural Anthropology* asserted that the historicity of primitive peoples is “beyond our reach” [“hors d’atteinte”], which is a completely unconscious paraphrase of the passages from Tylor cited above.¹⁵³

None of this alters the basic question facing us; we still do not know what “survival” means. The first thing to establish is to what extent, if any, this concept derives from evolutionist doctrine—in terms of both content and of what is at stake. When, in the seventh chapter of his book *Researches into the Early History of Mankind*, devoted to the “Growth and Decline of Culture,” Tylor sprinkles his text with references to Darwin, the stakes are clearly polemical: he needs, at this juncture, to play off human evolution against divine destiny, that is to say, the *Origin of Species* against the Bible itself.¹⁵⁴ He needs to rehabilitate “developmentalism” and its links to the notion of the species against the religious theories of degeneration and their links to the notion of original sin.¹⁵⁵

A further observation should be made here: at the moment when Tylor starts making these references in his texts, he has not yet elaborated a vocabulary concerning “survival.” Even though the debate over evolution does constitute his overall epistemological horizon, Tylor, in constructing his notion of survival, clearly displays his independence with regard to the doctrines of Darwin and Spencer.¹⁵⁶ Where natural selection speaks of the “survival of the fittest,” which guarantees biological innovation, Tylor approaches survival in an inverse manner, from the angle of the most “unfit and inappropriate” cultural elements, the bearers of a bygone past rather than of an evolving future.¹⁵⁷

* * *

In short, survivals are only symptoms, bearers of temporal disorientation. They are in no sense the initial indicators of a teleological process, of any “evolutionary direction” whatsoever. They do bear witness, certainly, to a more original, and repressed, state, but they say nothing concerning evolution itself. They doubtless possess some diagnostic value but have no prognostic value at all. Let us recall, finally, that, according to Tylor, a theory of culture ought no more to be based in biology than in theology. For him, “savages” are no more the fossils of an original human group than they are degenerate examples of God’s image. His theory aimed rather at a *historical* and *philological* point of view,¹⁵⁸ which is sufficient to explain its attractiveness to Warburg.

One thing is certain: Warburg’s concept of survival (*Nachleben*) was initially sketched out in an epistemic field in which anthropological subjects and the central preoccupations of evolutionist theories were major elements. In this regard, Ernst Gombrich asserts, Warburg remains a “man of the nineteenth century”; accordingly, he concludes, his art history has aged, its basic theoretical

models having become outmoded.¹⁵⁹ The simplification is brutal, and not free of bad faith. At best, it shows how difficult it was for iconologists of the second generation to administer a patrimony that was clearly too "phantasmal" to be "applied" in the form in which they received it. At worst, this simplification aimed at blocking off again precisely the theoretical paths the notion of *Nachleben* had opened up.

Warburg the "evolutionist"—what can that mean? That he read Darwin? There is not a shadow of doubt about that. That he promoted an "idea of progress" in the arts and adopted a "continuist model of time"?¹⁶⁰ Nothing could be further from the truth. The theory of evolution, of course, introduced the *question of time* into the life sciences, moving beyond that "long cosmic duration"—as Georges Canguilhem put it—that still constituted the framework of Lamarck's thinking. But to raise the question of time is to raise the *question of times*, that is to say, of the different temporal modalities manifested, for example, by a fossil, an embryo, or a rudimentary organ.¹⁶¹ Patrick Tort has shown, moreover, that it is a complete mistake to consider the philosophy of Herbert Spencer—which automatically comes to mind when one hears the word "evolutionism"—as being closely based on the Darwinian theory of biological evolution. The latter is a bio-ecological theory of transformation, in which the emergence of living species is subject to the process of variation; while the former is a doctrine, or better, an ideology, of the meaning of history, whose conclusions—widespread among the ruling classes and the industrial milieux of the nineteenth century—are opposed in many respects to those of the *Origin of Species*.¹⁶²

The misunderstanding is rooted, precisely, in the notion of survival. It was only in the fifth edition of his book that Darwin introduced the Spencerian phrase "the survival of the fittest." Today, students of epistemology see only theoretical confusion in the association of these two words (which Tylor, as we have seen, carefully dissociated). To speak in this manner amounts to linking *selection* very tightly to *survival*: the fittest, the strongest survive and multiply. The idea that this law might be relevant to the historical and cultural world comes from Spencer, not from Darwin, who, instead, saw in civilization a way of opposing natural selection, of becoming "unfit."¹⁶³ In this sense, Warburg was no doubt a Darwinian, but not an evolutionist in the Spencerian sense.

For Warburg, *Nachleben* made sense only if it was used to *complexify the notion of historical time*, to recognize in the world of culture the existence of specific, nonnatural temporal modes. To base a history of art on "natural selection," i.e., the successive elimination of the weaker styles, with this elimination bestowing on change or becoming its perfectibility and on history its teleology—nothing could be further from his basic project or from his temporal models. The surviving form, in Warburg's understanding of the term, does not triumphantly survive the death of its competitors. Quite to the contrary, it survives, as symptom and as phantom, *its own death*. Having disappeared at a certain point in history, it reappears much later, at a moment when, perhaps,

it is not expected; it has survived, therefore, in the still poorly defined limbo of a "collective memory." Nothing could be further from this idea than the "synthetic," authoritarian, and highly systematic notions of Spencer's so-called social Darwinism.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, one could trace links between this idea of survival and certain Darwinian statements concerning the complexity and the paradoxical interpenetration of biological times.

From this point of view, *Nachleben* could be compared—although not assimilated—to models of time which allow for a symptomatic interpretation of certain cases within the framework of the theory of evolution, that is to say, models which create difficulties for all schemas of adaptation that stress continuity. Theorists of evolution have spoken of "living fossils," those creatures that have survived but are completely anachronistic.¹⁶⁵ They have spoken of "missing links," those intermediate forms in a series of variations situated between older stages and recent ones.¹⁶⁶ With the concept of "retrogression" they have indicated their refusal to oppose a "positive" evolution to a "negative" regression.¹⁶⁷ They have also spoken not only of "panchronistic forms"—living fossils or surviving forms, i.e., organisms that have been widely found in the fossil state and that were believed to have disappeared but that are suddenly discovered, in certain conditions, in the state of living organisms¹⁶⁸—but also of "heterochronies," those paradoxical states of a living organism in which heterogeneous phases of development are found combined.¹⁶⁹ When the normal processes of natural selection and genetic mutations cannot account for the development of a new species, they have even spoken of "hopeful monsters," "noncompetitive" organisms that are nevertheless capable of engendering a radically divergent, original evolutionary line.¹⁷⁰

In its own way, Warburg's *Nachleben* is really only concerned with "living fossils" and "retrogressive" forms. It allows for "*heterochronies*," and, indeed, "hopeful monsters"—like the prodigious sow of Landser, with two bodies and eight trotters, that Warburg, after seeing it in an engraving by Dürer, discussed in terms of what he called a "world of prophetic freaks" (*Region der wahrsagenden Monstra*).¹⁷¹ But one also sees how a misunderstanding can arise when the label "evolutionist" is applied to a body of work as experimental—and also as unsettled and heuristic—as Warburg's.

* * *

In order to get a better grasp of the anachronistic and *extraordinary object* of his quest, Warburg proceeded like all pioneers: he cobbled together a system of disparate borrowings, reorienting them using the "good neighbor" approach for each one with respect to all the others. Ernst Gombrich revealed, but also overestimated, his use of the heterodox evolutionism of Tito Vignoli.¹⁷² This positivist source should really be placed alongside the romanticism of Carlyle, for example, from which Warburg drew further arguments in favor of that *questioning of history* that always arises from recognizing the phenomena of

survival. His influence on Warburg was not limited to just the "philosophy of the symbol," and of clothing, found in the strange book entitled *Sartor Resartus*, to which we shall return. In the same context, Carlyle sketched a veritable philosophy of history in dialogue with the whole of German thought, including that of Lessing, of Herder, of Kant, of Schiller, and, of course, of Goethe.¹⁷³

It was a philosophy of distance (history as that which puts us in contact with what is distant) and of experience (history as philosophy teaching by example); it was a philosophy of the *vision of times*, at once prophetic and retrospective; it was a critique of prudent history, and an encomium of artistic history; it was a theory of the "signs of the times" that Carlyle himself defined as "hyperbolic-asymptotic," always in search of limits and of unknown depths. Whereas he considered history in the trivial sense to be successive, narrative, and linear, Carlyle spoke of time as an eddy composed of innumerable and simultaneous acts and "solids," which he wound up calling the "chaos of Being."¹⁷⁴

It is not without interest to observe that in 1890 Wilhelm Dilthey commented on this philosophy of history in relation to his own "critique of historical reason."¹⁷⁵ In their very different ways, and though they disagreed on many points, Carlyle and Dilthey were thus able to furnish the young Warburg with several conceptual tools he later used in constructing, little by little, the temporal model of his own emerging *Kulturwissenschaft*.¹⁷⁶ The opening up of art history to anthropology could not fail to modify its own schemas of intelligibility, its own determinants. And whether he wanted to or not, Warburg found himself taking part in a polemic that at the end of the nineteenth century was opposing the positivist historians or "specialists" to the proponents of an expanded *Kulturgeschichte*, such as Salomon Reinach and Henri Beer in France, and, in Germany, Wilhelm Dilthey and Warburg's own teacher Karl Lamprecht.

What should we conclude from this play of borrowings and debates if not that evolutionism produced its own crisis, its own internal critique? In recognizing the necessity of enlarging the canonical models of history—narrative models, models of temporal continuity, models based on the assumption of the attainability of objectivity—and in moving slowly toward a theory of the *memory* of forms—a theory composed of jumps and latencies, of survivals and anachronisms, of desires and unconscious motives—Aby Warburg effected a decisive rupture with the very notions of historical "progress" and "development." He thereby set evolutionism against itself, deconstructing it simply by identifying and recognizing the importance of those phenomena of survival, those cases of *Nachleben* to which we now must turn our attention, with the aim of understanding his specific elaboration of them.

RENAISSANCE AND THE IMPURITY OF TIME: WARBURG WITH BURCKHARDT

Warburg elaborated the notion of *Nachleben* within a very specific historical framework, one which formed virtually the exclusive domain of his published

studies. It encompassed, first of all, the Italian Renaissance (Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, and Francesco del Cossa, but also Pico della Mirandola), and, secondly, the Flemish and German Renaissance (Memling, Van der Goes, and Dürer, but also Luther and Melanchthon). If we consider such a notion today, it of course seems to offer us a theoretical lesson capable of "refounding," as it were, several major presuppositions concerning our knowledge of images *in general*. But we should not forget that Warburg formulated the problem in the context of the Renaissance *in particular*. We should not expect him to provide something that he never promised (which is what Gombrich does, for example, when he reproaches him for having "virtually omi[tted] medieval art"¹⁷⁷ when speaking of survivals). Whatever general value the notion of *Nachleben* may possess results from a reading of Warburg, and thus of an interpretation of him; we are the only ones responsible for that interpretation.

Let us agree that, in any case, Warburg has a certain taste—though subtle and surreptitious—for provocation. Is it not provocative of the historian-philosopher to juxtapose head on in his work two notions as different as "survival" and "renaissance"? Of course, in German, the word *Renaissance* means a historical period: it does not, as in French or Italian, spontaneously refer to a process that, at the time, referred to the "survival of Antiquity" (*Nachleben der Antike*). But the impression persists that there is something irritating about the confrontation of these two words. We must observe, in fact, that neither of them emerges unaffected by this pairing. The Renaissance, as the golden age of the history of art, loses some of its purity and its completeness. Reciprocally, survival, as an obscure evolutionary process, loses something of its primitive or prehistoric aura.

But why this context? Why the Renaissance? Why, in particular, begin or begin again—I am thinking of Warburg's thesis on Botticelli, his first published work¹⁷⁸—with the Italian Renaissance? First of all, because that is precisely where art history, conceived as a branch of knowledge, had begun or begun again. Warburg and Wölfflin, before Panofsky, reinvented the discipline of art history *by returning to the humanist conditions*, that is to say, to the Renaissance conditions, of an order of discourse that had not always existed as such. Entering into the Renaissance—entering into art history by the royal road of the Renaissance—also meant, for a young scholar at the end of the nineteenth century, *entering into a theoretical polemic* about the very status, about the style and the stakes of historical discourse in general.

This polemic goes back to Jules Michelet, who, in several celebrated formulas, sketched, for the first time, a properly historical and interpretative notion of the Renaissance: "the discovery of the world and of man," "the advent of modern art," "the free flight of fantasy," the return to Antiquity conceived of as "an appeal to the living forces," and so on.¹⁷⁹ Let us try to relativize what today appears banal or even questionable in these expressions; for when Warburg followed the courses of Henry Thode at the University of Bonn, he probably heard a hundred recriminations concerning this "modern" Renaissance, perceived

essentially as the moment of *the invention of an anti-Christian morality*. Recriminations addressed less to Michelet himself than to two German thinkers guilty of having pushed such formulas to their extreme consequences. These two authors are none other than Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁸⁰ The polemic, one suspects, was not only about the status, Christian or not, of the Italian Renaissance, but also about the status of historical knowledge itself, of its philosophical and anthropological ambitions. At the heart of this polemic lay nothing less than a struggle over the new *Kulturgeschichte* inaugurated by Nietzsche and by Burckhardt.

It is clear that between Thode's "Franciscan" lectures and Burckhardt's "modern" writings, Warburg did not hesitate a moment. The former's name is not cited even once in the pages of the *Gesammelte Schriften*, whereas the latter's influence is acknowledged throughout them.¹⁸¹ A single example will suffice to bring out this contrast: in his article of 1902 on the Florentine portrait, Warburg begins, precisely, with a topic involving Franciscan iconography—*The Confirmation of the Rule* of the order of Saint Francis, portrayed by Giotto in the Church of Santa Croce and by Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita—which renders the absence of any reference to Thode all the more flagrant.¹⁸² Indeed, Warburg simply left unmentioned the fact that his anthropological interpretation of Ghirlandaio's cycle contradicted point by point the schema proposed by Thode in his own work on the Renaissance. In contrast, the same text opens with a vigorous theoretical statement dominated by the authority of Burckhardt:

With all the authority of genius, that model pioneer (*vorbildlicher Pfadfinder*), Jacob Burckhardt, dominated the field that he himself had opened up for scholarship: that of Italian Renaissance civilization (*Kultur der Renaissance*). But it was not in his nature to be an autocratic exploiter of the land (*Land*) he had discovered. Such, indeed, was his self-abnegation as a scholar (*wissenschaftliche Selbstverleugnung*) that, far from yielding to the temptation of tackling the cultural history of the period as a whole (*Einheitlichkeit*), he divided it into a number of superficially unrelated sectors (*in mehrere äusserlich unzusammenhängende Teile*), which he proceeded to explore and describe with magisterial poise and authority. On the one hand, in *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, he discussed the psychology of the individual in society without reference to visual art; on the other, in *Cicerone*, he undertook to offer no more than "an introduction to the enjoyment of works of art." . . . Our perception of the greatness of Jacob Burckhardt must not deter us from following in his footsteps.¹⁸³

This "path" (*Bahn*) demands a methodological rigor that is extremely difficult to maintain. But it led Warburg's "humility"—his *Selbstverleugnung* [self-denial], as he puts it here—to reach the level of humility he recognized in Burckhardt. This attitude could almost be called Stoic. On the one hand, it meant recognizing the unity (*Einheitlichkeit*) of all culture, its fundamentally organic nature. On the other hand, however, it meant refusing to assert it, to define it, or to

claim one has grasped it as such: things are to be left in their state of division or of “disassembly” (*Zerlegung*). Like Burckhardt, Warburg always refused to complete [reclure] a system, which was his way of always *postponing* the moment of conclusion, the Hegelian moment of absolute knowledge. It was necessary, he thought, to push “humility,” or epistemological modesty, to the point of recognizing that an isolated researcher—a *pioneer*—can and should *work only on singularities*, as Warburg well expresses it on the same page, presenting the paradox of a “synthetic history” which, however, consists of “particular studies,” that is, studies that are not placed in any hierarchical order: “Even after his death, this connoisseur [Burckhardt] and scholar of genius presented himself to us as a tireless seeker: in his posthumous *Beiträge für Kunstgeschichte von Italien*, he opened up yet a third empirical path to the great objective of a synthesis of cultural history (*synthetische Kulturgeschichte*). He undertook the labor of examining the individual work of art (*das einzelne Kunstwerk*) within the immediate context of its time, in order to interpret as “causal factors” the ideological and practical demands of real life (*das wirkliche Leben*).”¹⁸⁴

Wölfflin, too—the other great twentieth-century “reinventor” of art history—admired in Burckhardt a master capable, precisely, of creating a “systematic history” in which the “system” was never defined, that is to say, completed, schematized, and simplified. With Burckhardt, his “sensitivity to the individual work” always predominates, leaving any conclusion an *open one*.¹⁸⁵ Now, no one has been better able than Warburg to accomplish—if such a verb may be used here—the paradoxical task so well expressed in his text by the verb *zerlegen*, “to decompose” or “take apart.” No one in the field of art history has ever traveled with such daring along the path of this *infinite analysis of singularities*—an analysis which, because of its lack of completion, has wrongly been considered “imperfect” or “unfinished.”

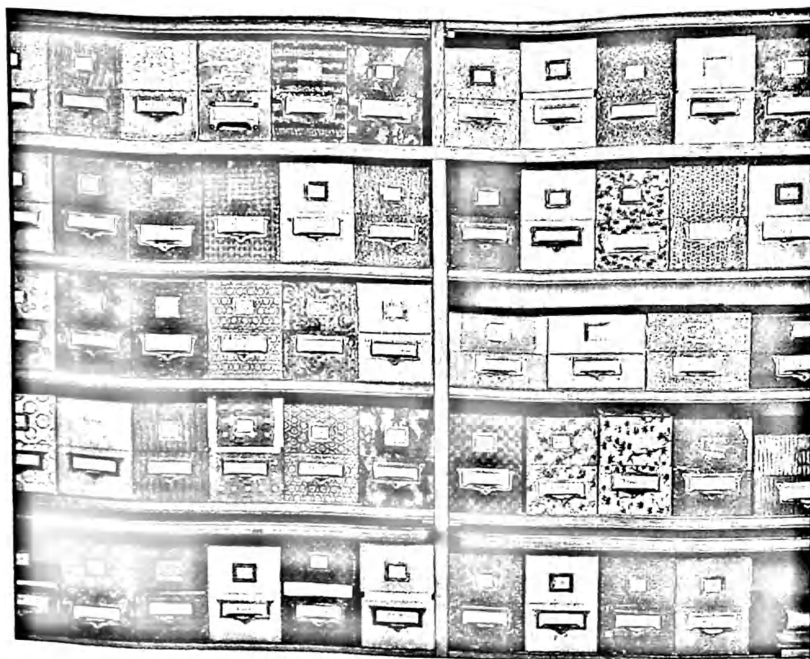
The modesty and humility Warburg displayed with respect to the historical “monument” erected by Burckhardt are neither false nor simply a matter of politeness.¹⁸⁶ They do not, however, mean that the later body of work is purely the offspring of the earlier one. In his personal notes, Warburg is quite willing to be more critical, readier to discuss certain issues and even take an opposing position.¹⁸⁷ It should also be said that Warburg’s basic vocabulary—that of *Nachleben*, of *Pathosformeln*, and of the theory of “expression” (*Ausdruck*)—does not figure among Burckhardt’s own conceptual tools. Yet one cannot help thinking that Warburg’s famous *Notizkästen*—his multicolored cardboard file boxes—are, so to speak, the three-dimensional incarnation of the *Materia-lien* that Burckhardt had assembled with a view toward writing a “History of Renaissance Art,” a project continually placed on hold and never published (figs. 6 and 7). It is worthwhile, in any case, to determine what elements among the work of the great historian from Basel could have nourished the intuitions and intellectual constructions of the young Warburg.

* * *

1 <u>Arminianische Bewegung</u>	8 <u>Classification des XVI^e St.</u> <i>(1517-19)</i>	15 <u>Baummodelle</u>	22 <u>Contracten</u>
2 <u>Prosa Renaissance</u>	9 <u>Vertrag.</u>	16 <u>Baupropositionen</u>	23 <u>Locken anlegen</u>
3 <u>Begriff des Gotischen</u>	10 <u>Bauklosterplan</u>	17 <u>Remarque der arch. Mittel</u> <i>in den Kirchen</i>	24 <u>Faltarbeiten</u> 24 b <u>Illustrierte Kupferdruck</u>
4 <u>Stile got. Architektur</u>	11 <u>Banken u. Wandstuck</u>	18 <u>gewölbe</u> 18 b <u>Maasstab, Kapelle</u>	25 <u>Festungsplan</u>
5 <u>Empfehlung antiker Bauk.</u>	12 <u>Baumaterial u. Technik</u>	19 <u>Fussboden</u>	26 <u>Geometrische Gebäude</u>
6 <u>Nachfolge ant. u. Gotik</u> 6, b, <u>Detail der Renaissance</u>	13 <u>Architekton. Skizzen</u>	20 <u>Reinigt Kirchenbau</u> <i>um Altäre</i>	27 <u>Kingstühle von Profanen</u>
7 <u>Restica</u>	14 <u>Nachfolge in Baumaterial</u>	21 <u>Kirchenfassaden</u> <i>Maasstab in</i>	28 <u>Stückentwurf</u> <i>Maasstab u. Proportionen</i>

FIG. 6 Jacob Burckhardt, outline of the project for "Kunst der Renaissance," 10 August 1858. Ink on paper. Basel, Jacob Burckhardt-Archiv. Photo: Jacob Burckhardt-Archiv.

FIG. 7 Aby Warburg, *Notizkästen*. London, The Warburg Institute. Photo: The Warburg Institute.



Entering into art history by the "royal road" of the Florentine Renaissance, as Warburg did in 1902 (in the study of the portrait) and, earlier, in 1893 (in the study of Botticelli), meant taking a position with respect to the very concept that Burckhardt had forged throughout his *livre-fleuve*, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.¹⁸⁸ That book's themes and theses have been endlessly glossed. Commentators have recognized its audacity, its ambitious scope, and its "brilliant," animated presentation. Some have written admiringly of its way of unifying extraordinarily rich and highly varied historical material. On the other hand, every famous theme—the opposition of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the primacy of Italy, the "development of the individual"—has come in for criticism.¹⁸⁹ It has also been observed that beyond all the critiques, the book still dominates historical debate concerning the notion of the Renaissance.¹⁹⁰ The fact of this oppressive "domination" has been used to argue that, with his masterpiece, Burckhardt created a *mythical Renaissance* whose myths fostered a cult which ultimately yielded what Heinrich Mann censured in the expression "hysterical Renaissance."¹⁹¹

If there is indeed a *myth of the Renaissance*, this myth is intrinsic to Renaissance culture itself—and Burckhardt is the one who analyzed it as such. The "development of the individual" probably does derive from a mythical structure, in any case an ideological and political structure.¹⁹² It nonetheless generated effects in the realms of knowledge and style, and in the realms of truth and of history. If the "individual" is a Renaissance myth, it at least created those fascinating realities that are the Quattrocento Florentine portraits. Now, this is precisely where Warburg started from: to analyze a myth, to trace the ramifications of its aesthetic effects, required one to both gauge its fecundity (as a "science of the concrete") and deconstruct it (as an ensemble of phantasms).

Burckhardt's analysis, therefore, did not interest Warburg because it offered a few generalizations explaining how the Renaissance, as a culture or a period, might have emerged entirely pure and conceptually "armed," like Athena emerging from the head of Zeus. Burckhardt did recognize a "development of the individual" in Renaissance Italy, but this "development" found a strange conclusion in an *analysis of the symptoms* and of the mental traits, of the parodies and of the defamations—in themselves obstacles to any trivially evolutionary model—of which the individual, from Franco Sacchetti to Aretino, was a constant victim. Burckhardt spoke, therefore, of the "development of the individual" not only as ever-increasing emancipation but also as a *development of* [the individual's] perversity.¹⁹³

One can derive two very different interpretations from this analysis. The first is moralizing: it follows the "greatness and decline" model of the pessimistic outlooks of the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁴ It rightly sees a connection between Burckhardt and Schopenhauer.¹⁹⁵ But, in stressing the theme of decline, it winds up viewing Burckhardt as nothing but a reactionary ideologue, an antidemocratic precursor of Spengler's type of *Kulturpessimismus*, and even a partisan of the "conservative revolutions" which, in Germany, prepared the way for Nazism.¹⁹⁶

The other interpretation is structural: it is more intent on detecting the *workings of history* than in the *judgments of history*. It has the advantage—which Warburg fully understood—of being dialectical and, for that very reason, epistemologically fecund. When Burckhardt castigated “modern . . . culture” and its incapacity to “understand Antiquity,”¹⁹⁷ he was not so much offering a “reactionary” judgment as he was drawing attention, in a critical fashion, to the more general problem of the relationship between a culture and its memory; for a culture which represses its own memory—its own survivals—is just as likely to become powerless as a culture immobilized in the perpetual commemoration of its past. Walter Benjamin’s view of this matter, it seems to me, was no different.¹⁹⁸

The “development of the individual” in the Renaissance thus contains within itself the *development of the individual’s symptoms*—encompassing perversions and negative qualities in general. What should one conclude from this proposition? The proponent of a moralistic view would speak of a “decline,” asserted in the name of a certain “purity,” though it is unclear whether or not one should, like Winckelmann, locate such purity exclusively in the time of the “Greek miracle.” A structural point of view understands that *time*—whatever that time may be, whether of Antiquity or the Renaissance—is *impure*. This is the kind of interpretation, I believe, that provided the starting point for all of Warburg’s subsequent work, inasmuch as he was able to use Burckhardt’s analyses to construct an incisive notion of this impurity of time—to construct, in short, the theoretical foundation of the notion of “survival.”

* * *

Right from the start, Burckhardt had decided to take the measure of the *complexity of times* that he saw as an essential characteristic of the Renaissance, finding it impossible—and historically pernicious—to sum up the period as consisting in the appealing science of a Leonardo, the angelic expression of a Raphael, or the genius of a Michelangelo. A half-century before Freud defined his “fundamental rule” of non-omission. Burckhardt wrote that historians “must not seal [them]selves off from anything past”;¹⁹⁹ the lacunae, the dark areas, the counterthemes, and the aberrations are all part of his quest. That is why the famous “development of the individual” should be considered in terms of what Burckhardt called a “mixture of ancient and modern superstitions”²⁰⁰ characteristic of Renaissance Italy. (Warburg later undertook a similar analysis for the Germany of Luther and Melanchthon.) Where Robert Klein saw in Burckhardt “a certain opposition between the two orientations of the Renaissance”—the *positive* spirit of the “discovery of man and of the world” and the *fantastic* spirit of esoteric fictions²⁰¹—we are tempted to recognize something like a dialectical clairvoyance, a *way of thinking centered on tensions and polarities*, which Warburg, for his part, went on to systematize at each level of analysis.

Given all this, it is hard to see how the famous “resurrection of Antiquity”²⁰² could be thought of, with regard to its temporal aspects, as a pure and

simple return of the “same” (the same “ideal of beauty,” for example). It is its relationship—inescapably *anachronistic*—to a specific time and place, Italy of the fifteenth century, which leads this *return* to be bound up with *differences*, with complexities, and with metamorphoses.²⁰³ It is the encounter of the long period of survivals—Burckhardt does not designate them by this term, writing instead that “this Antiquity had made its influence felt for a long time”—with the short period of stylistic decisions that makes the Renaissance such a complex phenomenon.²⁰⁴

This is why Burckhardt, with regard to the historical concept of *rebirth*—which he noted in the verbal form (*renaitre*) in French, in a manuscript of 1856—was able to describe a true dialectical movement: between the *temps-coupure* (or period of rupture) of what he called the “reprise” of the ancient past and the *temps-remous* (or period of slow stirring) of the “vital remains” (*lebensfähige Reste*), which had long remained latent, though efficacious in a sense, at the very heart of the “long interruption” that caused them to go unperceived.²⁰⁵ Antiquity is not a “pure object of time” which returns as such when called. It is a great movement of large domains, a silent vibration, a harmonic wave which traverses all the historical layers and all the levels of a culture: “The history of the ancient world, i.e., of all those peoples whose lives have flowed into ours, is like a fundamental chord that keeps sounding through the fields of human knowledge.”²⁰⁶

In this light, one is less astonished to find Burckhardt penning a proposition as radical—and as scandalous in the eyes of the aesthetic devotees of the Renaissance—as the following: “The Renaissance created no organic style of its own” (*kein eigener organischer . . . Stil*).²⁰⁷ What does that mean? That *the Renaissance is impure*—both in its artistic styles and in the complex temporality of its comings and goings between the living present and recollected Antiquity. One cannot imagine, in the nineteenth century, a more pointed critique of historicism (bent on unity of time) or of aestheticism (bent on unity of style).²⁰⁸

The Renaissance is impure. Warburg never ceased to explore and deepen this observation, thanks to his specific concepts of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel*. The Renaissance is impure. That perhaps limits it with respect to any ideal, but it is also the source of its very *vitality*. And this is exactly what Warburg wrote in 1920: the “heterogeneous mixture of elements” (*Mischung heterogener Elemente*) designates precisely what is “vital” (*so lebenskräftig*) in the “civilization of the Renaissance” (*Kultur der Renaissance*).²⁰⁹ It designates the “composite” character of the Florentine style (*Mischstil*),²¹⁰ and it implies the existence of a constant dialectic of “tensions” and “compromises,” with the result that, in the end, Renaissance culture appears to the historian to be a truly “enigmatic organism”:

When conflicting worldviews (*Lebensanschauung*) kindle partisan emotions, setting the members of a society at each other’s throats, the social fabric inexorably crumbles (*Verfall*); but when those views hold a balance within a single individual—when, instead of destroying each other, they fertilize each other and expand the

whole range of the personality—then they are powers (*Kräfte*) that lead to the noblest achievements of civilization. Such was the soil in which the Florentine early Renaissance blossomed. The citizen of Medicean Florence united the wholly dissimilar characters (*heterogene Eigenschaften*) of the idealist—whether medievally Christian, or romantically chivalrous, or classically Neoplatonic—and the worldly, practical, pagan Etruscan merchant. Elemental yet harmonious in his vitality (*Lebensenergie*), this enigmatic creature (*ein rätselhafter Organismus*) joyfully accepted every psychic impulse as an extension of his mental range, to be developed and exploited at leisure.²¹

SURVIVAL RENDERS HISTORY ANACHRONISTIC

The Renaissance is impure, and the notion of *survival* is Warburg's way of designating the temporal mode of that impurity. Although not striking, the expression "vital remains" (*lebensfähige Reste*) in Burckhardt's writings seems to me decisive for understanding, going back earlier than Warburg himself, the paradox—and the necessity—of such a notion. It is the paradox of a residual energy, of a trace of past life, of a death barely evaded and almost ongoing: a *phantasmal* death, to put it bluntly, one which gives to this triumphantly named "Renaissance" culture its own principle of *vitality*. But just what vitality and what temporality are we discussing here? How does survival impose a specific, fundamental way of understanding the "life of forms" and "forms of time" that this life displays?

Our working hypothesis will be that, beyond Burckhardt's evocation of "vital remains," Warburg's *Nachleben* provides a model of time specifically suited to images, a *model of anachronism* which breaks not only with Vasarian filiations (those family novels) and Winkelmannian nostalgia (those elegies of the ideal), but also with all the usual assumptions about the meaning of history. The concept of *Nachleben*, as Warburg understands it, therefore, is linked to a whole theory of history; it is with respect to Hegelianism that we must ultimately take the measure of such a concept and judge it.²²

Let us observe, to begin with, that Warburg himself was well aware that the "survival of Antiquity" was a "central problem" (*Hauptproblem*) in all his research. His closest collaborators and friends, such as Fritz Saxl²³ and Jacques Mesnil, have attested to this:

The library founded in Hamburg by Professor Warburg is distinguished from all other libraries by the fact that it is not devoted to one or several branches of human knowledge, that it does not fit into any of the usual categories, whether general or local, but rather that it has been formed, classified, and oriented with a view to solving a problem, or rather a vast ensemble of connected problems. This problem is the one which has preoccupied Warburg since his youth: what did Antiquity really represent for the men of the Renaissance? What was its significance for them? In what areas and in what ways did it exercise its influence? The question posed in

this manner was not for him a purely artistic and literary question. In his mind the Renaissance evoked not only a style but also, and above all, the idea of a *culture*: the problem of survival and of the renaissance of Antiquity is as much a religious and social problem as an artistic one.²¹⁴

The current classificatory scheme at the Warburg library still testifies to this obsession: virtually every major section begins with a subsection on the "survival of Antiquity," encompassing the survival of the ancient gods, of astrological knowledge, of literary forms, of figurative motifs, etc. The volumes of lectures (*Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*), published between 1923 and 1932 by Fritz Saxl, likewise are all marked by this problem. Just opening the first volume we find an article on Dürer as interpreter of Antiquity (by Gustav Pauli), joined by a study on Hellenistic survivals in Arab magic (by Hellmut Ritter), Ernst Cassirer's famous lecture on the concept of "symbolic form," and an essay by Adolph Goldschmidt on the "Survival of ancient forms in the Middle Ages" ("Das Nachleben der antiken Formen im Mittelalter").²¹⁵ All of the bibliographic efforts of the Warburg Institute came together in a two-volume work devoted exclusively to the problem of the survival of Antiquity.²¹⁶

But was this problem really all that new? Had not the neoclassicism of Winckelmann and his followers already projected Antiquity (*Altertum*) all the way into the living present (*Gegenwart*) of the men of the nineteenth century?²¹⁷ Ernst Gombrich has insisted on the influence of a text by Anton Springer—the first chapter of his book *Bilder aus der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, published in 1867—concerning "The survival of Antiquity in the Middle Ages" ("Das Nachleben der Antike im Mittelalter"). In the margin of a passage in which Springer speaks of the ancient draped statue as a "perfect tool of expression," Warburg noted his agreement with a laconic "bravo."²¹⁸

Warburg, of course, was thoroughly knowledgeable about all the historical literature concerning the problem of the "ancient tradition." But this knowledge, from our point of view, underscores all the more sharply the difference between his notion of *Nachleben* and all those others which, in varying guises, were under discussion at the time.²¹⁹ How, then, was Warburg's notion of survival able to break with all the preceding and contemporary ones? Essentially because it alone *was not meant to be superimposed on any historical periodization*. Springer's *Nachleben* simplified history by periodizing it: it allowed one to see a "diminished" Antiquity existing in the form of its survivals in the Middle Ages, as opposed to the "triumphant" Antiquity of the Renaissance. Warburg's *Nachleben*, in contrast, is a structural concept. It is as relevant to the Renaissance as it is to the Middle Ages: "Each age has the renaissance of Antiquity it deserves" (*jede Zeit hat die Renaissance der Antike, die sie verdient*), he wrote.²²⁰ But he could have just as well written, in a symmetrical fashion, that each period has the survivals it deserves, or rather, that are necessary to it and, in a sense, underlie it stylistically.

* * *

According to Warburg, the notion of survival offers us no way of simplifying history: it confronts any urge we might have toward periodization with a formidable disorientation. It is a notion that cuts across any chronological scheme. It always describes *another time*, and thus it disorients history and opens it up, making it more complex. In short, it *anachronizes* history. It creates the following paradoxical situation: the most ancient things sometimes come *after less ancient ones*. Thus, the Indian type of astrology—the most ancient there is—came to be used again in Italy in the fifteenth century *after* it had been supplanted and rendered out of date by Greek, Arab, and medieval astrology.²²¹ This single example, developed at length by Warburg, shows how survival *disorients history*, revealing how each period is woven with its own knot of antiquities, anachronisms, present times, and tendencies toward the future.

Why does medieval knowledge survive in Leonardo? Why does the Northern Gothic survive in the classical Renaissance? Michelet already said that the Middle Ages are “all the more difficult to kill because they have long been dead.”²²² It is the things which have long been dead, in fact, which haunt our memory the most effectively, and the most dangerously. For example, when today’s housewife works on her horoscope, she continues to manipulate the names of ancient gods in whom, it is assumed, no one any longer believes. Survival, therefore, *opens up history*, which is what Warburg encouraged when he spoke of a “history of art in the widest sense” (*wohl zum Beobachtungsgebiet der Kunstgeschichte im weitesten Sinne*): a history, namely, open to the anthropological problems of superstition and of the transmission of beliefs.²²³ This would be an art history informed by that “psychology of culture” in which Warburg began to take a passionate interest when studying under Hermann Usener and Karl Lamprecht.

To the degree that it enlarges the discipline’s objects, approaches, and temporal models, survival *complexifies* history: it frees up a kind of “margin of indeterminacy” in the correlation of historical phenomena. What comes “after” almost frees itself from what comes “before” when it joins that phantasmal, surviving “before the before.” This can be seen, for example, in the work of Rembrandt, which Warburg termed “more ancient and more classical”—more Ovidian, in short—than that of an Antonio Tempesta, which preceded it historically.²²⁴ The form almost frees itself from the content, as in the frescoes in Ferrara, in which the Renaissance structure—the reciprocal position of the figures, and the astrological reference itself—coexists with an iconography which is still medieval, heraldic, and knightly.²²⁵

This makes it clear that the ideas of *tradition* and of *transmission* present a formidable complexity: they are historical (Middle Ages, Renaissance), but they are also anachronistic (the Renaissance of the Middle Ages, the Middle Ages of the Renaissance); they are constituted out of conscious and unconscious processes; of forgetting and rediscovery; of inhibitions and destructions; of assimilations and inversions; of sublimations and alterations—all terms, moreover, that Warburg himself used.²²⁶ A displacement of perspective, through which

the historical model of the *Renaissance* and the anachronistic model of *survival* became dialectical, was sufficient to turn the very idea of a transmission into a problematic one. All the more so since this complexity, according to Warburg, is accompanied by a stubborn reference to an anthropology based on the linked questions of belief, of alienation, and of knowledge—and of the image, of course:

In the perspective of the evolution (*Wandel*) of the images of these gods, which were transmitted, then disappeared, and were then rediscovered (*überliefert, verschollen und wiederentdeckt*), the history of Antiquity has some unexplored insights to contribute to the history of the meaning of anthropomorphic thought (*eine Geschichte der Bedeutung der anthropomorphistischen Denkweise*). . . . Thus understood, the images and words (*Bilder und Worte*) here discussed—a mere fraction of all that might have been brought to light—are to be regarded as hitherto unread records of the tragic history of freedom of thought in modern Europe (*die tragische Geschichte der Denkfreiheit*). At the same time the intention has been to show, by the example of a positive investigation, how the method of the study of civilization (*kulturwissenschaftliche Methode*) can be strengthened by an alliance between the history of art and the study of religion (*die Verknüpfung von Kunstgeschichte und Religionswissenschaft*).²²⁷

Because it is woven of long stretches of time and of critical moments, of ageless latencies and of brutal resurgences, survival ends up by *anachronizing history*, thereby eroding any chronological notion of duration. In the first place, survival *anachronizes the present*: it violently contradicts the obvious facts presented by the *Zeitgeist*, that “spirit of the age” on which the definition of artistic styles is so often based. Warburg liked to cite Goethe’s statement that “what is called the spirit of the age (*Geist der Zeiten*) is, in reality, nothing more than the spirit of the worthy historian in whom this age is reflected.” Consequently, Warburg gauged the greatness of an artist or of a work of art—in opposition to what a too readily accepted sociological reading of his work would have us believe—according to its capacity to *resist* such a spirit, such a “spirit of the age.”²²⁸

In the second place, survival *anachronizes the past*: if Warburg analyzed the Renaissance as an “impure time,” it was also because the past from which it summoned up its “living forces,” namely, classical Antiquity, was itself very far from having an absolute origin. Consequently, the origin itself is an impure temporality characterized by hybridizations and sediments, by protensions and perversions. Thus, in the pictorial cycles at the Schifanoia Palace, what survives is an Oriental model of astrology in which the more ancient Greek forms had already undergone a long process of alteration. As soon as the art historian takes the risk of recognizing the *longues durées* at work in the artistic monuments of the Renaissance—as Warburg did in presenting together a work by Raphael and the Arch of Constantine in Rome, created twelve hundred years apart²²⁹—he quite logically exposes himself to the risk of anachronism. Let us call this a decision to recognize anachronism at work in historical evolution itself.

For the notion of survival indeed opens a breach in the usual models of evolution, detecting within the latter paradoxes, ironies of fate, and nonlinear changes. It *anachronizes the future* inasmuch as it is considered by Warburg to be a "the force which determines style" (*als stilbildende Macht*).²³⁰ The fact that Luther and Melanchthon reveal their interest in the "arcane survivals of paganism" (*an den fortlebenden mysteriösen Praktiken heidnischer Religiosität*) of course seems "a paradox in terms of any rectilinear view of history" (*geradlinig denkende Geschichtsauffassung*).²³¹ But that is precisely what fully justified Warburg's call for a model of time specific to the history of images: what he called, as we have seen, a search for "an evolutionary theory of its own" (*ihre eigene Entwicklungslehre*).²³²

* * *

Now we are somewhat better prepared to understand the paradoxes of a history of images conceived as a *history of phantoms*, in which survivals, latencies, and returns [revenances] all take part in the most clearly marked developments of periods and styles. One of Warburg's most striking formulations, dating from 1928, a year before his death, was his definition of the kind of history of images that he pursued as "ghost stories for grown-ups" (*Gespenstergeschichte für ganz Erwachsene*).²³³ But whose ghosts are these? When and where do they come from? Warburg's admirable texts on the portrait, with their mixture of archaeological precision and melancholic empathy, at first make one think that these ghosts are a matter of persistence, of the *survival of a postdeath state*.

At the time he was working on the portraits of the Sassetti family (a family of bankers, like his own family), Aby Warburg wrote his brother Max a moving letter in which he tried to describe how it was that all his archival work, however "arid" (*eine trockene Arbeit*) it might be, became "tremendously interesting" (*colossal interessant*) as soon as he was able to restore to a kind of life, even of palpitation, those "phantom-like images" (*schemenhafte Bilder*) of beings who had disappeared so long ago.²³⁴ With this in mind, we can better understand the paradoxical "liveliness" of the Florentine portraits (that is to say, their physical relationship with death) and, consequently, their very powerful "animism" (that is to say, their psychological relationship with the inanimate).²³⁵ After all, was it not on the ancient sarcophagi, those caskets of death, that the artists of the Renaissance—from Nicola Pisano to Donatello and beyond—scrutinized the classical formulas for representing life itself, that "life in motion" which survived, fossilized, as it were, in the marble of the Roman remains?²³⁶

But that is not all. The phantoms of this history of images also emerge from an inchoate past: they can be seen as the *survival of what we might call a "pre-birth."* Their analysis should teach us something decisive concerning what Warburg rightly termed the "formation of a style," its "morphogenesis." The model of *Nachleben*, therefore, is not applicable solely to a quest for disappearances; rather, it seeks the fecund element in the disappearances, that which yields a

trace and, accordingly, is capable of becoming a memory, of returning, indeed, of a "renaissance." With this scheme, we have, speaking in epistemological terms, something like a redefinition of the biomorphic model of evolution.

Life, death, and renaissance, progress and decline—in other words, the models habitually used since Vasari—are no longer sufficient for describing the symptomatic historicity of images. Darwin, of course, dealt with these same issues, as can be seen in his analysis of "accidental appearances"—truly symptoms, or *malaises dans l'évolution*—where he describes in a remarkable fashion the "return of lost characteristics" and the notion of the "latencies" through which the biological structure of the "common ancestor" survives":

With pigeons, however, we have another case, namely, the occasional appearance in all the breeds, of slaty blue birds with two black bars on the wing, white loins, a bar at the end of the tail, with the outer feathers externally edged near their basis with white. As all these marks are characteristic of the parent rock-pigeon, I presume that no one will doubt that this is a case of reversion, and not of a new yet analogous variation. . . . No doubt it is a very surprising fact that characters should reappear after having been lost for many, probably for hundreds of generations. . . . In a breed which has not been crossed, but in which both parents have lost some character which their progenitor possessed, the tendency, whether strong or weak, to reproduce the lost character might, as was formerly remarked, for all that we can see to the contrary, be transmitted for almost any number of generations. When a character which has been lost in a breed, reappears after a great number of generations, the most probable hypothesis is, not that one individual suddenly takes after an ancestor removed by some hundred generations, but that in each successive generation the character in question has been lying latent, and at last, under unknown favorable conditions, is developed.²³⁷

EXORCISM OF THE *NACHLEBEN*: GOMBRICH AND PANOFSKY

Before inquiring into the conditions under which, in the history of art, an ancient form becomes capable of *surviving* in certain cases and of undergoing a *renaissance* in others, let us attempt to determine how this problematic fared within the history of the discipline. Was Warburg's *Nachleben* understood? By a few, certainly; but certainly not by the *mainstream*, as a few examples will make clear.

When Julius von Schlosser published his *History of the wax portrait* [*Geschichte der Porträtbildnerie in Wachs*] in 1911, it became clear that the vocabulary of survival—borrowed from Tylor, but mainly from Warburg, who was a friend of Schlosser's²³⁸—had opened the only possible theoretical way of understanding the strangest phenomenon of wax sculpture, namely its persistence [*longue durée*], its resistance to the history of style, in other words, its capacity of surviving without significantly evolving.²³⁹ Schlosser understood that the history of images is not all a "natural history," but rather an elaboration, a "methodological construction" (*ein methodisches Präparat*), and that it escapes

from the laws of a trivial "evolutionism." This is what justifies, at the end of the book, his critique and summary dismissal of "teleological pretensions" of the Vasarian sort.²⁴⁰

Schlosser clearly left unexplored, undoubtedly more from modesty than from ignorance, a certain number of theoretical problems inherent in the model of survival. But a powerful idea was beginning to take shape. It is this: *if art has a history, images, for their part, have survivals*, which "declassifies" them, separating them from the usual domain of works of art. The price of this survival is the disdain in which they are held by a "high" history of artistic styles.²⁴¹ That is why the *History of the Wax Portrait* has for many years been read more by anthropologists than by art historians.

With regard to models of time, Edgar Wind probably never risked making theoretical moves as radical and exploratory as those of Warburg and Schlosser. But he clearly understood that the word "survival" should be employed as more than a trivial "biological metaphor." In 1934, he wrote that "when we speak of the 'survival of the classics,' we mean that the symbols created by the ancients have continued to exert their power over subsequent generations—but what do we mean by the word 'continued'?" And Wind indicates that survival presupposes the harmonious working together of an entire ensemble of operations, including forgetting, transformation of meaning, eliciting of memory, and unexpected rediscovery. This kind of complexity ought to remind us of the *cultural*, nonnatural character of the temporality involved here.²⁴² Wind is criticizing not only Wölfflin's "immanent history" but also "*historical continuity*" in general, which is unaware of what is involved in all this kind of survival, the forces brought into play in every instance of survival: "pauses" and "crises," "jumps" and "periodic reversions." All of this forms a skein of memory (memory-mnemosyne), not a narrative history, resulting, therefore, not in a succession of artistic facts but in a theory of symbolic complexity.²⁴³

One could not have a clearer statement of the *critique of historicism* contained in the very hypothesis of survival. Gertrude Bing rightly noted Warburg's paradoxical situation regarding the epistemology of the historical sciences. (One could also, I believe, make an analogous observation concerning Michel Foucault.) On the one hand, he can be incomplete, biased, and even mistaken regarding certain historical facts; on the other hand, his hypothesis about memory—the specific type of memory presupposed by *Nachleben*—has profoundly altered our very understanding of what a historical phenomenon is. Significantly, Gertrude Bing stressed the way in which the notion of *Nachleben* transforms our whole conception of tradition: it is no longer a continuously flowing river in which things simply start from upstream and travel downstream, but a tense dialectical process, a drama played out between the river and its own eddies.²⁴⁴ Here we may again note that this way of conceiving historicity is not all that far from Walter Benjamin's.²⁴⁵

* * *

It must be said, however, that this approach found very few followers. Historians often prefer not to risk making a mistake: a fact, in their eyes, is worth more than a hypothesis, which is inherently uncertain. Let us call this scientific modesty—or perhaps cowardice, or even philosophical laziness. At worst, it is a positive hatred of all “theory.” Gombrich, in 1970, wanted to conclude his biography of Warburg by, as he termed it, “putting [the latter’s work] in perspective.” Here one detects a strange wish to “kill the father,” a definite desire to make sure that the ghost or *revenant*—as Warburg defined himself in 1924—*no longer returns*. And, with him, the “outmoded” hypothesis of *survival* will also cease for a time from its eternal return to the back of the art historian’s mind.²⁴⁶

In order to arrive at this goal, two moves are necessary. The first consists in *invalidating survival’s dialectical structure*, that is to say, denying that a double rhythm, composed of *survivals* and *renaissances*, always organizes the temporality of images, rendering them hybrid and impure in the process. To this end, Gombrich does not hesitate to claim that Warburg’s *Nachleben* can be seen simply as the equivalent of what is called a *revival*.²⁴⁷ The second move consists in *invalidating survival’s anachronistic structure*, which is accomplished simply by returning to Springer and *reperiodizing* the distinction between survival and renaissance. In other words, the distinction is very simply reduced to a chronological one between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Gombrich thus ends up distinguishing the obscure “tenacity” of the medieval survivals and the inventive “flexibility” of the imitations *all’antica* that only a Renaissance worthy of that name could have produced, beginning only in the fifteenth century.²⁴⁸

Sorting out the various transformations of the notion of survival would be a huge task, requiring anyone who undertook it to examine the whole history of the discipline since Warburg’s time. Let us, then, indicate only the most important landmarks. At the beginning of the 1920s, in the first volume of the *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, Adolph Goldschmidt published an article on “The survival of ancient forms in the Middle Ages” [“Das Nachleben der antiken Formen im Mittelalter”]. Aware right from the start of the paradox of the *Nachleben*, which is simultaneously an indicator of “continued life” (*Weiterleben*) and of “continued death” (*Weitersterben*), Goldschmidt attempted to *extend into the Middle Ages* what Warburg had observed in Botticelli, notably by pointing out the expressive role of drapery in Byzantine art.²⁴⁹ Twenty years later, Jean Seznec, presenting the “survival of the ancient gods,” called the theme an argument that would be troubling for received views of chronology. In showing the *interference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, he, too, demonstrated the broad scope of the field of survivals:

As the Middle Ages and the Renaissance come to be better known, the traditional antithesis between them grows less marked. The medieval period appears “less dark and static,” and the Renaissance “less bright and less sudden.” Above all, it is now recognized that pagan antiquity, far from experiencing a “rebirth” in fifteenth-century Italy, had remained alive within the culture and art of the Middle Ages.

Even the gods were not restored to life, for they had never disappeared from the memory or imagination of man. . . . The difference in styles acts as a further hindrance to our awareness of the continuity of tradition, for Italian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries invests the ancient symbols with fresh beauty; but the debt of the Renaissance to the Middle Ages is set forth in texts. We shall attempt to show how the mythological heritage of antiquity was handed down from century to century, through which vicissitudes it passed, and the extent to which, toward the close of the Cinquecento, the great Italian treatises on the gods which were to nourish the humanities and art of all Europe were still indebted to medieval compilations and steeped in the influence of the Middle Ages.²⁵⁰

This kind of respect for Warburg's teachings and for the notion of the *impurity of the temporality of images* represents, it must be said, a minority position. Everywhere else one senses a desire to establish an ever clearer and more distinct *periodization of the history of art*, one more schematic and satisfying to the mind. In short, the procedure used to invalidate Warburg's approach, so clearly expressed by Gombrich, was employed more surreptitiously in a whole series of theoretical moves by which the notion of *Nachleben* was reoriented toward various temporal schemas and deterministic models that it had the merit of challenging in the first place. Thus, survival was drawn toward the atemporal notion of the *archetype*, or toward the idea of eternal *cycles*; this was done in order to explain, but at little cost, the mixture of "continuities" and "variations" which inevitably stamps the history of images.²⁵¹

The notion of survival was also drawn in the more positivistic direction of the *material remains* of Antiquity, or of the more general question of *sources*.²⁵² It was also drawn toward a more "formalist" point of view, that of *influences*.²⁵³ And it was used, as well, by scholars interested in iconographic *traditions*²⁵⁴ and, more generally, in those *unexamined permanent elements* which have characterized certain ancient artistic genres up to the modern period.²⁵⁵ Finally, all this has been looked at from the opposite direction by sociologically informed theories of *reception*, or in terms of the "taste for the antique," of imitation, or simply of "reference" to the "stylistic norms" of Antiquity.²⁵⁶ Considered outmoded, or else used as a *passe-partout*, but, in any case, stripped of all theoretical significance, Warburg's *Nachleben* is thus no longer *debated*. That does not mean that it has been assimilated. Quite to the contrary. Let us say, rather, that it has been exorcized by the very discipline which is indebted to Warburg for the historical concept of the impurity of time but which has ended up reproaching him for it.

* * *

The high priest who exorcised our *dybbuk* is none other than Erwin Panofsky—but could we not have expected it? Gombrich himself reluctantly admitted as much: it was primarily due to Panofsky that, for generations of art historians, Warburg's work was "put in perspective" in such a way as to invalidate the

Nachleben, this being the theoretical means by which the notion was exorcised.²⁵⁷ As early as 1921—just fifteen years after Warburg's lecture on "Dürer and Italian Antiquity"—Panofsky published an article with a title too similar not be secretly rivaling the earlier publication: "Durer and classical Antiquity."²⁵⁸ In it, despite the requisite expressions of respect, the problematic of *survival* already has given way to a problematic of *influence*; and the question of the *pathetic*, which in Warburg's work could be linked to Nietzsche's *Dionysian*, has given way to a problematic of *typification* and of the "juste milieu," supported by several references to Kant's "ideal beauty" [*beau idéal*] and to classical rhetoric.²⁵⁹

In the obituary Panofsky wrote in 1929, the crucial expression of Warburg's *Hauptproblem*, the expression *Nachleben der Antike*, does not appear even once; instead of any mention of "survival," the only issues we find discussed are the "heritage" of Antiquity (*Erbeil des Altertums*) and the "history of reception" of Antiquity (*Rezeptionsgeschichte der Antike*).²⁶⁰ Then, in 1933, joining his efforts to those of Fritz Saxl, who was already attempting to historicize Warburg's conceptual schemas as much as possible²⁶¹—in itself a legitimate undertaking—Panofsky published a long article on "Classical Mythology in Medieval Art" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York's *Bulletin*. This was his first important publication in English²⁶²—his entry visa into a new intellectual and institutional context that would transform his exile (his flight from Nazi Germany) into an empire (his undisputed domination of academic art history).

It is possible—and, up to a certain point, justified—to read this article as an *extension* of Warburg's writings on the "survival of the ancient gods"; for Panofsky and Saxl appear to be satisfied to apply the notion of *Nachleben* to a chronological domain on which Warburg himself had not directly worked. At the start, therefore, they make a place for survival, a place showing that the Vasarian historical point of view is "wrong," though only in part:

The earliest Italian writers about the history of art, such for instance as Ghiberti, Alberti, and especially Giorgio Vasari, thought that classical art was overthrown at the beginning of the Christian era and that it did not revive until, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy, it served as the foundation of what is usually called the Renaissance. . . . They were wrong in so far as the Renaissance was connected with the Middle Ages by innumerable links. Classical conceptions survived throughout the Middle Ages—literary, philosophical, scientific, and artistic—and they were especially strong after the time of Charlemagne, under whose reign there had been a deliberate classical revival in almost every cultural field. The early writers were right in so far as the artistic forms under which the classical conceptions persisted during the Middle Ages were utterly different from our present ideas of antiquity, which did not come into existence until the "Renaissance" in its true sense of the "rebirth" of antiquity as a well-defined historical phenomenon.²⁶³

One already senses that this way of approaching the subject implies not only an extension but also a bifurcation, or possibly even a *reversal*, of Warburg's

position, of which Panofsky and Saxl, however, claim to be "followers."²⁶⁴ What, then, is extended here? The general idea of a polarization between *survival* and *renaissance*. What is reversed, or abandoned? The structural or synchronic aspect, the nonchronological aspect—in short, the *anachronistic* aspect of this double rhythm. Henceforth, things become more neatly separated in value and in time: they become hierarchized and periodized. Survival becomes a *lower category* of art history, making the Middle Ages into a period of artistic "conventions," of "gradual degeneration" of the classical norms, and, finally, of the unfortunate "dissociation" of form and content: "the medieval mind [is] incapable of realizing . . . the unity of classical form and classical subject matter."²⁶⁵

The Renaissance, for its part, will become—or become again—that higher category of art history which makes the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento into summits of artistic activity, of archaeological authenticity, and, therefore, of stylistic purity. Reading Panofsky and Saxl, one would almost think that the Renaissance "in its true sense," i.e., the Renaissance as a "well-defined historical phenomenon," was the only period ever to witness the birth of a genuine and "free" human being. Free, notably, from symbolic burdens and figurative conventions: "the reintegration of classical mythological subjects, realized in the Renaissance, was the motor as well as a characteristic of the general evolution that culminated in the rediscovery of man as a natural being stripped of his protecting cover of symbolism and conventionality."²⁶⁶ Perhaps not all the tensions have been eliminated (and in this regard Panofsky and Saxl evoke the Counter-Reformation, that is to say, the *end* of the Renaissance). But it is only the "classical harmony" of the time of the Renaissance *in its true sense* that receives the accolade for surmounting the artistic and cultural crises that had characterized the periods of survival, crises attested to, if only in a negative fashion, by what these periods lacked.²⁶⁷

Only one conceptual difficulty remained to be resolved: the notion of a renaissance contrasts with that of a survival with regard to two aspects that are not easily coordinated. The hierarchical opposition does not automatically coincide with chronological succession. Panofsky found an effective solution by distinguishing two different conceptual orders within the word "renaissance": a synchronic order, which he here calls "renovation," and the "well-defined historical phenomenon" that is the "Renaissance." What has been called the Carolingian Renaissance is, for Panofsky, only a "renovation." The only Renaissance, taking the word "in its true sense," is that of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁶⁸ As for the notion of survival, it remains in the shadow of its relative indetermination.

Beginning in 1944, Panofsky used the term "renascence" to refer to what he formerly called a "renovation."²⁶⁹ The system attained its final state in 1960 with *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, a work that emerged from lectures he gave in 1952, and thus one benefiting from eight long years of reflection. Panofsky forcefully reiterated that the Carolingian "renovation" or renewal and,

in general, all the "proto-humanist" moments experienced by the Middle Ages are in no way "renaissances" in the strict sense; they are only "renascences," partial moments of a "return to Antiquity."²⁷⁰

We can now see that in order to resolve the basic problem announced at the start—namely the relationship between *continuity* and *change* in history—Panofsky created a conceptual framework similar, in its ternary structure, to the famous "semiological" distinction between "primary subject," "conventional subject," and "intrinsic meaning" set forth in the introduction to his *Studies in Iconology*.²⁷¹ According to Panofsky, therefore, the entire "theory of historical time" could be organized by a three-term hierarchy, with the *Renaissance* at the summit, its initial capital letter indicating both chronological centrality and atemporal dignity. A dignity that Panofsky highlighted by the use of virtually Hegelian expressions like "self-realization," "becoming aware," "becoming real," and "total phenomenon."²⁷² For Panofsky, the Renaissance was the *awakening* of art to a consciousness of itself, that is to say, to its own history and to its own "realization" or ideal meaning, so that in the end, Vasari, who said the same thing, turned out to be right.

Anticipating this stage were the various partial "renewals" or *renascences* that, in the long course of the Middle Ages, stirred up the history of forms in those moments which experienced an *awakening* of classicism.²⁷³ Finally, there is the background of *sleep* from which all these movements arose. Panofsky hesitated to name it, to give it a theoretical status; he just barely managed to mention, in a one-page digression, a "period of incubation."²⁷⁴ But it is clear that what is involved here is none other than the Warburgian notion of *survival*. Significantly, the final sentences of *Renaissance and Renascences* oppose the "unredeemed phantom" of this survival to the soul of classicism *all'antica*, now finally resuscitated—a soul that is ideal, intangible, pure, immortal, and omnipresent:

The Middle Ages had left antiquity unburied and alternately galvanized and exorcised its corpse. The Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally auspicious moment it succeeded. This is why the medieval concept of the Antique was so concrete and at the same time so incomplete and distorted; whereas the modern one, gradually developed during the last three or four hundred years, is comprehensive and consistent but, if I may say so, abstract. And this is why the medieval renascences were transitory; whereas the Renaissance was permanent. Resurrected souls are intangible but have the advantage of immortality and omnipresence.²⁷⁵

In these sentences one seems to hear the echo of two symmetric exaltations—both of them idealist—the one stemming from Vasari, the other from Winckelmann. Death to errant phantoms and to survivors! Long live resuscitated and immortal souls! What all this expresses, of course, is simply an aesthetic choice. One might even say a phantasmal choice. In that respect,

it is a legitimate one. But it appears here in a discourse purporting to present what is true and claiming to establish art history as an objective science. Its effect has been to orient the latter toward the study of "well-defined historical phenomena" rather than toward the uncertain time of the various survivals. It has preserved the immortal ideas and sent all the phantom images far away. In looking at the Renaissance, this approach wanted to see only a *time without impurities*, a period that could serve as a "standard," in which the homogeneity, the "reintegration" of forms and contents, would be legible. It has, therefore, rejected Warburg's fundamental intuition.

Veritas filia temporis [truth is the daughter of time], so the ancient adage tells us.²⁷⁶ But, for the historian, the question is how to know exactly of what time—or of what times, in the plural—truth is the "daughter." As a student of Warburg's, Panofsky *began* by recognizing the complexity and anachronism of the time involved in discussing images. Thus, in a text from his German period on the problem of historical time [*Zum Problem der historischen Zeit*] he used, and not by chance, a medieval example in order to introduce the theoretical difficulty inherent in any model of evolution that might be used in art history:

The sculptures at Rheims [in particular] engender . . . an image of an unending, polychrome web, within which the most diverging threads become intertwined, running now beside each other and now in opposite directions. These individual stylistic directions (their marked differences in quality notwithstanding, which would seem to prohibit proposing a coherent, linear evolution) do not merely progress in parallel, indifferent to any interconnections; rather they penetrate one another and, not only that, they return again and again. . . . Thus this endless multiplicity of frames of reference, which seems to primarily constitute the world of the art historian, amounts to a confusing and unformalizable chaos. . . . Are we not then faced with a completely inhomogeneous contiguity of such frames of reference, which, to use Simmel's terminology, remain frozen in self-sufficient isolation and irrational specificity?²⁷⁷

Panofsky indeed *began*—with Warburg—by recognizing the impurity of time. But he *ended* by extirpating it, dissolving it, subsuming it in an ordered framework that hearkened back to the aesthetic ambition of the golden ages (of which the Renaissance is one) and to the historical ambition of "reference periods." Thus, his 1931 text concludes with the hope that a "chronology" of the sculptures of Rheims Cathedral might one day clarify and hierarchize their multiple stylistic reference systems.²⁷⁸ This expresses the desire of any idealist or positivist historian: that the times involved, once analyzed, become "pure" again. That survivals become logically eliminated from history the way the *lees* would be eliminated from a fine wine. But is that really possible? It is only ideal wines—wines without any taste—that can exist without any lees at all, without that impurity which, in a certain sense, gives them style and *life*.

From Warburg to Panofsky, therefore, a word falls out of use and is forgotten: the word *Nachleben*, "survival." And with it—with its fundamental impurity—went a second word contained within it: *Leben*, "life." Panofsky, it is clear, sought to understand only the "meaning" of images, whereas Warburg also sought to understand their "life," that impersonal "force" or "power" (*Kraft*, *Macht*) that he occasionally speaks of but regularly declines to define. Where did he get this vocabulary, which is so lacking in rigorous conceptual analysis and yet is so important? Above all from Burckhardt, about whom he liked to say—referring to the role of ephemeral spectacles in the visual culture of the Renaissance—that he attempted to find "a true transition from life into art" (*ein wahrer Übergang aus dem Leben in die Kunst*).²⁷⁹ Just as for Burckhardt, art, for Warburg, was not a simple question of taste, but rather a *vital* question. Similarly, history was not for him a simple chronological question, but rather a stirring up [remous] of the past, a debate in which "life" is at stake and which continues throughout the long span of a culture's existence.

The history of images was thus for Warburg what it had already been for Burckhardt (but which it no longer has been since Panofsky): a question of "life" and—since in this "life" death is omnipresent—of "survivals." The biomorphism expressed here has nothing in common with that of a Vasari, or even of a Winckelmann, for the "life" in question here does not exist without the *element of the nonnatural*, which, in the view of Burckhardt and of Warburg, is required by the notion of culture. Nor does it exist without the *element of impurity*, which, again for each of them, is required by the very notion of historical time. Let us try to briefly characterize this enigmatic "life." It seems to me that it can be understood as being, simultaneously, a play of functions (requiring an anthropological approach), a play of forms (requiring a morphological approach), and, finally, a play of forces (requiring a dynamic or energetic approach).

"Life" is a *play of functions* inasmuch as it the life of a *culture*. This did not escape Burckhardt's first readers, who read his philosophical anthropology in the still vague terms of the "soul" or of *culture* understood as the "intimate state of the consciousness of a people." Thus, in 1887, Émile Gebhart wrote that it was "to the Italian soul" that he posed the question of the secret of the Renaissance; and, for him, "all the great facts of this history: the politics, the erudition, the art, morality, pleasure, religion, [and] superstition manifest the action of certain *forces vives*."²⁸⁰ We know that Burckhardt's *Kulturgeschichte* has been looked at anew by social history,²⁸¹ just as Warburg's *Kulturwissenschaft* has been revisited by Panofskian iconology and the social history of art. Certain of Burckhardt's ambiguities have been left aside in the process (and that is as it should be), but along with them, so have certain of his major theoretical hypotheses and certain of his most pertinent *critical articulations*. Let us mention several that Warburg was to incorporate, more or less explicitly, into his own thinking.

For Burckhardt, "life," viewed as a play of functions, is, in the first place, neither the life of facts nor that of systems. One must speak of "life" and its concrete movement in culture because positivist history, in its rush to establish chronological facts, tends to blot out everything else, while idealist history—that of Hegel above all—tends to enlist everything in its effort to announce grand, overly abstract truths. In both cases, it is time itself that is disincarnated as a result of the desire to simplify, that is to say, to deny its complexity. Considering "life as culture," in contrast, leads to a critical formulation designed to get beyond a dilemma that is really only schematic, and thus trivial, namely history-as-nature versus history-as-idea:

Yet history is not the same thing as nature (*die Geschichte ist aber etwas anderes als die Natur*), and it creates, brings to birth and abandons to decay in a different way. . . . By a primordial instinct, nature creates in consistently organic fashion with an infinite variety of species and a great similarity of individuals. In history, the variety (within the one species *homo*, of course) is far from being so great. There are no clear lines of demarcation, but individuals feel the incentive inequality—inciting to development. While nature works on a few primeval models (vertebrates and invertebrates, phanerogams and cryptogams), in the people, the body social is not so much a type as a gradual product. . . . We shall, further, make no attempt at system (*wir verzichten ferner auf alles Systematische*), nor lay any claim to "historical principles." On the contrary, we shall confine ourselves to observation, taking transverse sections of history in as many directions as possible. Above all, we have nothing to do with the philosophy of history. . . . Hegel . . . speaks of "the purpose of eternal wisdom," and calls his study a theodicy by virtue of its recognition of the affirmative in which the negative (in popular parlance, evil) vanishes, subjected and overcome. . . . We are not, however, privy to the purposes of eternal wisdom: they are beyond our ken. This bold assumption of a world plan leads to fallacies because it starts out from false premises.²⁸²

One could say that with this twofold refusal Burckhardt inaugurated a new manner of writing history, a "third way."²⁸³ And Warburg later adopted the basic choices Burckhardt made: to be a philologist who goes beyond the facts (for the facts are important primarily for the basic questions they give rise to), and to be a philosopher who goes beyond the systems (for the basic questions are important primarily for the singular ways they are actually employed in history). Such, then, is what the "third way" demands: the refusal to accept either teleology or absolute pessimism, and the recognition of the historical "existence" (*Dasein, Leben*) of every culture, that is to say, of its complexity. Burckhardt went as far as to assert that authentic history is distorted as much by the "ideas" deriving from "preconceived theories" as by "chronology" itself. For history, he thought, was that aspect of our intellectual effort which rescues us from our basic incapacity "to understand what is varied, accidental" (*unsere Unfähigkeit des Verständnisses für das Bunte, Zufällige*) [translation modified—Trans.].²⁸⁴

With this approach Burckhardt thus established a strange dialectic of times, one which needed neither “good” nor “evil,” neither “beginnings” (origins or sources from which everything supposedly derived) nor “ends” (a direction toward which all history is heading). It needed none of all that to express the complexity—the impurity—of its “life.” It is composed of rhizomes, of repetitions, of symptoms. Local history—along with patriotic or racial history—is not its concern; for such history lacks a way of conceiving relationships and differences. Neither is universal history its subject; for Burckhardt renounced in advance any attempt to look for a general formula for the “system” of all these rhizomes.

The philosophers, encumbered with speculations on origins, ought by rights to speak of the future. We can dispense with theories of origins, and no one can expect from us a theory of the end. . . . Questions such as the influence of soil and climate . . . are introductory questions for the philosophers of history, but not for us, and hence quite outside our scope. The same holds good for all cosmologies, theories of race, the geography of the ancient continents and so on. The study of any other branch of knowledge may begin with origins, but not that of history. After all, our historical pictures are, for the most part, pure constructions, as we shall see more particularly when we come to speak of the State. Indeed, they are mere reflections of ourselves. There is little value in conclusions drawn from people to people or from race to race. The origins we imagine we can demonstrate are in any case quite late stages. . . . Its greater intelligibility is merely apparent, and arises in part from an optical illusion, namely our own much livelier readiness to understand, which may go hand in hand with great blindness.²⁸⁵

In reflecting on the relationships between the *local* and the *global*, Burckhardt did not fail to reflect as well on the relationships between *change* and *stability*. For him, the “life” of history is not only a spatial play of individual and contextual events; it is also, of course, a play of time, the dialectic of what changes and of what resists change.²⁸⁶ To be a historian, for Burckhardt, does not mean just composing a narrative of things that change and succeed each other; it is necessary, above all, to “deal first with their continuous and gradual interaction and in particular with the influence of the one variable (*Bewegtes*), Culture, on the two constants (*Stabiles*)” [Burckhardt is referring here to the state and to religion—Trans.].²⁸⁷ In this regard, the “life” of history falls within the domain of *morphology*: it is a *play of forms*, if one understands by “forms” the tangible crystallization of such a dialectic or “reciprocal influence.”

Since . . . time bear[s] away ceaselessly the forms (*die Formen*) which are the vesture of material as of spiritual life (*das geistige Leben*), the task of history as a whole is to show its twin aspects, distinct yet identical, proceeding from the fact that, firstly, the spiritual, in whatever domain it is perceived, has a historical aspect (*eine geschichtliche Seite*) under which it appears as change, as the contingent, as a passing

moment which forms part of a vast whole beyond our power to divine, and that, secondly, every event has a spiritual aspect (*eine geistige Seite*) by which it partakes of immortality. For the spirit knows change, but not mortality.²⁸⁸

* * *

In considering the word "spirit," it was to the domain of *culture* that Burckhardt directed his attention, and he did so as a historian and an anthropologist, not as a philosopher. Thus, even before Warburg claimed the status of "psycho-historian," Burckhardt had already thought of *Kulturgeschichte* in terms of a *morphology*, or even an *aesthetic* of the "psychic forms" of culture. He recognized that this issue was central to any historical project, but not if it was conceived in the "romantic-fantastic" mode (*nicht etwa romantisch-phantastisch*). It should be treated in the manner in which one would observe the "marvelous process of the metamorphosis of a chrysalis" (*als einen wundersamen Prozess von Verpuppungen*).²⁸⁹ That is why Burckhardt was able to cover his notebooks with all those visual notations (fig. 8). The culture of an epoch, he held, could be detected in its written sources and in the events of its history, but equally well in its paintings, in its architectural ornaments, in the details of its clothing, in the landscapes that its people refashioned, in its heraldic imagination, and in its most marginal figures, in grotesques, for example.²⁹⁰

It has wrongly been said that Burckhardt's *aestheticization of history* was due to epistemological weakness, to an art lover's failing, or to a disciplinary indiscretion of a historian *stricto sensu*. Burckhardt, however, did not aestheticize history in the way one lets oneself be drawn into intoxication in order to forget something. He simply recognized—in itself an important finding—that the *temporal hinge* between change and stability, between *Geschichte* and *Typus*, is a formal hinge, which involves the workings of something like the "process of the metamorphosis of a chrysalis." It is thus necessary to "aestheticize" history; for *Kultur*, according to Burckhardt, assumes the place, in a certain way, of Hegel's "reason in history."²⁹¹ No history is possible without a history of culture, and there can be no history of culture without an *art history* open to the anthropological and morphological resonances of images.²⁹² This is a task that Burckhardt, of course, left in its initial stages—a task that Warburg and Wölfflin, each in his own fashion, sought to take up, even if they could not complete it.

Burckhardt considered the establishment of such a morphology to lie at the heart of the historian's task—and someday one should critically examine the history of this morphological theme, from Goethe to, say, Carlo Ginzburg. This also explains the pronounced visual tenor of his theoretical vocabulary, which displays a violent refusal of, a shrinking back from, Kant's *a priori* and Hegel's "speculation," and, symmetrically, an insistence on the historian's right to "look" and to employ "contemplation" (*Anschauung*) and even "imagination" (*Phantasie*).²⁹³ History, for Burckhardt, is constructed less like a story and more



FIG. 8 Jacob Burckhardt, *Sculptures from Munster*, ca. 1835. Sketch from an album of drawings entitled *Alterthümer*. Basel, Jacob Burckhardt-Archiv. Photo: Jacob Burckhardt-Archiv.

like a "picture" (*Bild*): "Pictures, paintings, that's what I want" (*Bilder, Tableaux, das ist's was ich möchte*), he wrote as early as 1844—a formulation that Warburg made his own even before putting it into practice with the collection of plates that forms his *Mnemosyne Atlas*.²⁹⁴ How can one fail to see here, among other possible examples, that the very choice of *grisaille* as a color expresses a *form of time* in which the present time of a given historical moment (that of Mantegna, for example) asserts its own archaeological distance, its own anachronism, its own task of making possible the survival—like phantoms—of the figures of Antiquity.²⁹⁵

Thus, no history is possible without a *morphology* of the "forms of time." But the reasoning involved here would be incomplete without an essential clarification: there can be no *morphology*, or analysis, of *forms* without a *dynamic*, or analysis, of *forces*. To omit that is to reduce morphology—and this is often what happens—to the establishment of sterile typologies. It amounts to assuming that the forms are the *reflections* of a time, whereas they are really the casualties or *fallen elements* [*les chutes*], whether ridiculous or sublime, of a conflict taking place within time—that is to say, of a *play of forces*. This, then, is the third characteristic of "life," according to Burckhardt. The dynamic of the "type" (*Typus*) and "development" (*Entwicklung*) constitutes the "main

problem" (*Hauptproblem*) of history. The phenomenon in question is a tense and oscillatory one, and it generates formidable complexities: "What issues from this main phenomenon (*die Wirkung des Hauptphänomens*) is historical life (*das geschichtliche Leben*), rolling on in a thousand forms, complex, in all manner of disguises, bound and free, speaking now through the masses, now through individuals, now in hopeful, now in hopeless mood, setting up and destroying states, religions, civilizations, now a dark enigma to itself, moved by inchoate feelings born of imagination rather than thought, now companioned only by thought, or again filled with isolated premonitions of what is fulfilled long afterwards."²⁹⁶

To speak of "historical life" (*geschichtliches Leben*) is, therefore, to seek to understand time as a play of "forces" (*Kräfte, Mächte*) or of "powers" (*Potenzen*), out of which, Burckhardt states, "all kinds of forms of life" (*Lebensformen*) arise.²⁹⁷ Elsewhere he writes, "it is our task simply to observe and describe objectively the various forces (*Potenzen*) as they appeared side by side or one after another."²⁹⁸ But the task is very difficult, because a *power* [*puissance*] always tends to evade our notice: it is difficult to observe when it is too violent and omnipresent, and difficult to observe when it is too virtual (a "potential" force [*en puissance*]) and invisible.²⁹⁹ This double meaning of the word "power"—manifest force and latent force—is not at all simply an anecdotal matter; it gives rise to at least two important consequences, two bifurcations that profoundly alter our way of conceiving historicity.

The first yields a *dialectic of time*—the very one we are trying to grasp in the notion of the *symptom*. In reading Burckhardt, we find that this dialectic functions in the manner of a continually renewed debate between "latencies" (*Latenzen*) and "crises" (*Krisen*). There is no historical time, in fact, without some play of latencies: "[We are] ignorant . . . of everything which we call latent forces (*latente Kräfte*), physical or mental, and [of] the incalculable factor of mental contagions, which can suddenly transform the world."³⁰⁰ This historical and collective condition has its psychological and individual counterpart in the circumstance that "in man, no one side is ever active to the exclusion of the rest; the whole is always at work, even though some elements may function in a weaker, unconscious (*im Unbewussten*) fashion."³⁰¹

Now, every latency seeks to work its way toward the surface of events. In Burckhardt, the term "crisis" (*Krise*) designates that particularly effective way that time has of making its own power spring forth—through a *contretemps* or through a symptom. At least two chapters of the *Reflections on World History* are entirely devoted to this question.³⁰² And every other part of the book is concerned in some fashion with the observation of the dialectical relationship, which is such a difficult one to analyze, between the fixed forms and the forces which cause them to vacillate, or between the dominant forces and the forms which cause them to fail: "in history, the way of annihilation is invariably prepared by inward degeneration, by decrease of life. Only then can a shock from outside put an end to the whole. . . . The crisis which has one specific cause is

borne along on the storm-wind of many other things, yet not a man involved in it but is absolutely blind as to the force which will finally win the day."³⁰³

* * *

We see that for Burckhardt the practice of history amounted to the analysis not of facts succeeding each other over time but, rather, of something like an *unconscious of time*, with all its latencies and its catastrophes. Warburg developed his history of images, it seems to me, in accord with the consequences of this methodological decision. History, then, is to be a *symptomatology* or even a *pathology of time*, which it would be wrong, however, to reduce to a simple moral pessimism, even though an element of tragedy is everywhere visible in it. It is first of all in morphological and dynamic terms that Burckhardt wanted to speak of the "catastrophes," indeed of the "illnesses," of time:

[The historian must analyze each force,] State, Religion and Culture, dealing first with their continuous and gradual interaction and in particular with the influence of the one variable, Culture, on the two constants. We shall then discuss the accelerated movements of the whole process of history, the theory of crises and revolutions, as also of the occasional abrupt absorption of all other movements, the general ferment of all the rest of life, the ruptures and reactions—in short, everything that might be called the theory of storms (*Sturmlehre*). . . . We, however, shall start out from the one point accessible to us, the one eternal center of things—man, suffering, striving, doing, as he is and was and ever shall be. Hence our study will, in a certain sense, be pathological (*pathologisch*) in kind. [Translation modified by the author and, accordingly, by the translator—Trans.]³⁰⁴

Must one still speak of a dialectic of time? Yes, if by this term one understands a process that is filled with tensions rather than resolutions, one that is obsessional rather than linear and oriented in a certain direction. The dialectic of the "stable powers" (*Stabiles*) and of the "mobile element" (*Bewegtes*) produced a far-reaching critique of historicism, one that only complexifies, multiplies, and even disorients the models of time that Burckhardt in this passage calls "crises," "revolutions," "ruptures," "reactions," "occasional absorptions," "ferment," "perturbations"—a list that could go on indefinitely. To speak of an "unconscious" (*Unbewusstes*) or of a pathology is to affirm, moreover, that the dialectic at work here demonstrates only *the impurity and anachronism of time*. This, then, may be considered the second lesson, the second consequence of a morphological and dynamic approach to history: time liberates *symptoms*, and with them it causes the *phantoms* to act. Time, for Burckhardt, is already a time of obsessions, of hybridization, of anachronism; in this respect, it directly anticipates Warburg's notion of "survivals."

Thus, Burckhardt speaks of Western culture as an unlimited sphere of influence, "impregnated with the traditions of all times, of all peoples, and of all

civilizations."³⁰⁵ He also states that "there are no clear limits" to be found within it, and that the "body social" of any culture is nothing but a perpetual "gradual product," a "process" marked by "the effect of the contrasts and affinities." The conclusion being that "in history, everything is fully bastardized (*Bastardtum*), as if [that was] an essential element of fecundation (*Befruchtung*) of great spiritual events" [English translation modified—Trans].³⁰⁶

Now, this impurity is not only synchronic: it affects time itself, its rhythm and its development. One must not, Burckhardt asserts, rely on the use of periods to separate history into "ages of the world"; rather, one should note the existence of "countless incarnations," which presuppose "mutations" and, therefore, "human inadequacy." The whole, then, is a difficult-to-analyze mixture of "destructions" and of something that must be called "survivals."³⁰⁷ It is here that Burckhardt comes closest to the notion of *Nachleben*, in rejecting any attempt to set up a hierarchical periodization of history that would separate *barbarism* from *civilization*—just as later Warburg would refuse to sharply separate the Middle Ages from the Renaissance.

We can no more begin our presentation of history with the earliest state formations than with the *transition from barbarism to civilization*. Here, also, the concepts are much too vague. . . . In the final analysis, the use or non-use of this word becomes a matter of temperament. I consider it barbarism to keep birds in cages. First one ought to eliminate those elements which have lived on from the infant days of mankind in petrified form in the most advanced civilization, perhaps for sacral or political reasons, such as individual human sacrifice. . . . Countless elements also subsist in the unconscious (*lebt auch unbewusst weiter*) as an acquisition bequeathed to mankind perhaps by some forgotten people. An unconscious accumulation of vestiges of culture (*unbewusstes Aufsummieren von Kulturresultaten*) in peoples and individuals should always be taken into account. This growth and decay (*Wachsen und Vergehen*) follows higher, inscrutable laws of life (*höhere, unergründliche Lebensgesetze*).³⁰⁸

On the same page, Burckhardt uses the word *Weiterleben*, which means "subsistence" and, already here, "survival." The way was open for understanding what *Nachleben* means. And with this "survival," the way was also open for understanding time as that impure game, full of tensions, that debate between latent powers and violently acting ones we might call, with Warburg, the "life" (*Leben*) of images.

THE IMAGE AS PATHOS

Lines of Fracture and Formulas of Intensity

2

SEISMOGRAPHY OF MOVING TIMES

In the summer semester of 1927—three years after his return from Kreuzlingen, the psychiatric clinic where he had been under Binswanger's care—Warburg decided to offer his students at the University of Hamburg a seminar devoted entirely to Burckhardt and to historical writing. At the final session, after Alfred Neumeyer had dealt with the theoretical aspects of the *Reflections on World History* (*Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*), Warburg said he would present a particular perspective on the subject that, it seems to me, is extremely significant for understanding his own work as a historian. He proposed evaluating the work of Nietzsche along with that of Burckhardt, taking the point of view that, together, their writings constituted a polarity as tense as it was inseparable.¹

Right from his first words, Warburg went straight to the essential point, rejecting the notion that the historian possesses a mastery of the temporal material—i.e., memory—he or she presents interprets. Burckhardt and Nietzsche did not interest Warburg for the historical doctrines that they might have constructed or advocated. They were truly historians, in his eyes, not for being masters of a time they had explained, but rather as *subjects of an implicated [impliqué] time*. They were, Warburg says, the “receivers,” the “capturers” (*Auffänger*) of historical life, that *geschichtliches Leben* expressed here in terms

at once psychological and technical, morphological and dynamic: *mnemische Wellen*, i.e., mnemonic agitations, or, better, "mnemonic waves."²

The symptomatology of time as Burckhardt conceived it, and the temporal play of latencies and crises—all that is something Warburg will henceforth express with a geological metaphor, one which is really more troubling. For the agitations or waves of memory traverse and act on an element—culture and its history—which is not completely fluid, and that is why there arise tensions, resistances, symptoms, crises, cracks, and catastrophes. The "fundamental chord that keeps sounding through the fields of human knowledge,"³ as Burckhardt had once written—this "accord" of surviving things, here takes the form of a "wave," which should be understood as a "shock wave" and as a process of fracturing. This is why the exemplary nature of Burckhardt and Nietzsche's historical work takes the shape here of an apparatus for registering the invisible movements of the earth, the *seismograph*:

We ought to recognize in Burckhardt and Nietzsche the receivers of mnemonic waves (*als Auffänger der mnemischen Wellen*) and understand how a consciousness of the world (*Weltbewusstsein*) affected each of them in a different way. We ought to try to make each one illuminate the other, and use this reflection to help us understand Burckhardt as one who endures the trials (*als Erleider*) of his own profession [of historian]. Both of them are very sensitive seismographs (*sehr empfindliche Seismographen*) whose bases shake when they receive and transmit waves [i.e., shock waves and memory waves].⁴

* * *

Let us dwell for a moment on this technological comparison. In the first place, the seismograph is an apparatus capable of registering subterranean movements—invisible movements, and even ones that cannot be felt in any way—whose intrinsic evolution can give rise to those devastating catastrophes we call earthquakes (fig. 9). It was at the end of the nineteenth century that seismology made its most decisive advances, thanks to improvements in graphical recording techniques.⁵ Now, it is actually the entire phenomenal and "infra-phenomenal" field—visible and invisible, what can be sensed and what cannot be sensed, physical and psychological—that the sciences engaged in registering phenomena ultimately sought to encompass with their techniques for recording revealing traces. We could probably not find a better synthesis of the stakes and results of what we might call this "*épistémè* of registration" than that offered by Étienne-Jules Marey in his *La méthode graphique* [Graphical method], published in 1878.⁶ Marey's name is linked, as is well known, to the development of the field of chronophotography.⁷ As early as 1967, William Heckscher drew attention to the analogy between this photographic approach to time and to movement and Warburg's conception of the "life in motion" (*bewegtes Leben*) of images.⁸ More recently, Philippe-Alain Michaud extended this analogy to

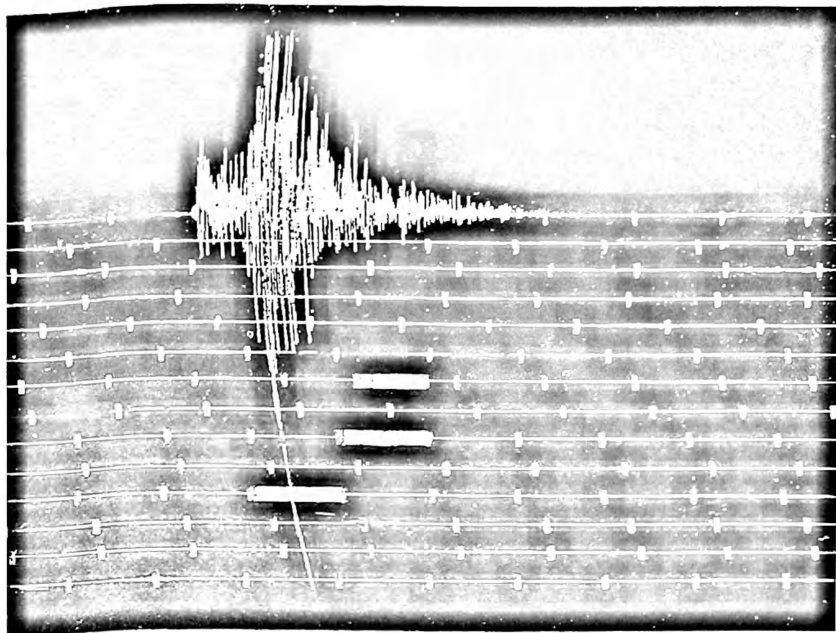


FIG. 9 Seismograph of a local earthquake (in Chile), obtained using a Weichert-inverted, mechanically damped pendulum. Reprinted from F. de Montessus de Ballore, *La sismologie moderne: Les tremblements de terre* (Paris: A. Colin, 1911), fig. 19 (detail).

the point where it yields paradoxical figural deconstructions: “The figure is no longer conceived as a modification or a state, but as the manifestation of energy becoming actualized in a body. . . . The body of the man with the silver button [in Marey’s experiment] disappears from the photographic plate just as [the body] of the nymph [in Warburg’s account] disappears from the study sheet to make place for another figure, that of energy in motion”⁹ (figs. 10 and 11).

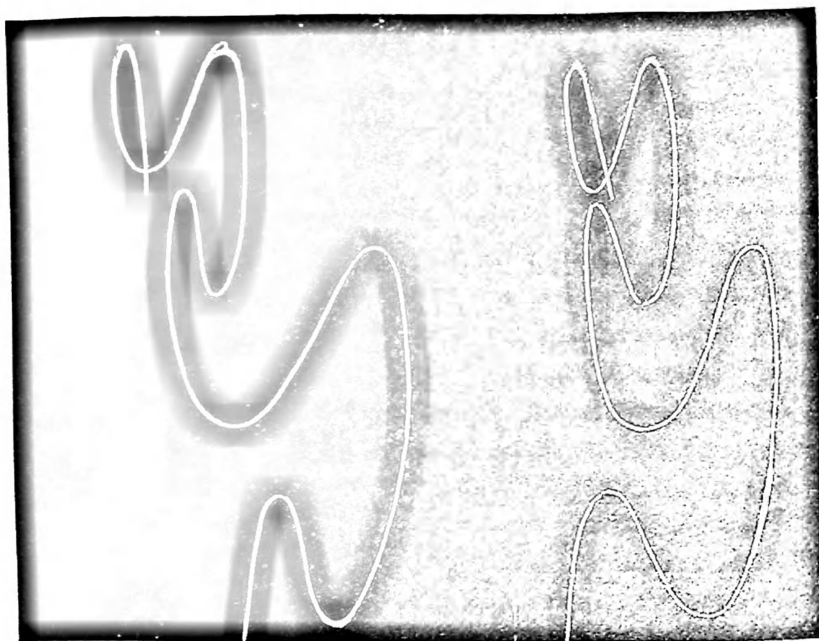
This *formulation of movement dissociated from any representation of a body* is not only an aesthetic *consequence* of the chronophotographic method. It is, literally, a *return* to the epistemic conditions of what Marey had earlier—going back to the period before his recourse to photography—elaborated as the “graphical method” in general. From the methodological point of view, chronophotography is less an extension of photography in the direction of movement (in which, incidentally, one generally sees a prehistory of cinematography) than a particular case, optically mediated, of that *chronography*—that writing or “inscription of time—for which Marey had been seeking the proper tools starting with his very earliest works.¹⁰ In 1866, in the context of experiments on animal physiology, Marey made an effort to define the “real form,” as he put it, of a muscle jerk. It was necessary, he wrote, to “determine [it] graphically” by means of recording devices providing the equivalent of a *seismograph of the human body*—a tool capable of furnishing the inscription, the *graph*, of the subtlest “times” and movements of the living organism.¹¹

The “graphical method” was first defined by Marey as the best “mode of representing phenomena.”¹² One quickly sees that this “mode of inscription,”

FIG. 10 Étienne-Jules Marey, splashes of water made visible by bright drops in liquid suspension, and a water current meeting a surface, 1892–93. Photochronograph on plate. Paris, Collège de France.



FIG. 11 Étienne-Jules Marey, stereoscopic trajectory of a bright point placed at the level of the lumbar vertebrae of a man walking away from the camera, 1894. Photochronograph on plate. Reprinted from Marey, *Le mouvement* (Paris: Masson, 1894).



as he says, gives rise to a paradox whereby the very notion of what is representable ultimately splits into two complementary facets. On the one hand, the “chronogram” is a *formula*; transposed and abstract, it emerges from the domain of the *graphic* in the most ordinary sense of the term, since it refers to the pure relationship between two or more variables by means of a line joining “characteristic points.” Inasmuch as it is a formula, the chronogram is thus meta-representational, indirect, and purely symbolic.

On the other hand, Marey demands considerably more from his graphical method. He wants it to be, he says, a "direct mode of expression" of the phenomena themselves.¹³ Accordingly, the "characteristic points," which by nature are separate, discrete, and discontinuous, must become fully wedded to the temporal *continuum* of motion. The status of a simple formula is modified as soon as one can manage to achieve "the inscription of the state of the body at each instant of its change of state"; in other words, as soon as a *continuous graphical representation* can be produced. For that to happen, one needs only to develop the technology to create an "apparatus capable of making continuous recordings."¹⁴ Once this step has been taken, one has essentially invented *chronography* as such, that is, "the transmission of the movement to the stylus, which inscribes its duration" on the drum of the recording apparatus. (In the nineteenth century the drum was simply blackened with smoke.)¹⁵ The word "transmission" is crucial: it turns the *formula*, a meta-representational entity, into an infra-representational *index*, a physical prolongation and a direct transfer of movement in real time.

Here, then, is the essence of the problem: the formula, which in itself is abstract, must *also* have a direct hold on the phenomenon—a phenomenon that, strictly speaking, it does not represent but rather accompanies, that it "transmits" tactilely, "inscribes," and "expresses" all at the same time. The same polarity, it may be pointed out already, will be found in Warburg's notions of the *Pathosformel* and the *Dynamogramm*. It presupposes an energetic and dynamic conception of the trace [tracé], which is viewed as a reflexive prolongation of the organic movements—mediated, however, by a stylus [style], a word that must be understood in its technical sense as well as in the aesthetic sense. It also presupposes a considerable extension of the *field of graphic registration*. The seismograph that Warburg talks about is only a particular case of those "apparatuses that inscribe movement" for which Marey had meticulously elaborated a whole system, encompassing the following devices: pantographs, harmiographs, accelerographs, odographs, myographs, pneumographs, cardiographs, rheographs, hemodromographs, limnographs, kymographs, thermographs, sphygmographs, and other polygraphs. All of these were described by Marey and all were designed to reveal *the mark [trait] of temporality* of the least easily observed phenomena, ranging from the propagation of liquid waves to shaking, from swallowing to phonematic articulation.¹⁶

Although Warburg's comparison employed the example of a type of technique widespread in the nineteenth century, it turned out to be very specific. The great historian—a Burckhardt or a Nietzsche—was not comparable, according to him, to just any well-intentioned "polygraph" or "chronograph." Warburg speaks of a *seismograph*, because for him time is no longer what it was for Marey; it is not a neutral magnitude, and not the necessary and continuous variable of all phenomena, but rather something both much more mysterious and difficult to grasp in itself, and more formidable. When Warburg uses the comparison of the dynamograph, it is in order to indicate the complex character

of the movements that need to be analyzed in the history of images. They are in no way reducible to a single aspect; for they elicit the action of *forces*, and thus of *dynamic forms*. That is why in art history one must continually reflect on biological and psychological models—beginning with those concerned with “life” (*Leben*) and with “survival” (*Nachleben*). And when Warburg speaks of the *seismograph*, as in his 1927 seminar, it is to point out the truly menacing character of that “historical life.”

What menace are we talking about? Time places us at the edge of crevasses that, most often, we do not see. The “historian-seismograph” is not the simple recorder of *visible movements that occur here and there; he or she is, above, all, the recorder and transmitter of invisible movements* that emerge and take form beneath the ground we walk on, creating hollows and waiting for the moment—unexpected on our part—to manifest themselves. It is not for nothing that Burckhardt spoke of a “pathology” and of a “symptomatology” of time: the historian of culture must always be listening for them, as Schmidt’s seismograph is listening for movements in the earth’s crust and as Charcot’s dynamograph is listening to the hysterical patient’s body, which is plunged into a state of somnambulistic “survival,” awaiting, in the *aura hysterica* phase of the crisis, its own kind of earthquake¹⁷ (fig. 12).

Actually, the menace is twofold. On the one hand, the historian-seismograph registers in a tactile fashion the symptoms of the age, his or her *style* reflecting its vibrations or shock waves; then he transmits these optically—on his recording drum, as it were—for others to look at. In this respect, he has to display a knowledge of symptoms, a knowledge acquired, as it were, “by recoil,” which distinguishes historical knowledge of this kind from any positivistic certainty. On the other hand, Warburg insists on pointing out that time’s seismic action affects the recording device himself: when the waves of time arise [surviennent]—or are recalled to mind [souviennent]—the “very sensitive seismograph” trembles on its base. It thus transmits the seism or upheaval to the exterior as *knowledge of the symptom*, as the “pathology of time,” which is now made legible to others. But he likewise transmits it to his own interior as *experience of the symptom*, as “empathy of time,” in which he risks becoming lost [se perdre, which can also mean “to perish”—Trans.]. This, then, is the dialectic of the image that Warburg develops in order to do justice to the “professional hazards” the historian must confront.

THE VECTOR OF TIME: THE HISTORIAN SKIRTS THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

It is on this basis that Warburg establishes a new polarity, distinguishing between the respective *styles* of Burckhardt and Nietzsche. On the one hand, the seismograph who is Burckhardt vibrates: he receives the waves of the past (*die Wellen aus der Region der Vergangenheit*) and experiences all their threats. But, in vibrating, he displaces and opens up all of historical knowledge. He allows new regions of history to appear, “morsels of elementary life” (*Stücke elementaren*

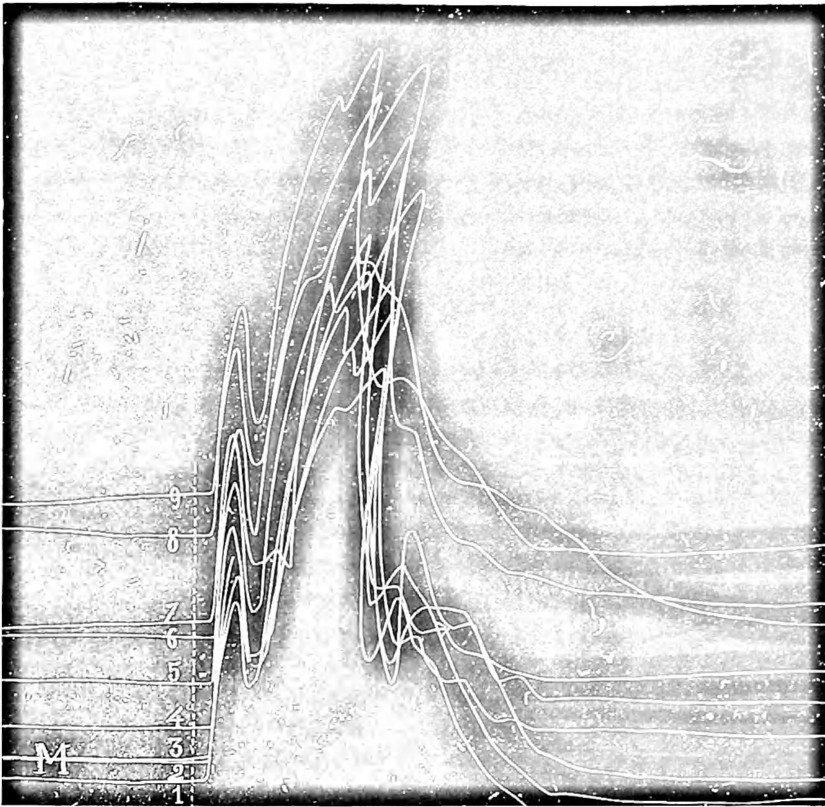


FIG. 12 Myogram of a hysterical woman: muscle spasm while sleepwalking. Reprinted from Paul Richer, *Études cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie* (Paris: Delahaye et Lecrosnier, 1885), 642.

Lebens) that he scrupulously transcribes and that ultimately will transform our whole vision of history in general and of the Renaissance in particular. Yet, in vibrating, he refuses to break; he protects himself as best he can from the telluric experience of time, withholding empathy and seeking to preserve his “consciousness fully intact” (*volles Bewusstsein*). He therefore wards off the spirits of survival and holds menace at a distance, making himself a champion of the Enlightenment (*Aufklärer*). In the end, he aspires to be only an intelligent necromancer (*Nekromant*) of the past. He preserves his stability by mortifying his capacity for experience and by remaining, for his entire life, the “modest teacher” (*einfacher Lehrer*) of a university in Basel.¹⁸

When the seismograph who is Nietzsche vibrates, everything begins to vacillate, to tremble greatly. Nietzsche receives the waves of time with full force; he submerges himself in them and winds up drowning. He, too, displaces and opens up all of historical knowledge, but in doing so he opens himself up, and crucifies himself. Unprotected against experience, he breaks, having

neglected to preserve his "consciousness intact," having called up all the spirits and all the menaces, and having renounced Enlightenment thought and the transmission of knowledge. The entire middle portion of Warburg's seminar was devoted to the minute description of the events in Turin surrounding the philosopher's collapse into insanity. Warburg concluded that Nietzsche and Burckhardt represent opposing types of prophets, the former being "the type of the Nabi (*Typus eines Nabi*), the ancient prophet who runs through the streets, tears his clothes, and screams in pain."¹⁹ The seismograph barely had time to record time's decree before he fell to pieces.

All that fascinated Warburg, who knew from his own experience what it means to collapse. But he was even more fascinated that this stylistic opposition between two "types of seers" (*Sebertypus*) could take the form of a knot so tightly tied that it constituted a single entity in which one could see the whole difficulty of the historian's work—the "psychotechnique" (*Psychotechnik*), as he termed it, that it requires. Nietzsche, he remarks, was always *attached* to Burckhardt: their link remained constant, even as it became distant, and necessary, even as it became impossible.²⁰ The philosopher, in fact, never wavered in the respect he showed for this overly modest historian, whom he considered to be a major figure and one of his only "masters." He shared with the latter several crucial views about the Greeks—and the destiny of Antiquity in general—about the notion of culture, about the way to practice history, and about the need for a thinker to preserve his solitude by staying far away from the academic world (which Burckhardt compared to a pack of dogs who constantly get together in order to sniff each other). He placed himself with Burckhardt on the side of those who "refuse to commit themselves out of despair."²¹ And that, too, is something Warburg could have understood from the inside.

Warburg was twenty-six years old when he sent Burckhardt his thesis on Botticelli. At the same age, Nietzsche had taken Burckhardt's seminar, and he was enthusiastic enough about it to write that "every week I attend his course for an hour on the study of history [the future *Reflections on World History*], and I believe I am the only one of the sixty listeners who understands the strangely sinuous and broken course of his deep thoughts when the questions become thorny. It is the first time that I am enjoying a lecture, but it should be said that it is of a kind that would be *mine* if I were older."²² Later, Nietzsche sent all his books to Burckhardt. The latter received them with a curious mixture of holding them at a distance and excessive modesty—claiming an incapacity to "reflect on causes" and marveling at the philosopher's "freedom of spirit." He states that he has never "penetrated into the temple of thought, like you," and, in sum, considers all this thought to be "well above [his] poor head," and so on.²³

Although he did not have access to the unpublished correspondence between the two men, Warburg clearly grasped that this distancing was itself a response, a shrinking back on the part of the prudent historian from the collapse (*Zusammenbruch*) that threatened his young friend. That is the impression one

has today in studying this 1927 seminar. Nietzsche understood, since the time of Turin, that the seismograph of Basel had already registered all the movements of his own underground psyche. How else can one explain that Burckhardt was the person whom Nietzsche thought of calling upon to help him in his upheaval?

[Turin, 4 January 1889]

To my esteemed Jacob Burckhardt. That was the little joke on account of which I forgive myself the tedium of having created a world. Now you are—thou art—our great, our greatest teacher; for I, together with Ariadne, have only to be the golden balance of all things; we have in every respect those who are superior to us.

Dionysus

[Turin, 6 January 1889]

Dear Professor,

In the end, I would much rather be a professor at Basel than God; but I haven't dared to push my private egotism so far on its account as to dispense with creating the world. You see, one must make sacrifices, however and wherever on one lives. . . . Since I am condemned to entertain the coming eternity by means of bad jokes, I have here a whole bunch of papers, which, to tell the truth, leaves nothing to be desired. . . . Listen to my first two bad jokes: don't take the Prado case too seriously. I am Prado, I am also the father of Prado, [and] I dare say that I am also Lesseps. . . . I am also Chambige—another honest criminal. Second joke: I greet the Immortals. . . . What is disagreeable and embarrassing for my modesty is that basically I am every name in history. This fall, dressed as lightly as possible, I twice attended my burial, first as Count Robilant (no, he is my son, to the degree that I am Carlo Alberto, my lower nature), but I myself was Antonelli. Dear Professor, you ought to see this edifice. . . . All criticism is up to you, [and] I am grateful to you for it without being able to promise you that I will profit from it. We artists are unteachable. . . . With all my affection,
Yours, Nietzsche²⁴

Warburg was not able to cite these letters, which he believed were lost. But he recounts, almost hour by hour—which is quite odd, considering that the context is a seminar on the methods of art history—the events which followed Burckhardt's receiving these delirious appeals. The old man goes quickly to Overbeck's house to alert him to the situation, and the latter leaves for Turin, where he finds Nietzsche prostrate and in a state of "complete collapse" (*vollständiger Zusammenbruch*).²⁵ There is, however, an important detail that Warburg omits to mention: Nietzsche, upon his return from Turin, was cared for by the great psychiatrist Otto Ludwig Binswanger,²⁶ the uncle of the psychiatrist who, between 1921 and 1924, devoted his own therapeutic efforts to curing the brilliant art historian, who was in "a state of complete collapse."

It is likely that while he was at Kreuzlingen, Warburg had heard of the main clinical traits of his illustrious predecessor: the "luminous phantoms" that filled his room, the ancient gods suddenly resuscitated, and that power of *empathy* he had developed to the point of *animism*, indeed of *demonism*. As Charles Andler writes, "Between him and objects there was no longer any barrier. He was given total power over matter and over spirits. He knew how to transform himself into them through magic."²⁷ How can one not link these traits, however isolated and incomplete they might be, to everything Warburg himself had experienced of madness—those *demonic survivals*, that *animism of images*, those *motoric empathies* in which he incorporated, so to speak, the superstitions and the ancient *Pathosformeln* of which he had so carefully studied the history and the survivals in Western culture.²⁸

How can one not be struck, as well, by this *acting out of the survivals* set in motion by Nietzsche's delirium? In his letter to Burckhardt of 6 January 1889, we discover that Nietzsche ended up by identifying himself simultaneously with God, the immortal creator of the universe, and with Chambige, an obscure criminal recently sentenced to death; with Lesseps and with Carlo Alberto; not to mention Rado, another murderer, Antonelli, and Count Robilant, and so on. But it is not the number of names that counts; what matters is that Nietzsche, who had signed the previous letter "Dionysus," claimed to be "every name in history." In decomposing all natural genealogy, he sought to assume, *to incorporate all of genealogy*, even if that meant becoming the ghost of himself. Much later, Antonin Artaud would write similar things in "Ci-gît" [Here Lies], a text written in reaction to a trip to the Indian villages of Mexico.²⁹ What is all this, then, if not a psychotic radicalization of that *Nachleben* Warburg had so patiently elaborated in the context of the history of images—or, to put it in other terms, a refusal of latency, a placing together of all the temporalities on the same plane? What is all this, if not an extreme case that calls out to be submitted to the hypothesis of the historian as seismograph?

Even before examining the impact of Nietzsche's work on Warburg's models of temporality, we must understand the *critical stakes*, and even the structural stakes, of the story of the crisis that concluded this seminar on Burckhardt and the historical *method*. Just as the delirious Nietzsche's *genealogical incorporation* is inseparable from his critique of history and from his patient elaboration of time through concepts such as genealogy and the eternal return, so, too, what we might call Warburg's *phantomal incorporation*—or "demonic" or "animistic" incorporation—is inseparable from his own critique of art history and from his patient elaboration of time through concepts such as survival and the Renaissance. Warburg recounts in minute detail Nietzsche's period in Turin because it illustrates, in his eyes, a possible consequence of the historian's work—a consequence whose shock waves he himself had experienced, starting with the outbreak of the First World War. If the seismograph is excessively sensitive, it begins to record at top speed, waves upon waves, all at once, distant waves on top of recent waves, finally chaotically intertwining with its exasperated style,

the superimposed survivals of each phantom, of "each name in history." Then it breaks.

Let us call this by the name that Warburg himself coined: a *psychotechnical* model of the historian's work, here represented by the double figure of Burckhardt and Nietzsche as seismographs. The former receives the shock waves and scrupulously and patiently inscribes them; if he resists them, "withstanding the shock," as one says, it is because he maintains a kind of prudence—that famous Greek *sophrosyne* [sense of measure] that Warburg speaks so often about—a *distance* with respect to the shocks he is recording. Another reason he is able to do this is that he constructs his thought brick by brick, in other words, because there is something *architectural* about his historical labors: his thought is like a tower under construction. It simultaneously makes visible time's work and protects against its ravaging effects, which Warburg, "psycho-historian" that he is, calls "demonic."

"One of them feels the demonic breath of the demon of destruction (*der den dämonischen Hauch des Vernichtungsdämons fühlt*) and withdraws into a tower; the other one wants to make common cause with it."³⁰ One (Burckhardt) chose distance, the other (Nietzsche) chose to be affected. One chose to transform knowledge into teaching—"without demanding anything," writes Warburg: a position at once modest and prudent. The other chose to transform knowledge by demanding much of it, and giving to the task everything he had: an ambitious and desperate position. One of them offers *formulas* for historical study; the other one transmits the *pathos* of time. As for Warburg, he sees in this polarity the very thing that Nietzsche had already recognized in *The Birth of Tragedy*: the architect will thus be termed "Apollonian," and the other—whose *pathos* suggests to Warburg a comparison with the *sculptor* Agostino di Duccio—will, of course, be defined as "Dionysian." This assignment of terms is not only typological; it also makes it possible to see that the historian of Western culture himself incarnates, in the polarity of his own method, that "survival of the ancient gods" whose destinies he made it his task to interpret.

* * *

There is no doubt that this *methodological* polarity, which is presented as such in the context of the 1927 seminar, also takes on, in Warburg's case, an *autobiographical* dimension. In this perspective, the pairing Burckhardt-Nietzsche represents the "dynamographic" formula of a self-portrait. In the first place, Warburg explicitly presents himself as a Burckhardtian seismograph: a historian of culture, a sensor [*capteur*] of the "pathologies of the time"—a mixture of latencies and crisis—a researcher governed by "scientific humility" (*wissenschaftliche Selbstverleugnung*), a thinker attentive to the unity of "fundamental problems," and a scholar attentive to the specificity of singular objects. He is also a patient collector of notes, of books, of images, of materials, of facts, and of forms; and a philologist open to the impurities of time, to the dark

continents, to symptoms he perceives as the "vital residues" of history. The tower he constructed, that is to say, the vertiginous Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, became the virtual receptacle of all the symptoms and of all the upheavals of time, and it was there that he hoped to patiently restore as much knowledge of them as possible.

But Warburg also experienced himself—in a manifestly convulsive fashion in the face of the convulsions into which all of Europe was plunged in 1914—as a seismograph that was vacillating and threatening to burst into pieces. The exegete of the "survivals of antiquity" was, clearly, one of those great thinkers about history—I am thinking here of Nietzsche, but also of Walter Benjamin, of Carl Einstein, and of Marc Bloch—who were directly touched, *affected by history*, caught up with and devoured by it. It is a vertigo symmetric with the one of the tower: a vertigo of collapse in which each fact, each form, each dark continent becomes a test for knowledge and for the scholar himself. A vertigo in which *knowledge about the symptom* becomes a *symptom of knowledge*, that is to say, a direct threat to the inventor of this knowledge.

It seems significant, from this point of view, that the "self-portrait of the historian as seismograph" was introduced, or in any case developed, by Warburg on the basis of his own psychotic experience. In his notes for the Kreuzlingen lecture of 1923, one sees him claiming the image of the seismograph. He takes it up again in 1927, in another autobiographical context where it is a question not only of his expedition to the Hopi Indians but also of the "voyage of his life" in general:

What I saw and experienced, then, reflects only the outward appearance of things, and I have a right to speak of it only if I begin by saying that this insoluble problem has weighed so heavily on my soul that during the time when I was healthy, I would not have dared to make any scientific statements about it. But now, in March 1923, in Kreuzlingen, in a closed institution, where I have the sensation of being a seismograph assembled from the wooden pieces of a plant that has been transplanted from the East into the fertile northern German plains and onto which an Italian branch was grafted, I let the signs that I received come out of me, because in this epoch of chaotic decline even the weakest has a duty to strengthen the will to cosmic order. . . . When I look back on my life's journey, it seems that my function has been to serve as a seismograph of the soul, to be placed along the dividing lines between different cultural atmospheres. . . . In order to experience life there in its polar tension between the instinctive pagan nature cult and organized intelligence.³¹

It is likewise significant that Warburg sometimes produced such "seismographs of time," which he *sketched out* for his own use. In the course of his excursion in Mesa Verde (Colorado), between 5 and 8 October 1895, he recorded in his journal the difficulties of walking through a terrain that was so hostile and tortured, as well as the anguish that arose in him: "Pneumonia (my phobia). . . . We ride, ride, Cliff Dwelling Canyon. . . . Silence. We ride. Evening

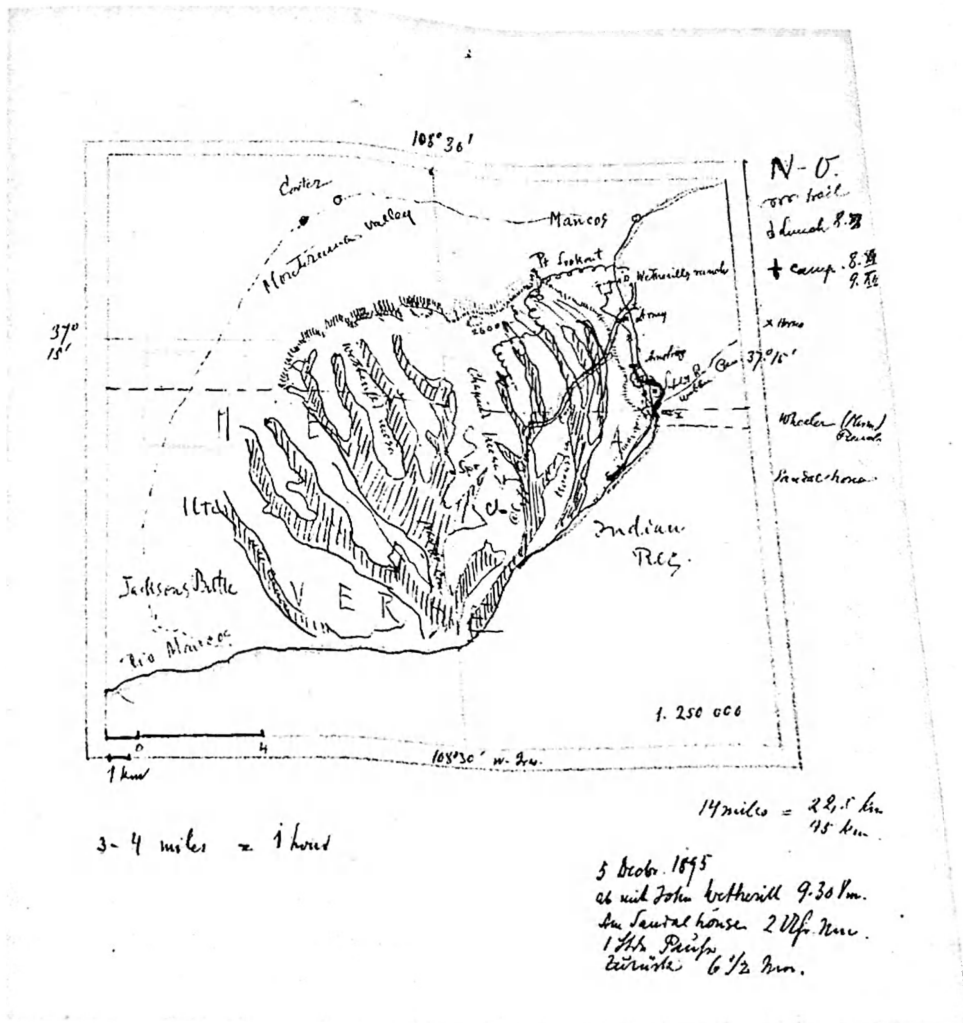


FIG. 13 Aby Warburg, *Mesa Verde*, 5 December 1895. Pencil-and-ink drawing. Extracted from a series of papers entitled "America" (1894-97). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

sky. Looking right and left. . . . Semi dark. . . . We wait. 'That's something for your European experience.' Ha Ha."³²

This text is accompanied by a drawing that may be read in terms of both a spatial overdetermination and a temporal overdetermination (fig. 13). It is a cartographic report, based on a book by Gustav Nordenskiöld on Mesa Verde, of territory Warburg traversed, with a relief hollowed out by arboresecent canyons. It almost resembles a labyrinth, or a network of bronchial tubes—something like a forced march through an exterior space in a state of anxiety or a phobic conception of interior space. Above all, however, it records the superposition, the overlaying of two rhythms or two temporal reigns: on the

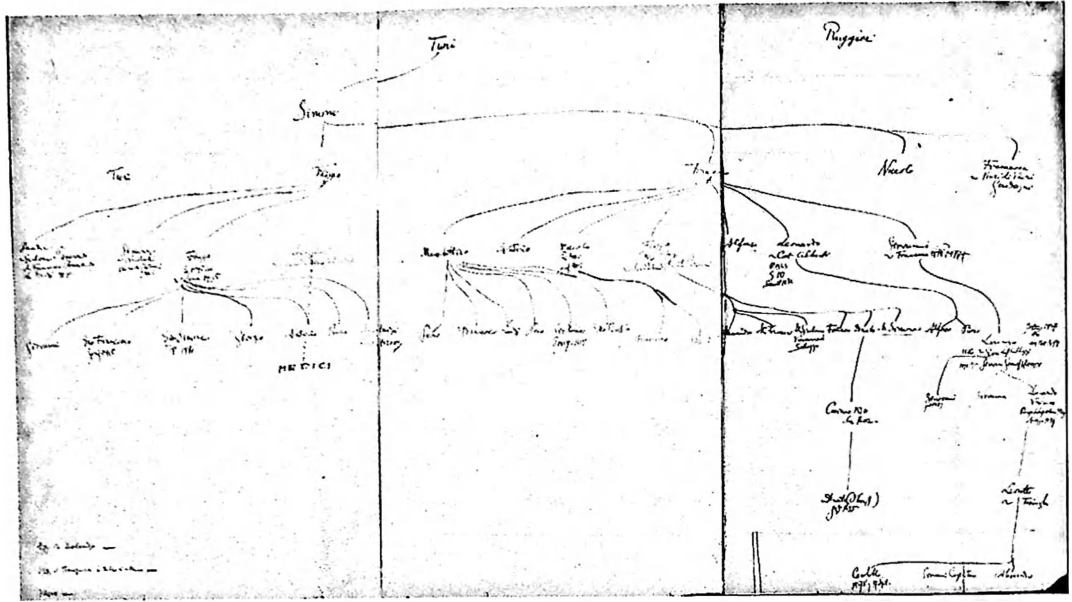


FIG. 14 Aby Warburg, *Family Tree of the Tornabuoni*. Ink drawing. Included on plate A of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927-29. London, The Warburg Institute. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

one hand, the map represents, in itself, the result of a huge expanse of time, i.e., that of geological activity. Each line, each relief, each vein corresponds to the infinitely slow course of a river and its erosions, which in turn have been joined by seismic or volcanic episodes of uncertain number occurring at unknown times. On the other hand, Warburg's drawing records the microscopic times of his own progress, however long it might have appeared to him: the stops, the bivouacs, and even the meals. It is an *anachronistic* drawing for the simple reason that it combines on the same drawing surface the personal, almost anecdotal time of a small-scale excursion and the immense impersonal time of erosion on a grand scale.

Years later, the same sort of thing appeared on the first plate of the atlas known under the title *Mnemosyne*, where Warburg chose to superpose an ancient representation of the sky (with its zoomorphic and anthropomorphic constellations), a schema of the main places where the "migration of [cosmological] symbols" could be found (from the Middle East as far as northern Europe), and, finally, the genealogical tree, recorded in his own hand, of the Tornabuoni family (fig. 14). Just by itself, the genealogical tree joins together two different temporal rhythms: the long period during which the name is handed down, and the brief period of the individuals who bear it. Here, of course, the astronomical and astrological context only serves to accentuate this anachronism. For the latter expresses the relationship between these heterogeneous scales, a relationship that forms the very basis of the practice of astrology and one that so fascinated Warburg, namely, that between an incalculably extended time, that of the celestial revolutions—which must at all costs be conjured up so that they

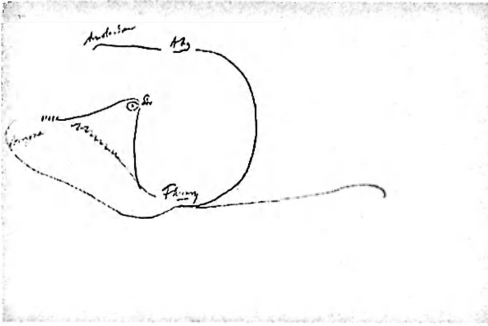


FIG. 15 Aby Warburg, *Schema of a Personal Geography*, 1928. Pencil drawing. London, The Warburg Institute. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

can serve as an interpretive tool—and a punctual time, i.e., the anxious present time of individual destinies.

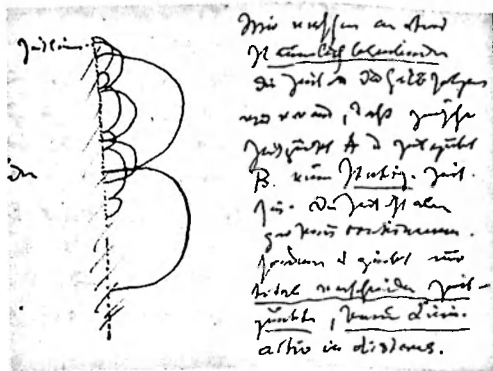
Even when Warburg makes an informal sketch of his peregrinations, of his “cultural geography”—Hamburg, Strasbourg, where he was a student, Arizona, and, of course, Florence—it is still something like a *dynamogram* that emerges from his pen, from his “style”: a spiraling knot that appears to be shooting upwards, with its hatching, erasures, lines turning back on themselves, sudden bifurcations, etc. All the stages, all the periods of a life suddenly press together to form a nervous arabesque, the tracing out of a destiny, which is executed, like all acts of reminiscence, in just seconds³³ (fig. 15).

* * *

These, then, are the *dynamograms* or the *seismograms* of the historian, of the thinker: tracings which are in part *formulas* and in part the products of *pathos*, being both abstract schemes and the results of tactile responses. This dual capacity—idealized abstraction and bodily, i.e., rhythmic reaction—is necessary if they are to be able to take into account the invisible, or only episodically visible, movements provoked by the symptom in the periods between latent stages and crises, between *survivals* and *sudden occurrences*. Nietzsche himself, in his unpublished fragments, sometimes makes such sketches. Here we will look at one example, one which is not without analogies to Warburg’s graphic efforts. It is a single sheet of paper, dating from the spring of 1873, where, already at this early date, he is probably looking for a way to express the notion of the eternal return (fig. 16).

The problem discussed in this fragment—in itself a very Warburgian problem—is that of “motion in *time*.” What, Nietzsche asks, is the status of *action*? “Every effect must cover a distance,” which assumes a *motion*. And “for this it needs a period of time.”³⁴ Not an *a priori* time, not just some arbitrary temporal frame of the action, but rather the dynamic aspect of its nature as “what is effective in time” On the one hand, then, time is to be thought of as *force*; and force, reciprocally, is to be conceived in terms of time, of nonpermanence:

FIG. 16 Friedrich Nietzsche,
Dynamic Schema of Time, spring
 1873. Ink drawing. Posthumous
 fragment U I 5b. Weimar,
 Nietzsche-Archiv. Photo:
 Nietzsche-Archiv.



"Time demonstrates the *absolute nonpermanence* of a force."³⁵ Concerning the relationship between time and movement, Nietzsche here chooses not to determine the temporal dimension in accord with the obvious, i.e., the physical laws of motion, as Marey, for example, would have. To the contrary, he poses the question of movement on the basis of a *contradiction* between space and time: "Translation of all laws of motion into temporal proportions. . . . Motion struggles with the contradiction that it is constituted according to the laws of space and that once we assume time, these laws become impossible: that means that at one and the same time it both is and is not."³⁶

To translate movement into temporal relationships? To set forth temporal relationships as acting forces? It would have been sufficient simply to state these requirements to see that what all this implies is a notion of *difference in repetition* or, to put it in a less Deleuzian manner, *discontinuity in time*. And it would have been sufficient to introduce discontinuity—from the perspective of "action at a distance"—to bring to the fore an entire conception of time that is dominated, already at this date, by movements of phantoms and movements of symptoms. This involves, as a first step, the "seismographic" project, if I may put it that way, of bringing together in a single conception, *difference, distance, and rhythm*:

Rather, only absolutely mutable forces can have an effect, those that are never the same in any two moments.

All forces are merely a function of time.

(1) An effect by successive temporal moments is impossible: for two such points in time would merge with one another. Thus, every effect is *actio in distans*, that is, by means of a leap.

(2) We have absolutely no idea of how such an effect *in distans* is possible.

(3) Fast, slow, etc. in the nature of this effect. That means that the forces, as functions of time, express themselves in the relationships to closer or more distant points in time: namely, fast or slow. The force is based on the degree of acceleration.³⁷

It is precisely here that there arises the *graphic necessity*, either chronographic or dynamographic, of this requirement: Nietzsche makes a rapid sketch on the page of his temporal schema. His "temporal line" (*Zeitlinie*) is not, as is customary, a continuous line oriented from left (the past) to right (the future), but rather a *rain of points*, a *broken line*, a *falling line*. "Time is by no means a continuum," Nietzsche writes just to the side; "rather there are only *wholly different points in time, no line* (*Die Zeit ist aber gar kein Continuum, sondern es gibt nur total verschiedene Zeitpunkte, keine Linie*). *Actio in distans*."³⁸ This nonlinear is itself hatched by a series of small, nervous lines—marks expressing, perhaps, the idea of the "real" as a "point in space" (*Real: ein Raumpunkt*). And then the seismograph registers, beyond all that, the rebounding—not circular—times of return: small and great returns, broad periods and narrow periods, accelerations and decelerations. And the result? . . . Of course, it is a *confusion of times*, a graphic formula which here expresses the play of differences, of returns, and of anachronisms.

It is surely not by chance that this superposition of more or less broad curves assumes the figure of a succession of *waves* along the noncontinuous shore of time—a succession, in brief, of the "mnemic waves," the *mnemische Wellen* mentioned by Warburg in his 1927 seminar. It is surely not by chance, either, that the polarity established by Warburg in his metaphor of the seismograph—the "knowing" apparatus of the *formula* and the "feeling" apparatus of the *pathos*—is to be found in a fragment Nietzsche wrote in the same year that he traced his schema of time:

The scholarly person is a genuine paradox: all around he is faced with the most horrible problems, *he strolls past abysses* and he picks a flower in order to count its filaments. It is not apathy with regard to knowledge: for he has a burning desire to acquire knowledge and discover things, and he knows no greater pleasure than increasing the store of knowledge. But he behaves like the proudest idler upon whom fortune ever smiled, as if existence were not something hopeless and questionable, but rather a firm possession guaranteed to last forever.³⁹

The question which arises—Warburg's question—is this: *how does one know time?* How does one produce formulas knowing that one is going to find oneself walking along the edge of the abyss?

THE TRAGEDY OF CULTURE: WARBURG WITH NIETZSCHE

This is a strange situation, and at the very least an epistemologically uncomfortable one. Does one think of a historian of the Renaissance "walking along the edge of the abyss"? Is not what he walks along in the course of his studies something more like great beauty and radiant colors, serene harmonies and masterpieces in the full flower of their bloom? From what Warburg bequeathed them, scholars

have often wanted to keep only the "formulas"—when the latter were positive: classicism and movement within the drapery, realism and individualism in the portrait, etc. And, as much as possible, they have managed to bury the "abysses." (Getting rid of them entirely proved to be impossible.) Therefore, they have bent all their efforts to minimize the relationships between Warburg, Nietzsche, and Burckhardt, even though these were clearly set forth in the 1927 seminar.

Cassirer, for example, is willing to point out the "spell," as he puts it, that Burckhardt's conception of history cast on Nietzsche.⁴⁰ He does recognize that "Burckhardt's way . . . is distinguished from that of most historical writers of the nineteenth century."⁴¹ But ultimately he sees only "a remarkable phenomenon and an anomaly in the history of the mind" in the fact that it was Schopenhauer—and, beyond him, Nietzsche himself—who left his philosophical mark on the work of a great historian.⁴² Likewise, Hans Baron stressed only the differences between Burckhardt and Nietzsche: the historian of the Renaissance, he held, still cannot dispense with the former, whereas the latter represents only "abysses" and dangers to the discipline of history itself.⁴³

Since what is stake in this whole debate is basically the *humanist* status of the discipline of art history, it is the *Nietzschean* thread or lode that must be removed at all costs. Can one imagine a historian of the Renaissance carrying out his iconographic studies "with hammer blows"? When Gombrich invents a "Hegelian" Burckhardt—despite all the texts, cited above, of the *Reflections on World History*—it is primarily, it seems to me, in order to chase the specter of Nietzsche away from the realm of Warburgian iconography.⁴⁴ But is this really possible? After admitting the influence of *The Birth of Tragedy* on Warburg's attempt to go beyond the classic "evolutionist" models, Gombrich stresses the modifications that the 1895 article, devoted to the Florentine *intermezzi* drawn by Bernardo Buontalenti, makes with respect to Nietzsche's views. This bears, in fact, on the whole relationship between the "plastic" arts (Apollonian arts, according to Nietzsche) and the "living" arts (the potentially Dionysiac arts), which Warburg supposedly reformulated from top to bottom.⁴⁵ So much, then, for the "formulas."

But Nietzsche and Warburg continue to share several essential "abysses." Their commonality of thought is not to be found at the level of specific historical findings, but rather at that of the fundamental questions concerning art, history, and culture in general. What we need to do is obtain a balanced view of the relationship between Warburg and Nietzsche which does not mask the trenchant aspects of their common intuitions and their common attitudes, for these are the decisive factor, both dynamic and emotionally moving. The first of these intuitions could be stated as follows: art is at the knot, *at the swirling center of civilization* [*centre-remous*, which could also be rendered as "central vortex"—Trans.]. This implies, already, a radical displacement of knowledge about art and, therefore, a radical displacement of the scholar himself. Warburg readily acted in accord with Nietzsche's bet that a philology could exist capable of examining not only art from the point of view of science, but also "science in the perspective of the artist," and even "an art in that of life."⁴⁶ This amounts to asserting that

the historian is not in a position of pure and simple mastery with regard to the object of his study; rather, he is a major—and vital—part of that object.

The historian, or the philosopher, of art does not stand before his object of study as he or she would before just any arbitrary item that is objectifiable, knowable, or capable of being pushed back into the pure past of history. Standing before any work of art, we are involved, *implicated* in something that is not exactly a thing, but rather—and here Warburg sounds like Nietzsche—a *vital force* that we are unable to reduce to its objective elements. All that philological ability Warburg displays (when deciphering, for example, the will of Francesco Sassetti)⁴⁷ is not directed solely at retrieving a few biographical facts about a fifteenth-century Florentine; it is in the service of understanding the art of Ghirlandaio in the perspective of a real *anthropological implication* of the image, of the artist, and of the viewer. What he preserves here is none other than Nietzsche's fundamental lesson: art is not "disinterested," as Kant thought. There is nothing at all that it cures, or sublimates, or calms. Even if it were an "affirmative force of the false," art would still be a "[vital] feeling of power." Nietzsche rejects right from the start all the "aestheticism" of the classical aesthetic tradition, that "peculiar philosopher's irritation and rancor against sensuality," as he put it in *The Genealogy of Morals* [translation modified—Trans.].⁴⁸

Art as "vital force." This recalls Burckhardt and his perception of the "forces" at work in the "impurity of time." This impurity, which Nietzsche held to be characteristic of philosophy in general—"my philosophy, *inverted Platonism*: the farther one is from genuine being, the more pure, the more beautiful, the better, etc."⁴⁹—is thus introduced by Warburg, via Burckhardt, in the specific, historically documented domain of Renaissance civilization. This is evident in his account of the Florentine *Mischstil* of the Quattrocento: its "wholly dissimilar characters" (*Mischung heterogener Elemente*) make it, as we have seen, a "creature" both "enigmatic" (*ein rätselhafter Organismus*) and endowed with "vitality" (*Lebensenergie*).⁵⁰

The Nietzschean reversal can thus be found in Warburg's specialized works, used philologically for diagnostic purposes and reformulated in anthropological terms. Whereas Nietzsche called for a beauty free of all "good taste," an "intranquillity" of the aesthetic, and even held consciousness of pain to be the "original source" of art,⁵¹ Warburg, for his part, started from his own disgust with an "aestheticizing art history" and went on to show how much of Renaissance art itself was "vital" only because it integrated all those elements of impurity, of ugliness, of pain, and of death. One can understand the grace of Ghirlandaio's figures only against the background of the votive, genealogical, and funerary practices of the merchant Sassetti: suffering mixed with beauty, death agonies mixed with belief in resurrection, modern "realism" mixed with "Etrusco-pagan" inelegance. All of that constitutes the very movement of *Lebensenergie*, a flux and reflux from which the pictorial beauties of Santa Trinita emerge, surviving before our eyes like solidified foam.⁵²

* * *

"Perhaps reality is only *pain*, and *representation* is born of that?"⁵³ When Nietzsche raised this question, at the end of 1870 or the beginning of 1871, he of course had tragedy on his mind: *tragedy as the central matrix [centre-matrice] of art itself*. That is the second intuition: tragedy gives birth to us as creatures of culture. Karl Marx had said that man, in becoming a child again, is only a puerile being; he was thus astonished at the "eternal attraction" that the old Greek tragedies still have for us.⁵⁴ Nietzsche inverted the perspective: tragic childhood survives within us, and *this survival gives birth to us at every moment*, inventing our present and even our future. Why is that? Because tragedy *repeats* the birth of art, the act of giving birth to art through pain. The will, Nietzsche wrote in 1870, "not only suffers, but also gives birth: it gives birth to appearance at every moment, even the briefest. . . . The prodigious artistic capacity of the world has its analogue in prodigious original pain."⁵⁵ *The Birth of Tragedy*, as we know, is entirely constructed around the following assertion: tragic pleasure is nothing other than a pleasure bound to its original pain. And that is why it evolves in a world of tension, of polarity—that of Apollo and Dionysus—and of unappeasable contradiction.⁵⁶

Warburg fully understood, in reading Nietzsche's book, that it was as much concerned with *survival* as with *birth*. Even if he placed a doubting question mark in the margin of a passage dealing with the Italian *stile rappresentativo*,⁵⁷ he could not refrain, five pages later, from reflecting on what Nietzsche understood by "rebirth" (*Wiedergeburt*) of tragedy or by "survival" (a possible translation of the German verb *durcherleben*) of the "Greek essence" (*das hellenische Wesen*) in us [English translation modified—Trans.].⁵⁸

In the formulation of these models of time—we have not yet reached the notion of the eternal return—Warburg thus found a theoretical tool that proved to be essential to him in producing his own concept of *Nachleben*. This, we may recall here, involved expressing the problem of the "transmission of antiquity" in terms going well beyond the model of "imitation" (*Nachahmung*) proposed by Winckelmann. It is not by chance that at a later date, in 1889, when mentioning his "debt to the ancients," Nietzsche again paid homage to Burckhardt while at the same time violently criticizing "the concept 'Greek' which was developed by Winckelmann," a poor idea because it was "incompatible with that element out of which Dionysian art grows—the orgiastic."⁵⁹

On the one hand, then, there is the "foolishness" of the notion of a serene and complete [tout trouvé] classicism, of the classicism of the "beautiful soul." On the other hand, a vital Hellenism—violent, explosive, Dionysian, still to be rediscovered (a task to be carried out by philology). Here Nietzsche invokes, as Warburg will do later, a *psychology of culture* which alone is capable of evading the "German" grasp, as he puts it, that is to say, the hold of the idealist doctrines of Kant and Winckelmann:

To smell out "beautiful souls," "golden means," and other perfections in the Greeks, or to admire their calm in greatness, their ideal cast of mind, their noble



simplicity—the psychologist in me protected me against “such noble simplicity,” a *niaiserie allemande* [a bit of German nonsense; in French in the text—Trans.] anyway. I saw their strongest instinct, the will to power; I saw them tremble before the indomitable force of this drive—I saw how all their institutions grew out of preventive measures taken to protect each other against their inner explosives. . . . I was the first to take seriously, for the understanding of the older, the still rich and even overflowing Hellenic instinct, the wonderful phenomenon which bears the name of Dionysus: it is explicable only in terms of an *excess of force*.⁶⁰

FIG. 17 Aby Warburg, *Centaur Group from the Theseion Frieze*, 1887. Pencil drawing. London, The Warburg Institute. Photo: The Warburg Institute

This *tragic exuberance of life*—Nietzsche compared it, in the same pages, to the “pangs of a woman giving birth”⁶¹—is exactly what Warburg began to look for in the reptilian violence of the *Laocoön* and in the “animal force” of the ancient centaurs he studied, at the age of twenty-two, in a course given by his professor of classical archaeology, Kekulé von Stradonitz (fig. 17): “The animal strength (*tierische Kraft*) with which the Centaur grasps his victim (*sein Opfer umklammert*) and the savage desire (*wilde Begehrlichkeit*) which even approaching death (*nahender Tod*) cannot stifle are splendidly rendered. . . . And, yet, the best thing is lacking in this world of forms (*das beste fehlt dieser Formenwelt*): beauty” [translation modified—Trans.].⁶²

Warburg, in this very first analysis of an “emotive formula,” already shows he has risen to the level of Nietzsche’s requirements: to give up that ideal “harmony without internal distress” that Winckelmann invented for the repose of German aesthetics; and not to forget the “frightening background” of all

beauty—"there is no beautiful surface without a frightening depth," Nietzsche wrote at the period of *The Birth of Tragedy*.⁶³ And even to accept that, in the knot of "animal force," "wild desire," and "approaching death," beauty as such (or at least, as it is traditionally imagined: serene and attractive) might be absent.

It should not be surprising, then, to see the eruption in Warburg's work of the famous Nietzschean polarity of the Apollonian and Dionysian, a topic that will continue to occupy him throughout his life. Nor is it surprising to see him giving special emphasis to the Dionysian countertheme—a necessary move because of its previous suppression—charged as it is with obscure and very powerful formal energy. Warburg would, in any case, have spontaneously stressed in his approach to images all the aspects that Nietzsche recognized in the Dionysian: the "grace of the terrible" (were not the Graces themselves formidable divinities?), combat without lasting reconciliation (Laocoön grappling with the serpent), the "drunkenness of suffering" (desire that is not suppressed even by the approach of death), the sovereignty of metamorphoses (to the detriment of serene eternities), etc.⁶⁴

Nor is it surprising that a disagreement ultimately emerged from this conceptual borrowing. Whereas Nietzsche opposed the (Apollonian) "arts of the image" to the (Dionysian) "arts of the festival,"⁶⁵ Warburg replied, with the support of Burckhardt, that the arts of the image are anthropologically inseparable from the arts of the festival: the *intermezzi*, the triumphal entries, the devout and the pagan representations of the Renaissance—all these manifestations of human "action" (*Handlung*) were, in Warburg's view, part of the same milieu that gave meaning to the pictorial forms. Whereas Nietzsche opposed the "plastic arts" as the (Apollonian) "arts of dreaming" to the (Dionysian) "arts of drunkenness," Warburg asserted the anthropological unity of sculpture and dance through his reflections on anthropomorphism and his concept of the *Pathosformel*. "If only Nietzsche had been familiar with the facts of anthropology and folklore!" Warburg lamented in his journal in 1905.⁶⁶

How can one not be struck, moreover, by the almost unconscious continuity displayed in *The Birth of Tragedy* as its author passes from dances of Saint-Guy [Saint Vitus' dance—Trans.] and other "folk-diseases"—presented as survivals of the "Bacchic choruses of the Greeks"—to the famous analysis of Raphael's *Transfiguration*, that plastic expression of the "eternal contradiction" between "the Apollonian world and its substratum" of Dionysian terrors?⁶⁷ Nietzsche wanted, in the end, to oppose the Apollonian domain of vision and the Dionysian one of all the sensations combined: "The Apollonian drunkenness excites the eye above all, so that it gains the power of vision. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries par excellence. In the Dionysian state . . . the whole affective system is excited and enhanced: so that it discharges all its means of expression at once and drives forth simultaneously the power of representation, imitation, transfiguration, and every kind of mimicking and acting."⁶⁸

To this Warburg replies simply that images do not call solely upon vision. (It would take a whole theory of *Einfühlung* [empathy] to understand the



FIG. 18 Agostino di Duccio, *Scene from the Life of Saint Sigismund*, ca. 1456. Drawing of a marble relief. Milan, Castello Sforzesco. Reprinted from Charles Yriarte, *Un condottiere au Xve siècle: Rimini, études sur les Lettres et les arts à la cour des Malatesta d'après les papiers d'État des archives d'Italie* (Paris: Rothschild, 1882), 222.

simplicity of the reply.) They do, at first, call upon the act of looking, but also upon knowledge, memory, and desire, and upon their capacity, which is always available, of *intensification*. This already means that they involve the subject in its totality—sensorial, psychological, and social. Given the use to which Warburg wanted to put it, the polarity of the Apollonian and the Dionysian could not, therefore, serve to establish a classification of the arts or of their “epochs”; for it penetrates every art, every period, every object, and every level of analysis. On this point, his disagreement with Nietzsche ultimately served to extend, in a fundamental way, the reach of the Apollonian-Dionysian polarity itself.

We will encounter this polarity at each step along Warburg’s path. As early as 1893, he underscores Nicolas Pisano’s borrowing of a figure of Dionysus, which appears, in a scarcely veiled fashion, on the chair of the Baptistry in Pisa. And he is no less fascinated by the fact that an ancient maenad could have served as the model of an angel by Agostino di Ducci⁶⁹ (fig. 18). In 1906, Warburg characterized the entire Renaissance in terms of a conflict between “Dionysian stimulant” (*dionysisch*) and “Apollonian clarity” (*apollinisch*).⁷⁰ By 1914, the Nietzschean polarity will be completely integrated into the opposition, dear to Warburg, of *ethos* and *pathos*:

[It should be noted] that a conception of antiquity sprang up from the spirit of the Quattrocento, which stands precisely opposite to that of Winckelmann. . . . [One must] regard this classical disquiet as an essential characteristic of ancient art and culture. Due to research into the religion of the ancient Greco-Roman world, we are learning more and more to see antiquity as symbolized, as it were, in the two-faced herm of Apollo and Dionysus. Apollonian ethos together with Dionysian pathos grows like a double branch from one trunk, as it were, rooted in the mysterious depths of the Greek maternal earth. The Quattrocento knew how to give artistic worth to the two-fold content of the ancient pagan world.⁷¹

From these premises a third proposition arises: ancient tragedy is at the same time the *central matrix* [*centre-matrice*] and the *central vortex* [*centre-remous*] of Western culture. Warburg, it is clear, asked himself the same fundamental question as Burckhardt and Nietzsche: "My task: *to comprehend the inner coherence and the necessity of every true culture.*"⁷² Like Burckhardt and like Nietzsche he saw that the symbolic order can be understood only in relationship to those obscure "forces" that one or the other had called *Pathos, Affekt, Trieb, or Konflikt*. Like Burckhardt and Nietzsche—and like Freud, too—Warburg saw no way to understand civilization other than through its illnesses, its symptoms, and its dark continents.

* * *

It did not escape the attention of Ernst Cassirer that, from Hegel to Georg Simmel, passing through Burckhardt—though Nietzsche is omitted from the list—the philosophy of history has been intersected by, and permeated by, the countertheme of the "tragedy of culture" (*Tragödie der Kultur*).⁷³ It did not escape his attention, either, that a question such as this called out for the word *Nachleben*; for the tragedy of culture is the tragedy of memory. It is the tragedy of our memory, which lapses with respect to the tragic. How does one orient oneself within the powerful "tie to tradition" (*Traditions-Gebundenheit*)? And how does one summon up, at the same time, the "originality" (*Eigenart*) necessary "for the creative process in the fine arts" (*der schöpferische Prozess in der bildenden Kunst*) [trans. modified—Trans.]?⁷⁴ To this question, Cassirer responds with the words—and the authority—of Warburg: "In recent times it is particularly Aby Warburg who has laid the greatest stress on this process and who has sought to throw light on it from all its angles, psychological as well as historical."⁷⁵

Now, how does Warburg illuminate this process? By declaring—this is the fourth proposition, and the most decisive one in our list—that culture is always essentially tragic because *what survives in culture is above all the tragic*. Conflictual polarities of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and pathetic movements issuing from our own immemorial times—these are what, in the first instance, constitute the life and the internal tension of our Western culture. Nietzsche

writes elsewhere that "Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus."⁷⁶ These sufferings encompassed combat, examples of animality [animalités], being torn to pieces, masks, metamorphoses, and so on. Thus, "civilized" humanity turns out to be traversed by an *animal force* that Warburg discovered, at the age of twenty-two, in the friezes of Greek temples. Nietzsche had already evoked certain Bacchic survivals in the dances of Saint-Guy, Sicilian tarantellas, and other "collective follies" animated by animism and animality.⁷⁷

Similarly, Christian humanity is traversed by a *pagan energy*, the survivals of which constituted, precisely, the object of all Warburg's research. Nietzsche had already evoked the Italian Renaissance as an "anti-Christian repetition of Antiquity at the edge of modernity."⁷⁸ A vital epoch if ever there was one: an epoch of ostentatious squandering. The Renaissance, according to Nietzsche, was a "time in which everything is *squandered*, in which one squandered even the very force necessary to accumulate, to amass treasure, to pile riches upon riches."⁷⁹

The . . . Renaissance contained within it all the positive forces to which we owe modern culture. . . . All its blemishes and vices notwithstanding, it was the golden age of this millennium. . . . Will one understand some day, will one desire to understand, what the Renaissance was? The *inversion of Christian values*: an attempt, undertaken with all the means, with all the instincts, and with all the genius possible, to promote the triumph of *contrary values*, of aristocratic values. There has only been, up to the present time, but a single great war, that one; there has never been any question more crucial than that posed by the Renaissance—*my question* is the very one that it posed.⁸⁰

Warburg will discover, in the "historical flesh" of the Renaissance, that all these things—Christianity and paganism, obscure beliefs and individual liberty, etc.—were much less distinct than Nietzsche wished to present them as being, and that they were no less conflictual for that. But he will also retain the following insight: that, whether musically (in the beginnings of opera, such as they were evoked by his predecessor)⁸¹ or visually (in the "emotive formulas" of the kind he will never cease to study), the Renaissance was surely able to manifest something like a "gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit."⁸² Even if, in the subsequent evolution of his vocabulary after 1914, Warburg passes increasingly from the realm of the *Dionysian* (a philosophical term, and specifically Greek) to that of the *demonic* (an anthropological term, and more "Asiatic" or "Babylonian"), the fundamental certitude he shared with Nietzsche (looking backwards) and Freud (looking forwards) still stands: what survives in a culture is the *most repressed*, the most obscure, the most distant, and the most tenacious part of that culture. The *most dead*, in a sense, because the most deeply buried and the most phantasmal; but equally the *most living*, because the most moving, the closest, and the most impulsive and instinctual [pulsionnel]. Such, indeed,

is the strange dialectic of the *Nachleben*. Warburg began from that point—just as, before him, an artist like Donatello had begun: it is thanks to the texture of the Florentine funerary masks, those modern versions of the Roman *imago*, that the “alive-ness” [“vif”] of the realistic portraits of the Renaissance could make a place for itself. It is on the walls of the sarcophagi that the ancient maenads danced, moving us, and transmitting, in *fossilized movements*, their paradoxical *Lebensenergie*.

THE PLASTICITY OF BECOMING AND FRACTURES IN HISTORY

What do such propositions imply with regard to a theory of historical time? What models are needed to characterize, more precisely than we have done so far, this biomorphism of the *Nachleben*, which is so particular and so paradoxical? What, then, does the *Lebensenergie* of images consist of, that “vital energy” capable of surviving, of rebirth, and of squandering itself so admirably in the exuberance of the masterpieces of the fifteenth century? With the statement of this truly Warburgian question, Nietzsche appears, more than ever, as the decisive theoretical hinge. He provides the necessary articulation—or rather the leap—to understand, when it comes to the matter of *survivals*, from what they *return*.

Why Nietzsche, again? Because, better than anyone else, he knew how to stand up to the historicism of his time. One cannot understand Warburg’s basic undertaking—to provide the history of images with “its own theory of evolution”⁸³—without returning, however briefly, to the very sonorous, very reverberating hammer blows of the second *Untimely Meditation* and of several other texts that are directly related to it, in particular, *Human, All Too Human*.

Becoming [le devenir], Nietzsche affirmed, is not to be thought of as a *line*, endowed with direction [sens] and continuity, nor as a *surface*, nor even as a fixed, isolatable *object*. The paradigm of painting, which still suited Burckhardt, Nietzsche soon found to be insufficient: if doing history means “painting the picture of life.” How poorly rendered the future, and thus life itself, will be! “Something in course of becoming cannot be reflected as a firm and lasting image. As an image of a ‘the.’”⁸⁴ It thus requires *movement*, metamorphosis: refluxing fluxes, surviving protensions, unexpected returns.⁸⁵ This is, as well, the game of memory and forgetting that essentially begins the second *Untimely Meditation*, in which Nietzsche contends that history itself should be considered a vital question—physical, psychological, and cultural—and not just a question of knowledge.

His epigraph is a sentence from Goethe: “I hate everything that only instructs me, without increasing or directly invigorating activity on my part.”⁸⁶ History is something “we need . . . for the sake of life and to action, [and] not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action” by endowing the things of the past with a “hypertrophied virtue.” That implies that we must manage in tandem *memory* (which is what constitutes humanity as such, whereas the

animal lives “unhistorically”) and *forgetting* (which is what constitutes action as such, since purely memorative existence runs the risk of producing life as only an “imperfect tense”—not to mention that “it is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting”).⁸⁷ Accordingly, man discovers his humanity only when the “vivid flash of light” of history appears to him, when the force of “the past [is] . . . employ[ed] for the purposes of life.” Yet, at the same time, “with an excess of history man again ceases to exist”; for, “without that envelope of the unhistorical, he would never have begun or dared to begin. . . . The unhistorical element (*das Unhistorische*) and the historical element (*das Historische*) are necessary in equal measure.” They are necessary for “health” (*die Gesundheit*), that is to say, for the *possibility of movement*, of both the body and the spirit, and of both the subject and its entire culture.⁸⁸

Becoming, therefore, is movement. How can the knowledge that makes the former its object not find in movement its very material, its theme, and its method? But what is a movement? Nietzsche responds, once again: it is a play, a relationship of *forces*. Memory and forgetting, “historical element” and “non-historical element” are forces—as Apollonian and Dionysian are forces in the aesthetic sphere—whose reciprocal play makes possible the *movement* and therefore, the “life” of becoming. A life wholly composed of conflicts: “active” forces against “reactive” forces. Becoming is, accordingly, *polarity* (active becoming vs. reactive becoming), but, beyond that, it forms a knot of tensions, a constantly proliferating knot—a pile of serpents; in short, there is a kind of extraordinary *complexity* at work (as the reactive forces become active while the active forces become reactive).⁸⁹

Let us recall Gilles Deleuze’s remarkable explanation of this dynamic. The body? “Nothing but quantities of force in mutual ‘relations of tension.’” The object? “The object itself is force, expression of a force, . . . apparition of a force.” History? “The history of a thing, in general, is the succession of forces which take possession of it and the co-existence of forces which struggle for possession. The same object, the same phenomenon, changes sense depending on the force which appropriates it. . . . A thing has as many senses as there are forces capable of taking possession of it.”⁹⁰ Let us observe already at this point that Warburg never had a different conception than this of the status of the ancient “formulas”: they were, he thought, always reappropriated, and thus metamorphosed, in the constantly changing course of their survivals and their renaissances.

“Force” as thus conceived is not without links to the historical concepts already employed by Burckhardt, namely *Kraft*, *Macht*, and *Potenz*. It will be characterized more precisely by Nietzsche (and soon after that by Warburg himself) as having a *dual temporality* [*temporalité duplice*], the conjunction of two heterogeneous rhythms. First, force is capable of *survival*: this is the aspect of memory. “Perhaps the human being is incapable of *forgetting* anything,” Nietzsche wrote at the time of his second *Untimely Meditation*: “All forms that once have been produced . . . are repeated frequently in the same way.

An identical neural activity generates the same image once again.⁹¹ Criticizing Bakunin, who “out of hatred of the present wants to destroy history and the past,” he also writes that “in order to eradicate the entire past, it also would be necessary to eradicate human beings” themselves.⁹² Such, then, is the vital power—profound and unconscious—of *Mnemosyne*: “All of tradition would be that nearly unconscious tradition (*alle Tradition wäre jene fast unbewusste*) of inherited characters: living human beings, in their actions, would provide evidence of the fundamental things they were passing on; history would move about in flesh and blood (*mit Fleisch und Blut liefe die Geschichte herum*), not as a yellowed document and as paper memory.”⁹³

Nietzsche is here perhaps forgetting what Warburg experienced throughout his life, from the Florentine *Archivio* to his library in Hamburg: the “yellowed documents” are themselves part of the flesh of memory, and the ink covering them part of the coagulated blood of history. But the important thing is the thought that comes to light in these lines, the thought of a *memory understood as material*, the material of things themselves. Pursuing the question of the unconscious—does there exist an *it thinks?*—Nietzsche ends by offering this remarkable hypothesis: “If memory and sensation were the *material* of things (*das Material der Dinge*)!”⁹⁴

But what kind of material? One must unhesitatingly reply: a *plastic* material. That is to say, a material capable of every type of metamorphosis. The notion of *survival* has revealed to us the indestructibility of traces and remains; the notion of *metamorphosis* will reveal to us their relative effacement, their perpetual transformations. This is the aspect of forgetting, if one wants to look at it that way (but with the proviso that one thinks of it as a forgetting that is vital to memory itself). The notion of *plasticity* suddenly appears in Nietzsche’s text just at the moment when it becomes necessary to conceive in a joint fashion the two ways [régimes] of becoming: the way of the *blow* [*coup*], I would call it (at the heart of the seism, under the force of its blow [*sous le coup*], we forget everything), and the way of the *counter-blow* [*contre-coup*] (in the course of the survivals, in the aftermath [*après coup*], we remember, even if without knowing it). Man never forgets anything of his “original pain.” But he transforms all that. The common factor here, responsible for both this imprinting and this capacity for transformation, is none other than the *plasticity*—that *material force*—of becoming itself:

To determine this degree, and therefore the boundary at which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present, one would have to know exactly how great the *plastic power* (*die plastische Kraft*) of a man, a people, a culture is: I mean by plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to re-create broken molds (*Wunden ausheilen, Verlorenes ersetzen, zerbrochene Formen aus sich nachformen*).⁹⁵

This “plastic force,” therefore, must welcome a wound and make its scar participate in the very development of the organism. It must also welcome a “broken form” and make its traumatic effect participate in the very development of contiguous forms. Clearly, the organic interpretation of plasticity is not at all incompatible with its aesthetic interpretation.⁹⁶ For it unites *body* and *style* in a single question, namely that of *time*; survival and metamorphosis will ultimately characterize the eternal return itself, in which repetition never occurs without its own excess, nor form without its irremediable inclination to the unformed.⁹⁷

Gilles Deleuze has illuminated still another aspect of this “plastic force.” This concerns knowing what *form of knowledge* such a force requires: “If . . . the will to power . . . reconciles empiricism with principles, if it constitutes a superior empiricism, this is because it is an essentially *plastic* principle that is no wider than what it conditions, that changes itself with the conditioned and determines itself in each case along with what it determines. . . . Never superior to the ways that it determines a relation between forces, it is always plastic and changing, undergoing metamorphoses.”⁹⁸

Here, we are undoubtedly beyond both Kant and Hegel: beyond any form of established synthesis.⁹⁹ Here, we are—on account of the plasticity itself—in an unheard of relationship of the universal to the singular, a relationship in which the universal is capable of changing its form in response to every impulse or change in pressure of the local object. Nietzsche certainly called for this kind of *downgrading of the universal* [*déclassement de l'universel*] (let us not hesitate to employ the word Bataille later used to qualify the operation of the unformed). But I would say that it is Warburg who was truly able to put into practice this type of *superior empiricism*.

* * *

“Superior empiricism”—this is what enables us finally to dispose of those negative judgments that have so often been made concerning Warburg’s scholarly production: not a single major book, articles devoted to a few microscopic questions, ideas that are too “big” and too fluid, and historical results as specialized as they are dispersed. This idiosyncrasy is no doubt related to the psychological struggles of an “(incurable) schizoid” against the “discursive logic” menacing him, as Warburg was willing to describe himself in 1923.¹⁰⁰ But this idiosyncrasy stems just as much from a remarkably well-grounded epistemological choice, namely that of transforming, of refashioning the historical intelligibility of images under the pressure—the stamp—of each and every fruitful singularity. That is why Warburgian knowledge is *plastic knowledge* par excellence: it itself acts through memories and interlaced metamorphoses. The library and the incredible quantity of manuscripts, note cards, and documents (Warburg never threw anything away) constitute, for this reason, a *plastic material* capable of absorbing all the accidents—the unthinkable and unthought elements of the history of art—and

of undergoing metamorphoses as a consequence of this, without ever becoming fixed in definitive results, in syntheses, or absolute knowledge.

To the degree that Warburg was an attentive reader of *The Birth of Tragedy* and, beyond any doubt, of the second *Untimely Meditation*—which dealt so specifically with the same methodological issues as his own discipline—there is no reason to suppose that there exists only a relationship of mere coincidence between, on the one hand, the emergence in philosophy of the plasticity characterizing, in Nietzsche's work, the material memory [matériau-mémoire] of becoming and, on the other, the emergence in historical and anthropological thought, of the plasticity characterizing, in Warburg's work, the material images [matériaux-images] of becoming. Concerning these "material images," one can assert at least two things: they are plastic precisely on account of their capacity for survival, that is to say, of their relationship to the temporal domain of the phantoms [temps des fantômes]; they are plastic precisely on account of their capacity for metamorphosis, that is to say, of their relationship to the *temporal domain of bodies* [temps des corps].

Let us consider a few examples. From the beginning, how did Warburg conceive of classical Antiquity, that time of a world that had vanished but was destined to "survive" itself, and then to be "reborn" in Italy? As a struggle between antagonistic "plastic forces"—Apollonian and Dionysian—dominated by the dangerous theme of *animality*. In the *Battle of the Centaurs* on the Greek frieze Warburg studied at the age of twenty-two (fig. 17), no less than in the *Laocoön*—a central paradigm for all of German aesthetics, and something that occupied Warburg throughout his life (figs. 29 and 30)—animality displays its power, reptilian and metamorphic, of marrying, to the point of totally absorbing it, the human form itself (fig. 37). Animal plasticity winds up, in the studies of pagan divination in the age of Luther, becoming incarnated in the monstrous figures of political and religious propaganda¹⁰¹ (fig. 19).

How did Warburg next approach the "survival of Antiquity," that *Nachleben der Antike* destined to be tirelessly repeated? By allowing himself to be captivated, like the hero of *Gradiva*, by the theme of *femininity* in motion. From his thesis on Botticelli (1893) up to his correspondence with André Jolles on the theme of the *Ninfa* (1900), it is a truly plastic figure which, heedless of the multiplicity of its iconographic identifications—Venus or Pomona, nymph or Victoria, Hour or Aura, servant or maenad, Judith or Salome—traverses the paintings of the Renaissance with its inimitable grace.¹⁰²

Even the heroic *virility* of the Florentine bourgeois emerged, according to Warburg, by virtue of exemplary *plastic materials*. There would have been no survival or renaissance of ancient portraiture if it had not been possible to draw on the knowledge of ancient techniques that were all essentially dependent on plasticity. The art of the painted portrait—which Warburg analyzed in 1902, taking as his example Ghirlandaio's frescoes—cannot be understood without the *missing link*, which had been censored by Vasari, of the use of wax *ex-votos* directly modeled on the donors' faces. Nor can one understand the art

Das Dunchkalb zu freyber 3



FIG. 19 Anonymous German, *Monk Calf*, 1608. Woodcut. Reprinted from Johann Wolf, *Lectiones memorabiles et reconditae* (Lauingen, 1608).

of portrait sculpture—evoked in the same article with respect to the busts of Rossellino—without the *missing link* of the use of funerary masks produced in plaster and then reproduced in terra-cotta, throughout the Quattrocento, like so many survivals of the Roman *imago*.¹⁰³ Warburg's intuition was developed in a rigorous manner by his friend Julius Schlosser, whose study of the wax portrait is a magisterial demonstration of the link between plasticity of time and plasticity of material. It turns out that it was the most plastic materials, and thus the least prized by the art of sculpture, namely wax, plaster, and terra-cotta, which were able to pave the way for survivals in the unconscious life of forms [dans l'inconscient des formes].¹⁰⁴ In other words, plasticity proves to be an essential characteristic of the *image as time* [*image-temps*].¹⁰⁵

Warburg never stopped elaborating on this great intuition, although, as usual, he did not want to state it in a fixed form as a generalization. Rather, in his eyes, a line was a plastic vector representing the act of embracing or a deadly trap: for example, a serpent (figs. 36–37). For him, a *surface* was a plastic vector of movement or of *pathos*: as in the case of drapery (figs. 21 and 22). And a *volume* was the plastic vector of the uneasy relationship between “external cause” and “internal cause”: entrails, for example.¹⁰⁶ Finally, he considered *time*

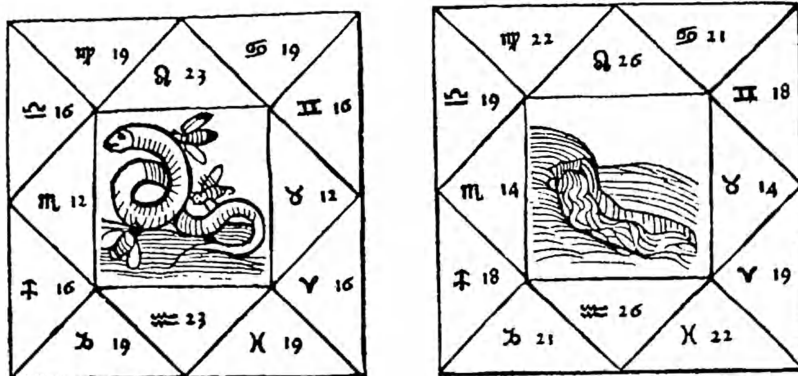


FIG. 20 Anonymous German, *Astrological Sign of the Scorpion*, 1488. Woodcut. Reprinted from Johann Engel, *Astrolabium planum in tabulis ascendens* (Venice, 1488). The snake represents the “prudence of the sly,” and the water current represents human inconstancy.

itself to be the plastic vector of the survival and of metamorphosis of images. Even when analyzing the arid divinatory calculations in the *Astrolabium planum* of Johann Engel (1488), Warburg regarded the numbering itself—the tabular organization of the astrological decans—to be a function of a plastic “flux” of becoming¹⁰⁷ (fig. 20). He later referred to number as rational “force” existing in a tense relationship with chaos and destruction.¹⁰⁸

In effect, everything is a question of “forces” and of dialectical tensions. To be more precise, should one not speak of historical time as being a *semiplastic* material? Plasticity alone cannot account for what it welcomes and absorbs, nor for what impresses it and transforms it. One must think of both plasticity and of *suture* (the way in which the ground has scarred over) in terms of *fracture* (the way in which the ground has given way, has cracked, has been insufficiently plastic). The historian skirts the edge of the abyss because seisms or eruptions have occurred which have fractured historical continuity at the points where time was not sufficiently plastic. This is the reason Burckhardt’s teaching remains so valuable: the discipline of history must think of itself as a “symptomatology of time” capable of interpreting latencies (plastic processes) together with crises (nonplastic processes). One must, therefore, conceive the plasticity of becoming as that which allows the *seism*—the “crisis,” to use Burckhardt’s terminology, the “original pain,” in Nietzsche’s, or the “trauma,” in Freud’s—to survive and to metamorphose, that is to say, to return in the *symptom* (a process simultaneously plastic and nonplastic) without completely destroying the milieu in which it erupts. The plasticity of becoming cannot exist without fractures occurring in history.

* * *



FIG. 21 Anonymous
Greek, Asia Minor,
Nereid Monument
at Xanthos in Lycia
(detail), fourth century
B.C.E. Marble. Lon-
don, British Museum.
Photo by author.

FIG. 22 Niccolò dell'Arca,
*Mourning of the Marys over the
Dead Christ* (detail of Mary
Magdalene), ca. 1480. Terra cotta.
Bologna, Santa Maria della Vita.



This is true, epistemologically, at the level of historical knowledge itself. Warburg, it may be remembered, said regarding the survivals and metamorphoses of pagan divination—which he analyzed at the heart of the antipagan discourse par excellence, namely Luther’s—that they unequivocally contradicted any possible “rectilinear view of history” (*geradlinige Geschichtsauffassung*).¹⁰⁹ Here we find further common ground between Warburg and Nietzsche: that of an “active philology” capable of conceiving both life and the plasticity of becoming.¹¹⁰ The whole argument of the second *Untimely Meditation*—its famous “critique of history”—starts from this point. Nietzsche’s formulation has become famous: “Too much history kills history” (and life and becoming along with it). It is not without interest to recall that something very close to this formulation was first presented by the great historian who preceded Burckhardt and who, in a certain sense, may be said to have invented the history of the Renaissance, namely Michelet:

We have evoked history, and here it is everywhere; we are besieged by it, stuffed, crushed; we walk bent over doubled under its baggage; we no longer breathe, we no longer invent. The past kills the future. How does it happen that art is dead (with a few rare exceptions)? It is because history has killed it. In the name of history itself, in the name of life, we protest. History has nothing to do with this pile of stones. History is that of the soul and original thought, of fertile initiative, of heroism, the heroism of action, the heroism of creation.¹¹¹

Michelet’s protest becomes, with Nietzsche, a diatribe. But it is clearly the same plasticity—in contrast to the immobile “pile of stones” of the facts accumulated by the positivist historian—and the same “heroism of creation” that he

will call for in the second *Untimely Meditation*. The history that Nietzsche takes to task is, precisely, the kind of history which is incapable of approaching the past from the point of view of its survivals and its metamorphoses. For it, the past is a dead object, even, and indeed above all, when it believes it is *conserving* it; for those things it believes itself to be preserving against anachronism and the present, it is really mummifying. In short, it maintains a *form* of the past, but it refuses to give any thought to its *force*:

When the historical sense no longer conserves life but mummifies it, then the tree gradually dies unnaturally from the top downwards to the roots—and in the end the roots themselves usually perish too. Antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present (*das frische Leben der Gegenwart*). . . . For it knows only how to *preserve* life (*sie versteht eben allein, Leben zu bewahren*), not how to engender it; it always undervalues that which is becoming because it has no instinct for divining it.¹¹²

History in the age of positivism? An almost totalitarian history: "Division of labor! Fall in!" A science in which a "hen . . . is compelled to lay eggs too quickly," with the result that "the eggs, to be sure, have got smaller and smaller (though the books have got thicker and thicker)." A culture in which "men are born already gray-haired," because they see in the past only an "old age of mankind." A science inclined toward the "terrible ossification [of] time." And this science, in the end, is revealed to be just one more "ascetic ideal," a "disguised theology," the "paralyzing and depressing . . . belief that one is a latecomer of the ages." What it aims at under the banner of "the concept that realizes itself"—and here we have Hegel put in his place—is an "accomplishment" reduced to a "compendium of factual immorality" [author's quotation corrected—Trans.], in short, to a "learned misery" [the English translation gives this phrase as "miserable condition"—Trans.].¹¹³

Nietzsche analyzes this "learned misery" as a psychologist. It is, he says, nothing but a defense against anguish, a reaction of "fear" before the fathomless "unknown," that, irremediably, makes us feel the "original pain," makes it survive in us—the pain he evoked early on, in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Accordingly, in historical writing, the obligation to provide a *cause* is something like an apotropaic process elicited by the confrontation with the essential obscurity of the *thing*.

To derive something unknown (*Unbekanntes*) from something familiar relieves, comforts, and satisfies, besides giving a feeling of power. With the unknown, one is confronted with danger, discomfort, and care; the first instinct is to abolish these painful states. First principle: any explanation is better than none. Since at bottom it is merely a matter of wishing to be rid of oppressive representations (*drückende Vorstellungen*). . . . The causal instinct (*Ursachen-Trieb*) is thus conditional upon, and excited by, the feeling of fear (*Furchtgefühl*). The "why?" shall, if at all possible,

not give the cause for its own sake so much as for a particular kind of cause—a cause that is comforting, liberating, and relieving. . . . That which is new and strange and has not been experienced before, is excluded as a cause.¹¹⁴

Here, again, Warburg was able to rise to the challenge of Nietzsche's demands. His erudition, which was immense, was not blinded by the "instinct for causality." It was able to leave room for the unknown (*Unbekanntes*) and for strangeness (*Fremdes*). It did not fear the discovery of "distressing" or even "overwhelming" (*drückend*) causalities in the explanation of the most radiant phenomena of the Renaissance. For is it not overwhelming, for an "aestheticizing art history," to see, right in the middle of the beautiful individuality of Italian portraits, the eruption of that "provocative and putrefying magnificence of fashion mannequins" (*herausfordernde, moderige Schneiderpracht*) and that "magical fetishism of the wax work cult" (*fetischistische Wachsbildzauber*) piled up in a Florentine church like a "pagan sculpture in a Christian church" (*Verquickung oder Nachleben heidnischer Bildniskunst in christlichen Kirchen*).¹¹⁵ In looking at a work of art, Warburg never distanced himself entirely from that "original pain" perceived by Nietzsche as being the obscure cause, or the ultimate *thing*, of representation.

The *Second Untimely Meditation* presents the historian with a crucial epistemological choice. On the one hand, he or she is offered the kind of *history which kills the past*: this is the reassuring history of the positivist. It is—it believes itself to be—"scientific" and *objective*. But it simply turns its object into a dead object, that is to say, renders it inoffensive and deprived of its "life." On the other hand, he is offered the kind of *history in which the past lives, in which it survives*: this is the more troubled, and more troubling, history of the genealogist-philosopher, of the "psychologist of culture," of the anthropologist of fertile singularities. His object is a force: the surviving, metamorphic force whose shock wave, if not the actual shock itself, the historian inescapably feels. Now, Nietzsche terms this history an "artistic power," the only kind which is capable of "perceiving *events impenetrable to him*, unites things when God alone knows whether they belong together. . . . For this, however, one must have, above all, a great artistic facility (*vor allem eine grosse künstlerische Potenz*).¹¹⁶

History seeks to be a science, and this is a wholly admirable goal. Its activities within the domain of knowledge—the establishment of "sources" and research into "causes"—legitimately aim at that status. But does it ever really reach it? Instead, it denies the beauty of its own activity when it thinks its goal attained, that is, that its work is concluded. If it accepted the limitation—and, I repeat, the beauty—of its status, then its "scientific" vocation would be revealed: to be a work [oeuvre], a production, an art. Nietzsche proposes, in the *Second Untimely Meditation*, that history should "accept being transformed into a work of art" [translation modified—Trans.].¹¹⁷ Why a work of art? Because in its *form* and *force* are necessarily and organically joined. When Nietzsche writes that "*what is artistic has its inception in the organic*,"¹¹⁸ he establishes that *the plasticity of*

becoming creates a fracture in the discourse of history. The artistic (forms and forces of culture) and the organic (forms and forces of the living body) both present themselves in the continuity of history as so many “unhistorical”¹¹⁹ forces, as so many symptoms and anachronisms. For Nietzsche, therefore, art constitutes the discipline of history’s central vortex [centre-remous]—the critical place par excellence, the place of non-knowledge. Warburg, for his part, made *art history* a critical discipline par excellence for all historical intelligibility in his time—a place which accommodated both knowledge and non-knowledge.

THE DYNAMOGRAM, OR THE CYCLE OF THE *CONTRETEMPS*

Thus, history stirs. It moves, it differs from itself, it displays its semiplasticity. Fluid in one place, but hard and sharp in another; serpentine here, but rock-like over there. Warburg, it is clear, wanted to conceive of all this as a single grouping, dialectically: latencies together with crises, periods of suspended activity together with ruptures, and malleable conditions together with earthquakes. And this is how the notion of the *Nachleben* wound up providing a dynamic formulation, specific and historical, of a *symptom of time*. But what is a symptom from the point of view of historical time? It is, in the context that we have established, the very specific rhythm of an *occurrence of survival*: a sudden opening up [effraction] (a springing forth of the Now) and a return (a springing forth of the Past), mixed together. In other words, it is the unexpected coexistence of a *contretemps* [literally, a *countertime*, something acting *against* time—Trans.] and a *repetition*.

To speak in these terms is, once again, to accept an idea of Nietzsche’s. It is to invoke for images the privilege of temporal strangeness, of *untimeliness*. Untimeliness is not the pure and simple negation of history, and still less that of time itself. Rather, it imposes on a period the combined power of the *contretemps* and the *repetition*. What is this *power of the contretemps*? According to Nietzsche, everything which is meaningful in history, everything which “exer[cises] an influence,” can appear only as “acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time.”¹²⁰ It is in this sense that one must understand the claims for philology and the passion for Antiquity shared by Nietzsche and Warburg: they provided the archeological tools—not metaphysical and eternal, but *material* and *temporal*—for a penetrating critique of the ambient historicism of their day. Every authentically historical force (and survival is one of them) must be able to produce the nonhistorical element which works against it [qui la contre-motive], just as every force arising from remembrance must be able to produce the element of forgetting which supports it. Thus, in Nietzsche, the *contretemps* refers to “this unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place.”¹²¹ Whence his famous injunction to historians: “And if you want biographies, do not desire those which bear the legend ‘Herr So-and-So and his age,’ but those upon whose title-page there would stand ‘A fighter against his age’ (*ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit*).”¹²²

What, then, is the vital energy, the “nonhistorical energy,” capable of offering the “fighter against his times” the weapon of untimeliness with which to oppose all the constraints, all the conventions of the *Zeitgeist*? Nietzsche, paradoxically, considers it to be a *power of repetition*, and thus at this point we have reached the domain of the eternal return. As Gilles Deleuze formulated it, the *return* [*le revenir*] provided Nietzsche with the expression, indeed, the *very being of what comes into existence* [*l'être même de ce qui devient*]: within it, temporality is constituted as the necessary coaction or coexistence—inescapably anachronistic—of the past, the present, and the future:

How can the present pass? The passing moment could never pass if it were not already past and yet to come—at the same time as being present. If the present did not pass of its own accord, if it had to wait for a new present in order to become past, the past in general would never be constituted in time, and this particular present would not pass. We cannot wait, the moment must be simultaneously present and past, present and yet to come, in order for it to pass (and to pass for the sake of other moments). The present must coexist with itself as past and yet to come. The synthetic relation of the moment to itself as present, past and future grounds its relation to other moments. The eternal return is thus an answer to the problem of *passage*. And in this sense it must not be as the return of something that is, that is one or the same. We misinterpret the expression *eternal return* if we understand it as return of the same. It is not being that returns but rather the returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it asserts connection to becoming and to that which passes. It is not some one thing which returns but rather returning itself is the one thing which is affirmed of diversity or multiplicity.¹²³

Briefly stated, the past is constituted of the interior itself of the present [*de l'intérieur même du présent*]—by virtue of its intrinsic power of being in a *state of transition* [*de passage*] and not through its negation by another present rejecting it, as if it were dead, and leaving it behind; just as the present is constituted of the interior itself of the past, by virtue of its intrinsic power of survival [*survivance*]. Deleuze's commentary here has the great merit of divorcing Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return from all trivial models of time; for it shows that the “eternity” in question will never cease to be subject to precarious circumstances and to “momentary occurrences” [*passageretés*], and that the “return” in question will never cease to be subject to variations and metamorphoses. Nietzsche's masterstroke consists, ultimately, in showing that in order to understand time, it is necessary to accept the coexistence of a *chaotic* model and a *cyclic* model.¹²⁴

This is why the power of the *contretemps* and that of repetition work in concert. The *contretemps* never occurs without the rhythm of the returns: *the contretemps returns*, and that is what gives it all its symptomatic value, beyond random occasions or simple chance events. Reciprocally, repetition never occurs without the cacorhythm of unforeseen fractures: the *disjointed repetition* repeats

it, creating a dysfunctionality with respect to any attempted return to the identical state. This is what Deleuze explains so well when he uproots Nietzsche's eternal return both from unity or the *one* [*à l'un*] (for there is no repetition without multiplicity) and from the *identical* (for there is no repetition without differences).¹²⁵ This is also what Pierre Klossowski suggests in terming the cycle of the eternal return a "vicious circle," always unforeseeable in its intrinsic torsional and "per-verse" [de "per-version"] effects.¹²⁶

Yet, does not Nietzsche himself famously employ the expression "eternal return of the *same*?"¹²⁷ This difficulty has raised several doubts concerning Gilles Deleuze's "differentiating" interpretation of the eternal return. But the objection is easily set aside as soon as one takes the precaution of distinguishing between Nietzsche's *same* (*das Gleiche*) and *identity* as such (*Einssein* or *Identität*). The return of the same is not the return to the same, and still less a return to the identical. The "same" which returns in the eternal return is not the identity of being, but only something *similar*. The maenad who returns by virtue of the survival of certain forms in the Quattrocento is not the Greek figure as such, but an image marked by what we might call the metamorphic phantom of this figure—classical, then Hellenistic, then Roman, then reconfigured in the Christian context; in short, it is a *resemblance*, which departs and which returns. This, then, is how repetition is able to make difference act within her. The process was perfectly understood by Warburg, who studied images, including their emergence and variations, as a privileged location of all aspects of cultural survival. Recently Giorgio Agamben has written an illuminating etymological excursion to help us understand the necessity (a very Warburgian one) of placing the image at the center of all reflection on human time:

Let us consider for a moment this word *Gleich*. It is formed by the prefix *ge* (which indicates a collective or grouping) and by the term *leich*, which goes back to the Middle High German *lich*, to the Gothic *leik*, and finally to the root **lig* indicating appearance, figure or resemblance, which in modern German has become *Leiche*, cadaver. *Gleich* therefore means: that which has the same **lig*, the same figure. It is this root **lig* that one also finds in the suffix *lich*, with which a great many German adjectives are formed (*weiblich* originally meant: one who has the figure of a woman) and even in the adjective *solch* (so that the German philosophical expression *als solch*, or the English *as such*, means: with respect to its figure, to its proper form). An exact correspondence exists in English with the word *like*, which can be found in both the word *likeness* and the verbs *to liken* and *to like*, and also as a suffix in the formation of adjectives. In this sense, the eternal return of the *Gleich* should be translated literally as the eternal return of the **lig*. There is therefore in the eternal return something like an image or a resemblance.¹²⁸

This is exactly what Warburg sought to capture in the expression *eternal return of ancient resemblances*—eternal return that could be conceived independently of any trivial sort of relationship, independently of the models of

time generally presupposed by the idea of an *imitation of ancient models*. Survivals occur in images: that is Warburg's hypothesis about the *longue durée* of Western history and about "dividing lines between cultures" (which is what allowed him to recognize, for example, in the imagery of a fresco from the Italian Quattrocento, the active, surviving phantom of an ancient Arab astrologer). Survivals occur in images: that is what requires us to establish more than just a simple history of art. Warburg developed all his ideas concerning *surviving images* from the perspective—again a Nietzschean one—of a *genealogy of resemblances*. In other words, he had an entirely critical way of envisaging the emergence of forms [le devenir des formes], one that went against the grain of every type of teleology, positivism, and utilitarianism. In establishing the foundations of this genealogy of resemblances in the Western tradition, Aby Warburg created in the aesthetic domain—no less than in art history, with its placid Vasarian family histories—a disturbance more discrete than, but comparable to, the one Nietzsche had already created in the ethical domain with his sulfurous *The Genealogy of Morals*.

"Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values."¹²⁹ Genealogical knowledge was at first presented by Nietzsche as philological and, even more so, *etymological* knowledge.¹³⁰ That was Warburg's attitude, too, and he clearly never modified it, as can be seen from simply noting the impressive number of books in his library that were devoted to etymology, along with the well-known role of the linguistic theories of Herman Osthoff—a point I will come back to—in the very definition of one of his key concepts, the *Pathosformel*.¹³¹ Now, etymology, far from basing the genealogical relationship on ancestries, sources, and "origins," reveals to us, through the play of survivals, their dissemination and their essential discontinuity, which is—and which engenders—the discontinuity of "our being itself," as Michel Foucault wrote in a famous study on the relationship, in Nietzsche's work, between history and genealogy:

"Effective" history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men. The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled. Necessarily, we must dismiss those tendencies that encourage the consoling play of recognitions. Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery," and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves." History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. "Effective" history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.¹³²

In these lines, Foucault obviously adopts the “trenchant” style of *The Genealogy of Morals*—but a little too much so, it seems to me. On the one hand, he rightly emphasizes the real meaning of the philological or etymological paradigm. Why is the genealogical investigation so “meticulous and patiently documentary”¹³³—a trait even more typical of Warburg, it may be said in passing, than of Nietzsche himself? Because it seeks, in its opposition to any notion of an absolute meaning in history and to “the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies,” to discern the *singularities of becoming* [*les singularités du devenir*] and of the eternal return. Genealogy, Foucault writes, “seeks to make visible all those discontinuities that cross us.”¹³⁴ Thus, the meticulousness of etymological knowledge ultimately disrupts the continuity of a potential history of words. It logically terminates in a *symptomatology*, which is what Nietzsche, in fact, calls for in *The Genealogy of Morals*, when he attempts to analyze—beyond the etymology of the words “good” and “evil”—the bad conscience in terms of “symptom” and even of “illness.”¹³⁵

Foucault, therefore, clearly sees that the notion of the symptom allowed Nietzsche—and his own historical project—to find the right point at which to establish the “articulation of the body and history.”¹³⁶ He understands that the genealogist’s “effective” history “has no fear of looking down,” scrutinizing the *base materials of a culture*—here I am paraphrasing a famous expression of Georges Bataille’s—that “barbarous and shameful confusion” that every physician must know how to scrutinize in the organism of his patient.¹³⁷ On the other hand, Foucault radicalizes the discontinuity (the *contretemps*) at the risk of losing sight of memory (repetition); for him, a symptom is revealing only of something discontinuous, that is to say, of forgetting, of the “lost event”: “a use of history that . . . constructs a counter-memory.” And his rejection of the concept of the origin (*Ursprung*) is directed entirely toward the goal of dismissing history as the search for the “site of truth” [*lieu de la vérité*], that original place where one would find “the exact essence of things.”¹³⁸

Besides turning out to be philologically inexact,¹³⁹ this rejection of Nietzsche’s *Ursprung* has the unfortunate consequence of de-dialecticizing the notion of the symptom. Foucault contrasts, without any nuance, the model of “roots,” which supposedly seeks only continuity, to the genealogical desire to “seek to make visible . . . discontinuities.”¹⁴⁰ He does not realize that the roots can be multiple, interlaced, stringy, reticular, rhizomatic, visible in one place and underground in another, fossilized here and constantly germinating there, and so on. The concept itself of the *Ursprung*—the theory of which Walter Benjamin had already written in 1928¹⁴¹—assumes the discontinuity and the *anadyomeric* character (i.e., appearing and disappearing) of the genealogical filaments. If one must, with Nietzsche, think of genealogy as a symptomatology, then that implies thinking of the symptom itself as something much more complex than a strict discontinuity. The etymology of forms imagined by Warburg, and meticulously practiced by him as a symptomatology of resemblances, constitutes a genealogical type of knowledge that is intimately linked to a dialectical

conception of the symptom; its purview encompasses contretemps arising from the material itself of the repetitions, instances of forgetting arising from the material itself of conscious memories, and differences arising from the *material itself, the surviving material, of resemblances*.

* * *

Such, then, are the movements and temporalities of the image-as-symptom [l'image-symptome]: occurrences of survival and critical points in the cycles of the contretemps. Throughout his life Warburg sought to find a descriptive and theoretical concept for these movements. He named it the *dynamogram* [*Dynamogramm*]: a kind of *graph of the image-as-symptom*; it measures the impulsive force of occurrences of survival—a force that is directly perceptible and transmissible thanks to the “seismographic” sensibility of the historian of images.

At the descriptive level, the dynamogram could express the relationship, with regard to survival, between, say, the extraordinary passion expressed by the drapery of Nicola dell'Arca's Bologna *Pietà* and the drapery characteristic of the Hellenistic age, which the Renaissance artist could scarcely have known and directly “imitated” (figs. 21–22). The “dynamogram” could trace out the “life,” or the *Lebensenergie*, common to these two draperies: their particular way—particularly intense, expansive, and agitated—of working the folds, that is to say, of creating characteristic discontinuities within the fluidity which is itself no less characteristic of the sculpted or modeled material.

It should be noted, however, that Warburg never systematized his descriptive studies of such “common traits.” He never made drawings based on the works of art he analyzed, as others in his time did, like Cavalcaselle and Morelli; nor did he seek to discover the traces of an underlying “geometric secret” of the paintings. Perhaps his respect for singularities made him suspicious of a practice that might schematize the image and thus impoverish it. And that is why he preferred to photograph the objects he studied, or rather to arrange and scrutinize these photographs with a magnifying glass. That likewise means that the notion of the dynamogram was, in his mind, eminently theoretical: it yielded a specific formula for that paradoxical biomorphism addressed by the expression *Nachleben der Antike*. An equivalent expression occurs from time to time in Warburg's unpublished manuscripts: *Wiederbelebung antiker Dynamogramme*, that is to say, the “reanimation of ancient dynamograms.”¹⁴²

The dynamogram, therefore, is meant to discern a form of historical energy, a *form of time*. All of Warburg's thinking about temporality appears to be constructed around hypotheses concerning phenomena which are rhythmic, pulsating, interrupted [suspensives], alternating, or panting [haletantes]. This is easily seen by simply leafing through the mass of his unpublished notes, where one frequently encounters the *oscillatory diagrams* of polarities that are constantly being established: the “pendulum” [balancier, which can also mean a tightrope walker's balancing pole—Trans.] of idealism and realism (fig. 23); the

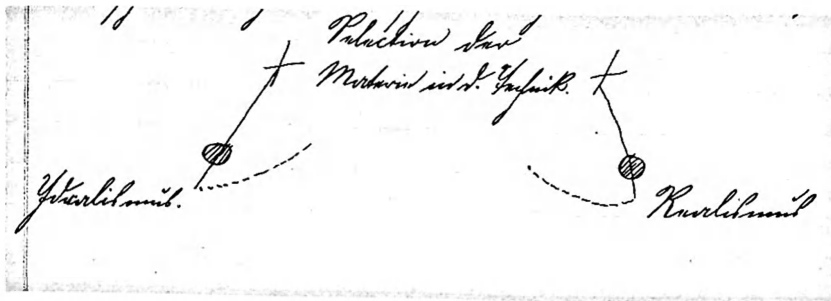


FIG. 23 Aby Warburg, *Schema of the Oscillation of the Idealism-Realism Polarity*, 1892. Ink drawing. Taken from "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," 1:166. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

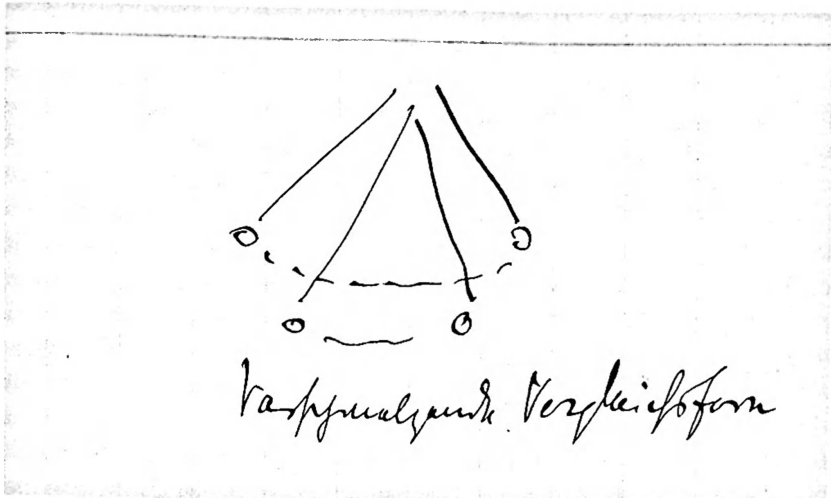


FIG. 24 Aby Warburg, *Schema of the Oscillations of Ornamental "Instabilities" and "Rhythm,"* 1900. Ink drawing. Taken from the "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," III.43.1-2, 2:67. London, The Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

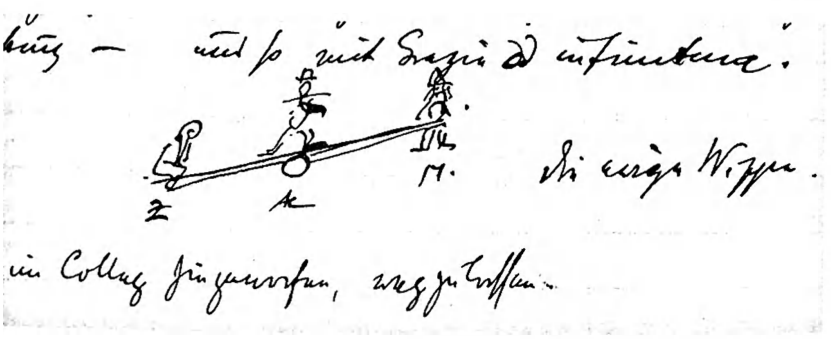


FIG. 25 Aby Warburg, *The Perpetual Seesaw*, 1890. Ink drawing. Taken from "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," 1:110. London, The Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

"rhythm" of the "instabilities" of style (fig. 24), and that marvelous "eternal seesaw" [*die ewige Wippe*], at the balance point of which a little personage marked K dances—or hesitates, like Jean Genet's tightrope walker. And it is, of course, the artist (*Künstler*) whom Warburg wanted to represent in this little sketch¹⁴³ (fig. 25).

This reading may doubtless be generalized even further: we might consider the dynamogram to be a constantly renewed hypothesis of the existence of a *form of forms within time*. Late in his career Warburg himself stated that his

entire interdisciplinary project—joining art history, history, and social psychology (*kunstgeschichtlich, historisch und sozialpsychologisch*)—should eventually yield a grand “aesthetics of the dynamogram” (*Asthetik des Dynamogrammes*),¹⁴⁴ nothing more and nothing less (figs. 21 and 22).

Reducing Warburg’s project to a pure iconology of “symbolic meanings,” as Panofsky, Gombrich, and several others have done, betrays a complete misunderstanding of it. Such a reading accounts for only half of it, as if one described a *Laocoön* devoid of gestures, of struggle, and of the snake. And it serves to maintain the idea—which could hardly be more false—of a Warburg exclusively interested in an image’s “contents” and relatively indifferent to its “form” and “forces.” In fact, the author of the *Ninfa* was not interested in the “symbolic” aspects of figures at the level of a dictionary of symbols (like Ripa), or even of a “pictorial riddle”¹⁴⁵ (like Panofsky): he scrutinized images to discern something much more fundamental, which he eventually termed a “dynamic or energetic symbolism” (*dynamische, energetische Symbolik*).¹⁴⁶

In short, what the survivals remember is not the signified, which changes at every moment and in every context, and in every relationship of forces it enters into, but rather the signifying line or feature [trait] itself. And even then, it must be understood that what matters is less the line as the contour of what we might call the “figured figure” than the action itself of the “figuring figure”—a dynamic action, surviving from the past, one which is both singular and repeated. In other words, it is not the *Gestalt* which matters but the *Gestaltung*. This is the sole reason, in Warburg’s view, that one can speak of the image’s “symbolic function” (*symbolische Funktion*), namely because the memory transmitted through it (*Mneme*) is that of an “impression of a movement”—a process summarized in the manuscript notes of Warburg’s final years by the strange expression “energetic engram” (*energetisches Engramm*).¹⁴⁷ The Renaissance artist, according to Warburg—who was thinking first of all of a Donatello, a Botticelli, or a Mantegna—is he who can “capture and put into form an ancient dynamorphic memory” (*Auffänger und Former der antiken dynamophorischen Mneme*).¹⁴⁸

The notion that “ancient memory” is “dynamorphic,” i.e., that it bears forces and transforms forms more than it transmits meanings, returns us, once again, to Nietzsche. We could say, in fact, that Warburg’s dynamogram is an attempt to answer Nietzsche’s call for a psychology, but also for an *aesthetic of forces* and not of meanings, a knowledge of forces which is, at the same time, a “morphology.”¹⁴⁹ We could also say that Warburg was able to find in marble what Nietzsche found only in sound: the “genius of existence itself,” the “will which makes itself immediately understood,” in short, everything that Nietzsche derived solely from the “intoxication of . . . musical . . . feeling” [translation modified—Trans.].¹⁵⁰ This is just what the rhythmic and morphological “aesthetic of the dynamogram” was designed to detect.

This aesthetic presupposes a *morphology* by virtue of the fact that every force—“cause of movement,” according to its most elementary physical

definition—acts between extreme positions, which thereby define a separation or a *polarity*. It is not surprising that Warburg always employed these two concepts together: *Dynamogramm* and *Polarität*; for, ultimately, he was bent on exploring all the possible ways of giving form to a contradictory tension. According to Warburg, it is as if images had the virtue, perhaps even the function, of conferring a plasticity, an intensity or a reduction in intensity, on the most antagonistic elements of existence and of history. The manuscript of the *Allgemeine Ideen* of 1927 begins, like countless previous attempts of the same kind, with a diagram of a tree-like sequence of *bifurcations* as an aid to understanding the Renaissance through its “style.” There we find: the rational point of view of “evolution” (*Entwicklung*) versus the “demonic” point of view of actuality or the present moment (*Aktualität*); the “archeological” (*archäologisch*) point of view versus the “historical” (*historisch*), and so on—all of which, taken together, form a hypothetical dynamogram of the Renaissance style of the fifteenth century.¹⁵¹

The historian, therefore, should use this dynamogram to trace the varied sequences of extreme polarizations and of “depolarizations”: “the ancient dynamogram appears with a maximum tension” (*das antike Dynamogramm . . . in maximaler Spannung*), but it is also capable of becoming “depolarized,” of going through, for example, phases of “nonpolarized latent ambivalence” (*unpolarisierte latente Ambivalenz*).¹⁵² It can also display what Warburg, in his earliest studies on Florence, called “compensatory” (*Ausgleich*) processes.¹⁵³ Warburg analyzed all of Ghirlandajo’s work and all the stylistic aspects of Florentine Quattrocento portraiture as compromises between two diametrically opposed tendencies: on the one hand, *realism* (especially Flemish and Gothic), and, on the other, *classicism* (especially Italian and Renaissance).

Beyond his discovery of *missing links* as important as the coexistence of medieval religious practices and of ancient techniques of figurative “hyperrealism”—wax ex-votos obtained with molds—Warburg demonstrated the fruitfulness of a dialectical comprehension of the *contradictory demands* made by the fifteenth-century Florentine bourgeoisie in its proud desire for self-representation. It wanted to have individuality in the manner of Van Eyck together *with* idealization of the Roman kind, pious Flemish simplicity *with* the ostentation of the “Etrusco-pagan” merchant, Gothic detail *with* classical pathos, medieval didacticism *with* Renaissance stylization, Christian allegory *with* pagan lyricism, the crucified god *with* dancing maenads, dress *alla francese* (i.e., Nordic) *with* drapery *all’antica*, and on and on.¹⁵⁴

* * *

How should one understand the *dynamic of these polarities*? Gombrich, it is true, did provide a good analysis of Warburg’s treatment of the different states of the Gothic-Renaissance polarity, showing that the Gothic, which was at first an obstacle to the blossoming of the Renaissance, wound up playing an important

role as a “dis-inhibited medieval life.”¹⁵⁵ But Gombrich’s theoretical conclusion remains incomplete and impoverishing, for it reduces Warburg’s approach to earlier, inferior models. Historians of the Renaissance like Alexis-François Rio and John Addington Symonds had, of course, pointed out the polarized, even oscillatory structure of Italian Quattrocento culture. Thus, as early as 1861, Rio spoke of “a remarkable oscillatory movement in the Florentine school . . . alternately inspired by the city of God and the city of the world.”¹⁵⁶ Symonds, for his part, noted in 1881 that Italian poetry of the fifteenth century was, by turns, medieval and classical, popular and philological.¹⁵⁷

The limitation of these models is the trivial degree of their dialectical comprehension: either things are presented as contradictory or they are “harmonized,” as Gombrich writes, via the concept of “compatibility,” which Warburg supposedly derived from reading the works of Spencer.¹⁵⁸ But the *Schwingung* that Warburg often speaks of is not the simple oscillation that Rio spoke of: its very movement—its cycle, its vibration—presupposes the unresolved, dynamic coexistence of the contrary poles. The latter are never eliminated—neither the one by the other, nor by a third, superior entity capable of “harmonizing” them, of subsuming them and alleviating all tension. They persist in being *contrariedades in motion*, a motion best described as *beating* or *pulsating*. The “compensation” (*Ausgleich*), according to Warburg, resolves nothing: it is less like a *synthesis* of the Hegelian type as understood by a beginning philosophy student than like a *symptom* in the Freudian sense of the term. It constitutes, literally, a “formation,” in the sense Freud would have meant—at exactly this period—namely, that of “symptom formation” (*Symptombildung*), of “substitutive formation” (*Ersatzbildung*), of “compromise formation” (*Kompromissbildung*), or else of “composite formation” (*Mischbildung*). It is no use Gombrich’s saying that Freud was virtually unknown to Warburg¹⁵⁹—even though his famous article “The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words” represents a typical case of “ambivalence” or of “depolarized polarization”¹⁶⁰—given the striking analogy between Warburg’s aesthetic of the *dynamograms* and Freud’s metapsychology of symptom *formations*.

In Warburg’s work, the dynamic of polarities, therefore, issues neither in Spencer’s simple “compatibility” nor in Gombrich’s simple “harmonization.” The latter, however, does cite an illuminating text in which Warburg, after having linked the differential relationship (*Kontrast*) with the cooperating relationship (*Zusammenwirken*), arrives at the following formulation, which is very far from an ideal synthesis or an alleviation of differences: “a process of growth endowed with latent and plastic goals” (*ein Wachstumsprozess mit latenten plastischen Zielen*).¹⁶¹ What does that mean? It means that things develop in intertwined knots, in “piles of snakes”: in one way or direction on one occasion (opposed over here) and in another way on another occasion (cooperating over there). In any case, they are endowed with unperceived movements, latent or unconscious, which, beyond any observable meaning or direction, manifest the essential plasticity of becoming. Warburg links these movements to what he at some point calls a “dialectical-hermetic causality” (*dialektische [hermetische]*

Causalität).¹⁶² This is an impure process, obviously related to a “compromise formation,” as Warburg tells us by using the expression “enigmatic creature” (*rätselhafter Organismus*) in describing the extremely heterogeneous “vitality” of the Florentine Quattrocento.¹⁶³

The evolution of Warburg’s interests confirms this hybrid, unappeased, and polarized structure of the *Nachleben*: little by little he will come to the view that every object within a culture must be understood as a case of active tension [tension en acte] or of the “energy of confrontation.” In the end, he will see the entire history of culture as a redoubtable “psychomachia.” The geographical and stylistic polarity evident in his writings on the Florentine Renaissance will thus become transformed into a more fundamental, more anthropological polarity: a kind of mental geography, or a *stylistic map of the Western psyche* in which the energy of confrontation is no longer found in the opposition between Burgundy and Latium in the fifteenth century but rather in that between “Athens and Alexandria” in the long sweep of our European civilization. When Warburg concludes his 1920 essay with the almost Socratic injunction that “Athens has to be constantly won back from Alexandria,”¹⁶⁴ one almost seems to hear an echo of Freud’s wise saying *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* [Where the id was, there ego shall be].¹⁶⁵

The conflict between the Id (*Es*) and the Ego (*Ich*)—primary processes against secondary processes—constitutes, perhaps, the metapsychological horizon of the Warburgian polarities in general. In fact, the *polarity of the symbol*, which thoroughly penetrates Warburg’s notion of culture, culminates in something like a *metapsychological polarity*, one which lies at the base of the “psycho-history” dreamed of by the author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. It is no accident that he formulated the group of hypotheses concerning that history just before and just after, first, his psychotic experience and, second, his Freudian/existential analysis under Ludwig Binswanger in the years 1921 to 1924.

It was thus as a “gravely ill” (*schwer erkrankt*) man that, in 1920, Warburg published his magisterial article, written two years earlier, on pagan divination in the age of Luther.¹⁶⁶ A seismograph broken by the historical waves of the First World War and by what he himself called his “incurable schizoid” state,¹⁶⁷ the historian gives us in this text the *cultural symptomatology* of all the agonies that he himself experienced on an individual level. It is because *symbols* have a dynamic and polarized structure—conflictual and unstable, constituted of unappeasable movements and pulsations—that culture must be understood on the basis of its movements, its malaises, and its *symptoms*. The article on pagan divination in the age of the Reformation can thus be read entirely as a symptomatology of modern reason. In it we find violent oppositions between “images” (*Bilder*) and “signs” (*Zeichen*), “magic” (*Magie*) and “logic” (*Logik*), and material “idols” (*Götzen*) and “mathematical abstraction” (*mathematische Abstraktion*).¹⁶⁸

Thus, as I have already suggested, this bundle of polarities replays, on another plane and with a transformed vocabulary, the Nietzschean polarity

of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which Warburg here renames that of the "Olympian" (*olympisch*) and the "demonic" (*dämonisch*) in order to stress the tension between "high" and "low" categories of culture. It was also a way of recalling that the dynamograms in question record the movement of a tragedy: the "tragic history of the freedom of modern European thought" (*die tragische Geschichte der Denkfreiheit des modernen Europäers*), as Warburg ultimately expressed it.¹⁶⁹ At the heart of this tragedy, we see a new polarity appear, a fundamental tension which, in fact, leads us to a problem of form and force, that is to say, a problem of image: what produces, in the image, the thought of its body? And what produces, in the image, the spirit of its matter?

Under the sign of Goethe—between *Faust*, cited at the very beginning of the article, and the *Theory of Colors*, cited at the very end¹⁷⁰—Warburg will thus pose the question, an essential one for art history, just as it is for aesthetics, of the relationship between *body* and *symbol*, between the plastic forms of "anthropomorphism" (*Anthropomorphismus*) and the discrete forms of the "sign" (*Zeichen*). Warburg's entire analysis of Dürer's famous engraving *Melancholia I* can be read as a dynamogram of the polarity between the melancholic *humor* (visceral interiors, organic substances) and the sublimate *code* [*chiffre* sublimatoire] of the magic square drawn by the artist (the manipulation of signs by thought, the logical conversion of the agony of an individual's destiny).¹⁷¹ We must stress the fact that this game of polarities is envisaged *structurally*: Warburg himself is careful to state how he is here subverting all "theor[ies] of evolution that are determined by purely chronological concepts":

*Logic sets a mental space between man and object by applying a conceptual label; magic destroys that space by creating a superstitious—theoretical or practical—association between man and object. In the divinatory workings of the astrologer's mind, these two processes act as a single, primitive tool that he can use both to make measurements and to work magic. That age when logic and magic blossomed, like trope and metaphor, in Jean Paul's words, "grafted to a single stem," is inherently timeless (*ist eigentlich zeitlos*): by showing such a polarity in action (*eine solche Polarität*), the historian of civilization furnishes new grounds for a more profoundly positive critique of a historiography that rests on a purely chronological theory of development (*zu einer vertieften positiven Kritik einer Geschichtsschreibung, deren Entwicklungslehre rein zeitbegrifflich bedingt ist*).¹⁷²*

Can we not already read, in this passage, the famous *zeitlos* aspect—the fundamental anachronism—of the Freudian unconscious? However that may be, five years after writing these lines, Warburg, in his Kreuzlingen lecture, will recast all these polarities in a vocabulary that is still more explicitly psychological, or better put, metapsychological. From then on the influence of Freud and of Binswanger—a topic to which I will try to return in greater detail—will guide Warburg's attempt to grasp culture in terms of "mythical thinking" (*mythische Denkweise*) and "substitutional image" (*ersetzendes Bild*),

of the processes of “defense” (*Abwehr*) and “phobic reflex” (*phobischer Reflex*), of “pulsional magic” (*triebhaftige Magie*) and “catharsis” (*Katharsis*), of “separation trauma” (*Katastrophe der Loslösung*) and “compulsion to associate” (*Verknüpfungszwang*), of the “unconscious archive of memory” (*Archiv des Gedächtnisses*), and, finally, of that “original causal category” (*Urkategorie kausaler Denkform*) represented, in his eyes, by the maternal.¹⁷³

The interesting thing to observe about these exploratory formulations is the fact that the more Warburg advances toward a *metapsychology* of the various aspects of culture the more he tends toward a *phenomenology* of the “body of the image,” if I may put it that way. The “symptoms of a unified psychological process within the constant oscillation” (*Symptome einer . . . Seelenschwingung*), which he mentions in 1926,¹⁷⁴ the “attempts to understand the internal processes of stylistic evolution in terms of their psycho-artistic necessity” (*Versuche . . . , die Vorgänge innerhalb der Stilentwicklung als kunstpsychologische Notwendigkeit zu verstehen*), which he speaks about in 1927–28,¹⁷⁵ the “dialectic of the monster” (*Dialektik des Monstrums*), whose psychological powers he constantly evokes until his death¹⁷⁶—all that is accompanied by an extreme attention to the bodily and phantasmic relations of the subject (whether artist or spectator) to the image.

In 1929, Warburg ultimately described the “heterogeneous origin” (*heterogene Herkunft*) of Renaissance art, which had provided the very first subject of his inquiries, in terms of spatial and corporal phenomenology: the basic oscillation (*Schwingung*) of culture produces two reciprocal movements characterized by tension and “rhythm” (*Rhythmus*), for which he created the neologisms *Einschwingen* and *Ausschwingen*. Thus, as if in a respiratory movement, or in a rhythm of diastole and systole, the image may be said to *beat* or *pulsate* [*l’image bat*]. It oscillates toward the interior, and then oscillates toward the exterior. It opens and it closes. It invites us to a material contact (*Materie*), then rejects us, putting us at a distance in the semiotic realm (*zeichenmässig*).¹⁷⁷ And it continues, in an endless movement of flux and reflux: “and back again” (*und zurück*).¹⁷⁸

The image beats, and the culture in it beats as well. Such is its paradoxical life—its *Lebensenergie* impossible to stabilize, and its dialectical movement impossible to complete or terminate. It comes and goes, alternating between affirmation and denial of life, between *Lebensbejahung* and *Lebensverneinung*, as Warburg expressed it, shortly before his death, in the feverish manuscript on the *Grundbegriffe*.¹⁷⁹

FIELD AND VEHICLE OF THE SURVIVING MOVEMENTS: THE *PATHOSFORMEL*

When one seeks to determine if a supine body is dead or alive, if it still possesses a residue of animal energy, one must pay careful attention to movements—to movements rather than to the surface appearances themselves. Can one detect, for example, the oscillation of a finger, a motion of the lips, a trembling of the eyelids, even if they are scarcely perceptible or infinitely slowed down, like that “petrified wave” of which Goethe speaks so eloquently in describing

the *Laocoön*?¹⁸⁰ I am able to assert that *there is a remnant of life* in something only when I can assert that *it can still move*, in whatever way that might be. Phenomenologically speaking, the entire problematic of survival is tied up with the problem of organic movement.

The situation already becomes more complicated with Warburg's *Nachleben*, considering that the *survival of Antiquity* is to be detected in *historical life* itself, in, as it were, the hollow of the visible succession of events, their reverse side or lining, sometimes in the shock wave, and, thus, at the surface [pan]. The "movement of survival" must be understood as a counterrhythm to the "movement of life." The time of the *contretemps* has a parallel, it seems, in the realm of the plastic, visual, and corporal, in a dynamogram of *countermovement*. And survival, it seems, is a symptom in the movements of life, manifesting itself as a countereffect [contre-effectuation] which is neither completely living nor completely dead, but, instead, is the *other genre of life*, that of the things which have passed away and yet persist to haunt us.

Warburg provided the answer to this great question—*what are the corporal forms of temporal survival [du temps survivant]?*—by developing the concept of "emotive formulas" (*Pathosformeln*), which is absolutely central to his work. He sketched the idea of them very early. It already underlies the unpublished project of the "Fragments for the foundation of a monist psychology of art" (*Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie*), which he began in 1888, when he was still a student, and continued to work on until 1905.¹⁸¹ It remained omnipresent in his final workshop, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, one of the potential subtitles of which was "The entry of the language of gestures *all'antica* into the anthropomorphic representation of the early Italian Renaissance" (*der Eintritt d[er] (Gebärdensprache all'antica in die Menschen-Darstellung der italienischen Frührenaissance)*).¹⁸² He even worked further on this topic during the period when he was trying to formulate his "fundamental principles" (*Grundbegriffe*), as can be seen from the ensemble of manuscript pages, likewise unpublished, entitled *Pathos, Pneuma, Polarität*.¹⁸³

The *Pathosformel* accompanied no less insistently every "visible" advance, that is to say, legible and published, in his reflections on the nature of images. Already in the prefatory note to his thesis on Botticelli (1893), Warburg announced his principal project, though without daring to explicitly state the word he had coined in order to define it: "to trace, step by step, how the artists and their advisers recognized 'the antique' as a model (*Vorbild*) that demanded an intensification of outward movement (*eine gesteigerte äussere Bewegung*), and how they turned to antique sources whenever accessory forms—those of garments and of hair—were to be represented in motion (*die Darstellung äusserlich bewegten Beiwerks*)."¹⁸⁴

The project seemed so crucial to Warburg that he referred to it again in the concluding words. Going beyond the "confused erudition" (*verworrene Gelehrsamkeit*), which is how he himself characterized his study of *The Birth of Venus*,¹⁸⁵ he stated that, from beginning to end, it was necessary to understand the artist's

“turn to the arts of the ancient world whenever it was a matter of embodying externally animated life [quoted English translation modified by the translator—Trans.] (*sobald es sich um die Verkörperung äusserlich bewegten Lebens handelte*).”¹⁸⁶

The problematic of the “emotive formulas,” which is in evidence throughout Warburg’s published work, seems to culminate, and finally appear explicitly, in his text on “Dürer and Italian Antiquity,” written in 1905. There the historian brings to light an “emotive, rhetorical current” (*pathetische Strömung*) in which, he holds, the style of the early Renaissance took form.¹⁸⁷ Selecting, and not by chance, the violent theme—as murderous as it is erotic—of the killing of Orpheus by his own lovers, Warburg discerns a characteristic use of gestures, which he expresses in a kind of “dynamographic” vector that relates the depictions on Greek vases to certain Renaissance illustrations of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and then the learned pathos of Mantegna to the agonizing humanism of Dürer (figs. 3, and 26–28).

The theme Warburg chooses in this article is obviously much more tragic and somber than the one in his work on Botticelli; for we move from a birth to a killing, and from a female nude calling out for a caress to a male nude being beaten. Yet the problems encountered are the same: why does modern man return to ancient formulas as soon as it is matter of employing a vibrant sign language of the emotions [*une gestuelle affective de la présence*]? Why is it that pagan representation succeeds so well in taking on—though possibly perverting them, or, on the contrary, illuminating them—such themes of Christian iconography as divine love or lamentation over the dead body of Jesus? To what degree do the formulas used to express emotions in the plastic arts of the Renaissance derive, not only from archaeology (the discovery of Roman remains), but also from the use of poetic language, of music and of dance, as is so clearly evident, for example, in *Orfeo*, Politian’s famous tragic ballet? Why did this “authentically ancient voice” survive within the tensions of the unstable, “hybrid style” characteristic of the Florentine Quattrocento? How did the movement of temporal survival, the *Nachleben der Antike*, become manifest on the geographical plane of the cultural “exchanges” between North and South, the Germany of Dürer and the Italy of Mantegna?

My choice of subject springs from the conviction that these two works [Albrecht Dürer, *Death of Orpheus*, 1494 and *Death of Orpheus*. 15th Century. Engraving of a drawing by Andrea Mantegna] [figs. 3 and 28] have yet to be adequately interpreted as documents of the reentry of the ancient world into modern civilization (*Wiedereintritt der Antike in die moderne Kultur*). . . . Its style is directly informed by the emotive gestural language defined by Greece for this same tragic scene (*die typische patetische Gebärdensprache der antiken Kunst*). . . . [These works] supply almost identical proofs of the vigor with which this archaeologically authentic emotive formula [*archäologische getreue Pathosformel*] based on an antique Orpheus or Pentheus, had taken root in Renaissance artistic circles. Most telling of all is a woodcut in the 1497 edition of Ovid of the *Metamorphoses*. . . . [fig. 27]. The true

FIG. 26 Anonymous Greek, *Death of Orpheus*, fifth century B.C.E. Drawing of a vase painting. Reprinted from Warburg, "Dürer und die italienische Antike," Leipzig, 1906, pl. 1.

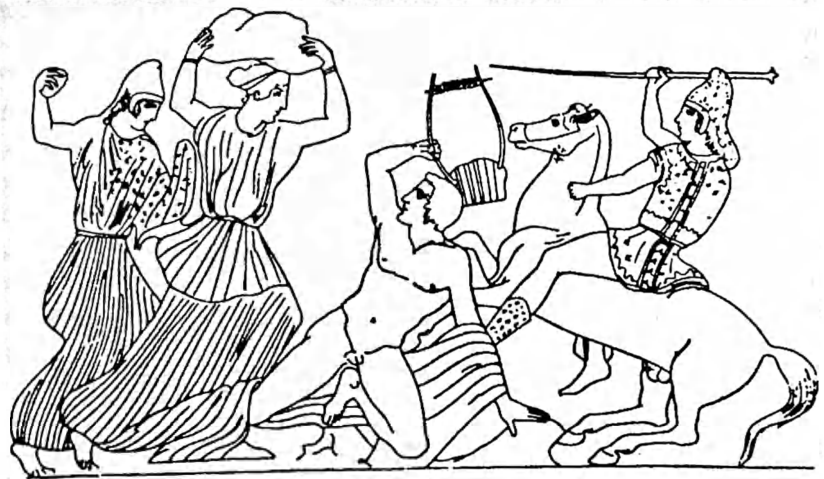


FIG. 27 Anonymous Italian, *Death of Orpheus*, 1497. Woodcut from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Venice, 1497). Reprinted from Warburg, *Dürer und die italienische Antike* (Leipzig, 1906), 57.



voice (*Stimme*) of Antiquity, which the Renaissance knew well, chimes with the image. For the *Death of Orpheus* was more than a studio motif of purely formal interest: it stood for the dark mystery play of Dionysian legend, passionately and knowingly experienced (*ein wirkliches . . . Erlebnis*) in the spirit and through the words of the ancients. Proof of this can be heard in the Ovidian strains of the first Italian drama, Poliziano's *Orfeo*, written in Italian and first performed in Mantua in 1471. *The Death of Orpheus* engraving drew added emphasis from that tragic dance-play, the earliest work of the famous Florentine humanist: for it set Orpheus's sufferings, acted out and vigorously expressed (*unmittelbar dramatisch verkörpert*). . . . These "Plates to Illustrate the *Death of Orpheus*" are thus a record of some initial



FIG. 28 Anonymous Italian, *Death of Orpheus*, fifteenth century. Engraving of a drawing by Andrea Mantegna. Reprinted from Warburg, *Dürer und die italienische Antike*, pl. 2.

excavations along the route of the long migration that brought antique superlatives of gesture (*wandernde antike Superlative der Gebärdensprache*). [Translation modified by the author and, accordingly, by the translator—Trans.]¹⁸⁸

In 1914—just before going to war against the “demons” of culture and the “monsters” of his own *psyche*—Warburg returned to the Quattrocento’s “intensified mobility *all’antica*” and “new pathetic style,” to a subject in which he recognized, going back beyond Mantegna, the crucial role of Pollaiuolo and, above all, of Donatello, with his Dionysian *Lamentations*, his “orgiastic [expressions of] mourning,” his Christian *conclamitiones* [*conclamations christiques*], and his depiction of maenads placed in front of tombs.

Ultimately the suppliers of these costly items could not resist Donatello’s desire to set the human body free from this rigid and opulent facade in order to endow it with the unhindered expressive rhythm of classical form. . . . From the reliefs for the reliquary of St. Anthony onwards (circa 1445) he, and above all his pupils, were seized by an intensely nervous, tragic sense of pathos which, in the case of individual figures, leads to an orgy of movement which seeks to excel the emotional ferocity of the antique reliefs that served as the model.¹⁸⁹

Is there any reason to be astonished that this line of thinking concludes with a statement about the “classical disquiet” of gestural formulas and the Nietzschean polarity of “Apollonian *ethos*” and “Dionysian *pathos*”?¹⁹⁰ But who, since Warburg, has been interested in studying the Italian Renaissance from this point of view of “free rhythm,” of “hyper-nervous movement,” and of

"emotional impetuosity"? Along with Dionysian survival, the discipline of art history exorcised the corporeity of the *Pathosformeln* to the same degree that it had to exorcise the temporality of the *Nachleben*.

* * *

Thus, it is possible to follow step by step the rejection of the "emotive formulas," or, in some instances, their weakening, in the texts of several famous art historians. The first among them, Wölfflin, defended the "moderate" and spiritualized classicism of the Cinquecento against the "anxiety," the "gaucherie," and the "triviality" of the Quattrocento.¹⁹¹ Then Panofsky reduced the expression of emotion to the simple status of "primary subject" of an image. In his own text on Dürer and classical Antiquity, he sought the resolution, or rather dissolution, of the "restless, tragic élan" in favor of a "classical serenity" entirely in the vein of Winckelmann. He rejected the Quattrocento's emphasis on the pathetic along with its "late Gothic" aspects, which was a way of suggesting that the emotional was a regressive element. He also adopted the opposition between "vulgar nature" and "noble nature" dear to Kant, because the latter was sublimated, idealized, and universalized. Finally, Panofsky praised the "juste milieu" and "unification" in contrast to all the pathetic tensions dear to Warburg.¹⁹²

Later, Gombrich reduced the *Pathosformeln* simply to questions of iconographic message and of the "illusion of life,"¹⁹³ before excluding them purely and simply from his research on "Action and Expression in Western Art."¹⁹⁴ In short, Warburg's concept, for all that it had brought notoriety to its inventor, was nevertheless "comparatively neglect[ed]" and, therefore, deprived of all use value.¹⁹⁵ Thus, André Chastel could go so far as to completely ignore it in his synthetic study of "Gesture in the Renaissance" ["L'art du geste à la Renaissance"].¹⁹⁶ But then, so did Pierre Francastel, when he analyzed the relationship between "plastic imagination" and "theatrical vision" in the Quattrocento.¹⁹⁷ Thus, Warburg's *Pathosformel* was neglected by structuralist history (implicitly hostile to its Nietzschean emphasis on energy) as well as by positivist history (implicitly hostile to its anthropological ambition). And it has even been ignored by several fields of research that, in a certain sense, owe their existence to it: for example, the history of gestures and, more recently, the semiotics of emotions.

Warburg's commentators have, of course, recognized the central, indeed constitutive nature of the *Pathosformel*.¹⁹⁸ A few historians whose work is allied with anthropology—foremost among them Carlo Ginzburg—have, in fact, tried to demonstrate the continuing usefulness of Warburg's concept, even if this involved reorienting it in one way or another.¹⁹⁹ But the establishment of such a use value runs into two major obstacles. The first derives from the considerable philosophical ambition crystallized within the concept, which art historians have really never figured out how to deal with. And the second derives from the fact that Warburg, as was his habit, set forth multiple hypotheses—his

theoretical “rockets”—without ever providing a systematic way of unifying them, or even a way of provisionally toning down their contradictions.

This philosophical ambition is itself supported by the very words Warburg chose: words with a dual [duplice] structure, as one can often see. *Pathosformel* and *Dynamogramm* tell us that Warburg conceived the image in terms of a twofold scheme [double régime], namely, as the dialectical energy of a montage of things that one generally considers to be contradictory: the pathos along with the formula, power along with a graphic representation of it, in sum, *the force with the form*, the temporality of a subject with the spatiality of an object, and so forth. Warburg’s aesthetic of the dynamogram thus found the perfect home in the pathetic gesture *all’antica*. It is the place par excellence—a formal *topos*, but also a phenomenological vector yielding a measure of intensity—for the display of that “energy of confrontation” which, in Warburg’s eyes, made the entire history of art a veritable psychomachia, and a cultural symptomatology.²⁰⁰ The *Pathosformel* is thus a signifying line or stroke [trait], a tracing [tracé] of the anthropomorphic images of the ancient and the modern West, one which captures these images as they act [en acte], registering what it is within the image and its milieu which makes the *image beat*, stir, and struggle [*se débat*] caught up as it is in the polarity of things.

This conflict [débat]—that is to say, this element of tension, existing within a crucible of contradictions—is omnipresent in Warburg’s work. Far from constituting a sign of conceptual weakness, as was believed by Gombrich and all those who confuse the power of a concept with doctrinal completeness [clôture doctrinale], this constant “conflict” [débat] of the *Pathosformel* manifests something like a *philosophical bet* that Warburg made at the very beginning of his “science without a name”: a bet that consisted, first of all, in conceiving the image without schematizing it (in either the trivial sense or in the Kantian sense of the term). And, in fact, the *Pathosformel* will be constituted as an agitated notion, infused with *passion* by the very thing it treats objectively: from beginning to end it struggled in the reptilian knot of images, grappling at every moment with the swarming complexity of spatial things and the intervallic complexity of temporal things. It is not for nothing that the concept took on a definite form at a period when the young Warburg was trying to understand, in the class of his archaeology teacher, Kekulé von Stradonitz, the intricate, entwined movements—animal or choreographic, agonistic or erotic, even if they lacked aesthetic beauty—of the *Battles of the [Greek] Centaurs* (fig. 17) and, of course, of the *Laocoön*, which became an obsessive presence throughout Warburg’s work²⁰¹ (fig. 29).

* * *

The theoretical ambition of the *Pathosformel* was thus worthy of the risk that Warburg had taken in order to *sustain*—and not to eliminate—the multiple polarities of the ancient image that appear when it is viewed from the

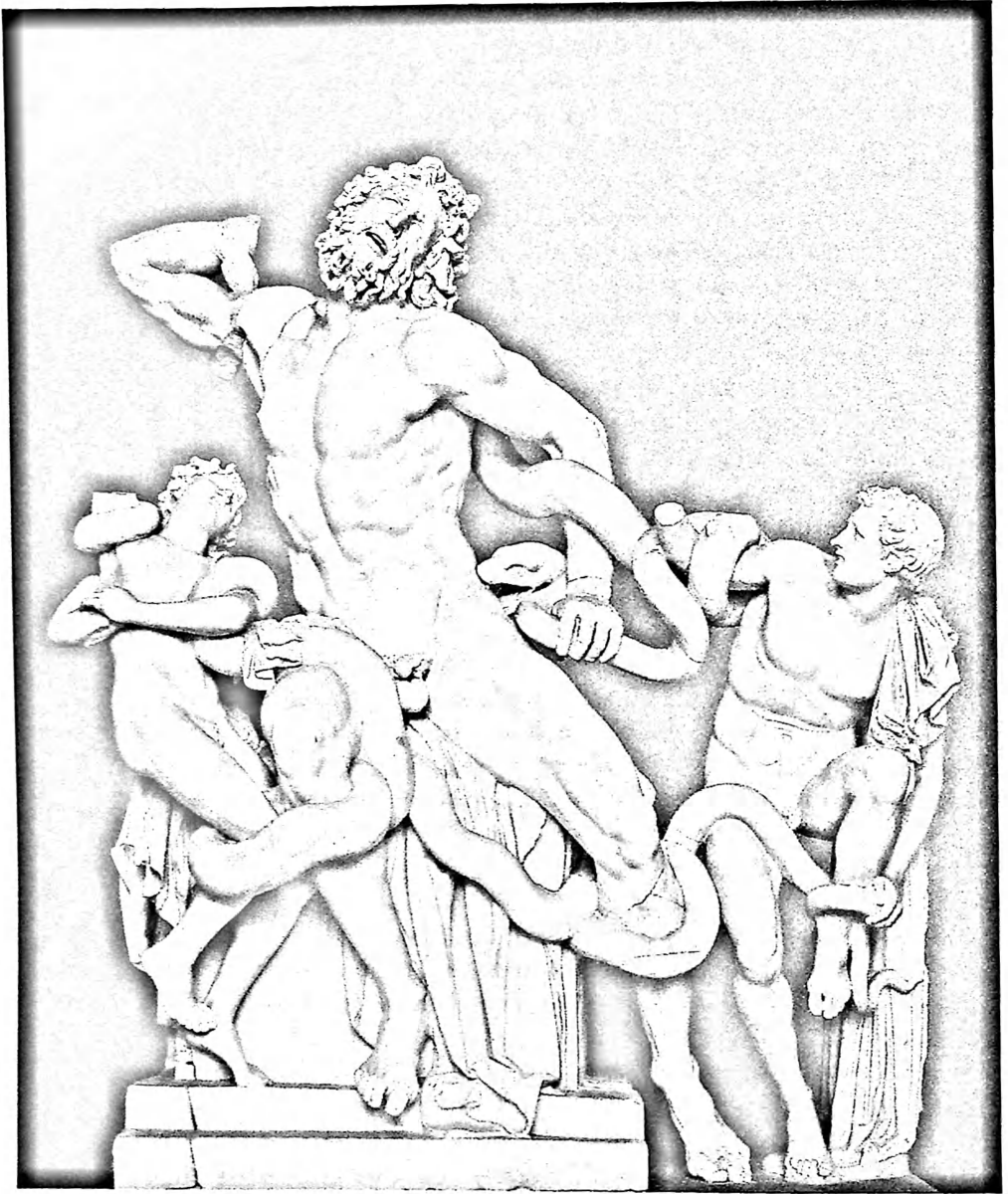


FIG. 29 Anonymous Roman, *Laocoon and His Sons*, ca. 50 c.e. Marble. After a Greek original of the third century b.c.e. Rome, Vatican Museum. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

standpoint of its survivals. Ernst Cassirer, in his obituary of 1929, fittingly placed the *Pathosformel*—along with the *Nachleben*, of which it is the incarnation, or rather the embodiment, the *Verkörperung*, as Warburg himself said—at the center of the problem posed by the author of this revolutionary history of art:

For, in the first instance, he did not scrutinize works of art, but rather felt and saw the great formative energy behind the works (*die grossen gestaltenden Energien hinter den Werken*). And he considered that this energy did no less than constitute the eternal expressive forms of human existence (*die ewigen Ausdrucksformen menschlichen Seins*), of human emotion, and of human destiny. Thus all creative formation, wherever it acted, became legible to him as a unique language whose structure he sought to penetrate ever more deeply and whose mysterious laws he sought to decipher. Where others saw definite, circumscribed forms, where they saw forms in repose, he saw moving forces (*bewegende Kräfte*); he saw there what he termed the great “emotive formulas” that Antiquity had created as an enduring legacy for mankind.²⁰²

The man who wrote these lines had just spent eight years among the bookshelves of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, so one is not surprised that he really understood the historical and philosophical importance of the *Pathosformel*. But, equally, one will not be surprised that, as a good neo-Kantian, Cassirer wanted to make explicit the relationship of the artistic forms to the “moving forces” of culture in precisely the terms that Warburg, with his Nietzschean views, wished to subvert. Thus, it is incorrect to state that the “great configuring energies” are “behind the works of art.” Warburg was a historian of singularities and not a seeker after abstract universals. In his eyes, the “fundamental problems,” the *forces*, were not “behind” but rather *at the same level as the forms*, even if in some cases that meant they were determined by or confined within a minuscule individual object. The critique of Wölfflinian “formalism,” which Cassirer implicitly evokes in this passage, does not mean that the “symbolic forms” constitute a *deus ex machina*, the entity which subsumes all the figurative forms.

Proof of this can be found in the undoubted influence, incomprehensible in terms of Cassirer’s account, of Gottfried Semper and Adolf Hildebrand on Warburg’s formulation of the *Pathosformel*, which takes into account ornament, the phenomenological relationship to forms, and material culture just as much as it concerns itself with symbolic contents.²⁰³ Salvatore Settis and Giorgio Agamben have rightly observed, each in his own way, that the notion of the *Pathosformel* introduces a previously unheard of relationship of form to content: “A concept like the *Pathosformel*,” Agamben writes, “makes it impossible to separate form from content, for it expresses the indissoluble intrication of an emotive charge and an iconographic formula.”²⁰⁴

What, then, is an intrication? It is a configuration in which heterogeneous, even antagonistic things are shaken together. Its elements can never be

synthesized, yet it is impossible to separate them from each other. Although they never can be separated, it is impossible to unify them into a superior entity. They are contrasting elements stuck together, differences linked together in the same units. *Polarities heaped up*, in piles, crumpled up, lying on top of each other: "formulas" with passions, "engrams" with energies, impressions with movements,²⁰⁵ "exterior causes" (the wind in a nymph's hair) with psychological motifs (the desire that animates the nymph), "accessories" (the *parergon*, the periphery) with treasures (the center, the heart of things), realistic details with Dionysian intensities, marble arts (sculpture) with the arts of gesture (dance, theater, opera), and so on.

But the most troubling intrications concern history and temporality themselves: *heaps of temporal scraps* [*chiffons*, which can also mean "rags" or "ribbons"—Trans.], if I may be so bold as to put it that way. Heaps of heterogeneous times, wriggling like those snakes gathered together in the Native American ritual that so fascinated Warburg²⁰⁶ (fig. 76). Here we find Eros intertwined with Thanatos, the fight to the death joined with desire, symbolic montage with demontage fueled by drives [*démontage pulsionnel*], mineralized fossil with the vital energy of movement, the durable crystallization of graphs with the fleeting expression of emotions. Here we find the etymological linkage of the *momentum* of impersonal time and *movimentum* of the body under the influence of the passions.

Warburg . . . showed how for certain typical, ever-recurring situations the ancients created specific pregnant forms of expression. It is not simply that certain inner excitations, certain tensions and resolutions are firmly adhered to; it is as if later artists are under their spell. Wherever the same feeling is suggested the old image which his art creates comes to life again. It arises, according to Warburg's expression, from determinate "emotive formulas" indelibly stamped in the human memory. Warburg has pursued the duration and change, the statics and dynamics of these "emotive formulas" throughout the history of the visual arts. [Trans. modified—Trans.]²⁰⁷

Emotions, emotions "frozen as if by enchantment" and traversing the ages: such is indeed the figurative magic of the *Pathosformel* according to Warburg. Once again, in bringing this phenomenon to light, he was guided by a penetrating insight into a paradox that was constitutive of the Italian Renaissance: it is in the walls of the ancient sarcophagi that the movements of life, of desire, of the passions have survived as far as our own days. Long enough to move us and transform the present time of our own vision. Long enough to move by themselves, as if "the force which determines style"—that *stilbildende Macht* so frequently invoked by Warburg from the time of his very first publication²⁰⁸—was able to turn these *fossils of movement* [*du mouvement*] into genuine organisms defying chronological time, that is to say, into *moving fossils* [*en mouvement*]. They are incarnate survivals, "primitive formulas" capable of agitating, of causing motion in the present time of our own gestures, as Warburg's contemporary

Rainer Maria Rilke so well expressed it when he wrote, "And yet they, who are long gone, are in us, as predisposition, as burden upon our destiny, as blood that pulsates, and as gesture that rises up out of the depths of time."²⁰⁹

THE QUEST FOR PRIMITIVE FORMULAS

Discovering "emotive formulas" is no simple task. Detecting a few analogies between different representations of the same type of gesturing is not enough to reveal their genealogical link or to understand the process by which the same "corporal impression of surviving time" took form, and, of course, became transformed. The sources and the theoretical bases of the *Pathosformel* are numerous.²¹⁰ They presuppose, at the very least, a meaningful articulation of three points of view, or, I would even say, three different disciplinary standpoints: philosophical (to problematize the very terms "emotive" and "formula"), historical (to bring to light the genealogy of the objects involved), and anthropological (to account for the cultural relationships in which these objects are enmeshed).

Taking a philosophical position on the issue requires the following preliminary step: one must reject once and for all the purely negative or privative definitions of emotion (or pathos), which traditionally set it in opposition to action (*poieîn*), to substance (*ousia*, as a result of which passion is related ontologically to the concept of accident), and to impassibility (*apathêia*) and, therefore, to wisdom (*sophia*). One needs to open all that up and make it more nuanced and dialectical. One needs to recognize the essential, positive *plasticity* of the pathetic paradigm. The *pathêtikos* being, the being to which something can happen—could it not transform its weakness (by opening up, by making itself vulnerable [prêter le flanc]) into power (by opening up the field of the possible)? Would not its capacity to be affected also give it the power to act in response? The philosopher—namely, Aristotle, in his treatise *On the Soul*—writes that "what suffers is dissimilar, but once it has suffered, it is similar."²¹¹ Given this paradoxical condition of pathos, should not the historian of images be looking here for the richness inherent in the power of figuration?

The notion of the *Pathosformel* requires, moreover, a clarification—and how difficult it is to achieve!—of the old problem of *expression*, so often abandoned by theoretical thought. If Warburg's work is so thoroughly permeated with the vocabulary of expression (*Ausdruck*), it is owing to the confluence of several traditions existing in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. First, there are the *philosophies of immanence*, whose history, "somewhat hidden and somewhat cursed [un peu maudite]," as Gilles Deleuze put it, runs from Spinoza to Nietzsche. Attentive to the question of "what a body can do," and going straight to the heart of the matter, they produced the most radical critiques ever brought to bear on the classical concept of representation.²¹²

Another tradition is that of the *philosophies of the symbol*, that is to say, the philosophies of the formula. From this point of view, we should name the two figures, however different they might be, of Gottlob Frege and Ernst Cassirer.

The former, an exact contemporary of Warburg, was not able to frame the problem of the formula without taking the risk of a genuine philosophical plunge into the concepts of *phantasia* and of expression.²¹³ The latter, who was a quasi-disciple of Warburg in certain of his areas of interest, was not able to frame the problem of language and of the *symbol* in general without referring to a history of subjectivity reaching back to the ancient notion of *pathos*:

But as philosophy brought a new breadth and depth to the concept of "subjectivity"; as this concept gave rise, more and more clearly, to a truly universal view of the spontaneity of the spirit, which proved to be as much a spontaneity of feeling and will as of cognition—it became necessary to stress a new factor in the achievement of language. For when we seek to follow language back to its earliest beginnings, it seems to be not merely a representative sign for ideas, but also an emotional sign for sensuous drives and stimuli. The ancients knew this derivation of language from emotion, and from the *pathos* of sensation, pleasure, and pain.²¹⁴

The author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was well aware that the ancient recognition of *pathos* was inseparable from its use in poetry (the suffering of Achilles), in theater (the suffering of Antigone), and, of course, in the figurative arts (the suffering of Laocoön). The concept of expression assumes its full theoretical weight within the framework of a *philosophy of art*, whose imposing tradition Warburg became familiar with very early on. His teacher Carl Justi must have introduced him to the writings of Winckelmann, and August Schmarsow to those of Lessing.²¹⁵ His readings in these authors, which initiated him into the subject, were decisive—but they served above all as foils, for Warburg quickly took his distance from the two illustrious theoreticians of the eighteenth century. For example, he made ironic comments about Winckelmann's desperate attempt to find his cherished "serene grandeur" everywhere, even in the group sculpture *Laocoön*²¹⁶ (fig. 29).

As for Lessing's work, it provoked Warburg to undertake, already at the early date of 1889, a project entitled "Sketch of a critique of *Laocoön* in the light of Florentine art of the Quattrocento" (*Entwurf zu einer Kritik des Laokoons an Hand der Kunst des Quattrocento in Florenz*).²¹⁷ This was nothing less than an attack on the fortress of the "second legislator of the arts after Aristotle," in Dilthey's notable formulation of 1877.²¹⁸ In the eyes of the young Warburg, Lessing had, in a way, closed an important door almost as soon as he had opened it: that of the problem of the aesthetics of expressing the emotions. On the one hand, he had recognized the importance of *momentum*, and therefore of *movimentum*, in the expressive power of art generally; on the other hand, he had excluded the visual arts from sharing this power: "A wide-open mouth, aside from the fact that the rest of the face is thereby twisted and distorted in an unnatural and loathsome manner, becomes in painting a mere spot and in sculpture a cavity, with most repulsive effect."²¹⁹ Lessing's dogmatic position is well known. The visual arts are related to *time* only with respect to "the single

moment to which art [in contrast to poetry] must confine itself by virtue of its material limitations"; and their only relationship to *passion* is that of rejecting its moment of greatest intensity.²²⁰ The visual arts are incapable of "painting invisible actions," incapable of uniting a genuine succession of aspects, and incapable of establishing a montage of affective *antitheses*: "the poet alone possesses the craft of description by negative terms and, by mixing together the negative and positive, combining two appearances in one."²²¹

But the aesthetic notion of pathos—that *ästhetisches Pathos* that Warburg was able to find in the writings of Anton Springer²²²—did not disappear with Lessing, far from it. Not only was the *Laocoön* debated by many authors—Johann Gottfried Herder, Karl Philipp Moritz, and, of course, Goethe himself²²³—but, in addition, the question of tragic pathos became a crucial paradigm for all of German Romantic philosophy. In 1792, Friedrich Schiller poked fun at the French tragedians for their measured "decency," so different from the "true, open, unashamed" audacity of the great Greek tragic authors. To return to the Greeks was to call for genuine aesthetics, even a genuine ethics of tragic being, of *affected* being, in other words, of *pathetic* being:

Representation of sorrow merely as sorrow is never the design of art, but it is extremely important as an instrument for that design. . . . The sensuousness must *suffer* deeply and violently: there must be Pathos, in order that . . . reason may announce its independence and represent itself as *acting*. . . . Then Pathos is the first and indispensable requisite for a tragic artist, and he is allowed to carry the representation of sorrow as far as it can be done, without endangering his final design, without suppression of [his] moral freedom.²²⁴

In this text, in which the *Laocoön* group is, once again, invoked as a key example, Schiller proposes a dialectical vision of tragic *Darstellung* [representation]: "The first law of tragic art is the presentation of suffering nature. The second is the presentation of the moral resistance to suffering."²²⁵ Here he anticipates some of the ideas Hegel will develop in *The Phenomenology of Mind*.²²⁶ Meanwhile, Goethe offered his own response to the question of the *Laocoön*, in an admirable text from which Warburg unquestionably derived certain essential elements of his notion of the *Pathosformel*:

If I were ignorant of the Laocoon legend and had to classify this sculpture I would call it a tragic idyl. A father was sleeping next to his two sons; they were attacked by two snakes, and, now awake, they are trying to extricate themselves from this living reptilian net. The great significance of this work lies in its presentation of a particular moment (*Darstellung des Moments*). If the sculpture is to convey to the viewer a sense of real movement (*wenn ein Werk . . . sich wirklich vor dem Auge bewegen soll*), it has to portray a fleeting moment (*vorübergehende Moment*). We must be convinced that no part of the whole was in its present position just afterwards. If this is so, the sculpture will forever be a living image for countless millions. In order to experience

this sense of movement in the *Laocoon* group, I would suggest that you face the sculpture from a proper distance, eyes closed. If you open and immediately shut your eyes, you can see the whole marble in motion, and you will expect the whole group to have changed its position before you glance at it a second time. I would describe the sculpture as a frozen lightning bolt, a wave petrified at the very instant it is about to break upon the shore. The effect is the same if the group is viewed at night by torchlight.²²⁷

Before this sculpted group (fig. 29), Goethe reacts as a morphologist: he knows *how to look at form*. He does not say, as would an iconographer, that Laocoön and his sons are fighting against snakes. He immediately observes that the three bodies are seeking to extricate themselves from a "living net," that is to say, from an organic configuration which simultaneously underlines and smothers the representation of the human bodies. Then, Goethe shows that he knows *how to look at time*: he understands that the *moment* chosen and constructed by the artist completely determines the sculptural quality of the depicted *movement*. It is thus a "fleeting" movement, in accord with the knot—and this is truly the way to say it—of the entire image and with the aesthetic problem it solves. The *moment-as-interval* [*moment-intervalle*], the moment which is neither that of the group's earlier posture nor the one it will later assume, but rather the moment of non-stasis which remembers and anticipates both past and future stases—that is what gives pathos an opportunity to find its most radical formula: "The moment of sudden transition has genuine pathos from one state to another (*der höchste pathetische Ausdruck . . . schwebt auf dem Übergang eines Zustandes in den andern*). . . . If during a transition there remains an indication of what the previous state was like, we have the ideal subject for sculpture, as in *Laocoon*, where struggling and suffering are combined in a single moment."²²⁸

Finally, Goethe is able to cast all that in dialectical terms, by looking at the *gaze* itself [*en regardant le regard*] when the gaze composes the form with time. Thus, the artifices the poet suggests—blinking one's eyes in front of the statue, or looking at it night by the light of a flickering torch—are aimed solely at "getting a good grasp of the outline of the *Laocoon*" and at better experiencing the aesthetic truth of its *movement* and its *moment*: a frozen lightning flash, a petrified wave. The choice of the "transitory moment" not only endows the sculpture with the truth of the movement it represents; it also induces an *empathetic* effect by virtue of which the *Laocoön*, beyond being a *sculpture of movement* [*du mouvement*], becomes what is unthinkable for any marble work, that is to say, a *moving sculpture* [*en mouvement*].

Now, where Goethe's text delivers even more than it promises is when the precision of the internal analysis extends and justifies the external artifice of the *mise en scène*. The *Laocoön's* movement is not achieved by a simple blinking of the eyes or a nocturnal viewing; it derives from its own organic configuration,

which, according to Goethe, is capable of putting into play "multiple forces." This occurs "when one of them has been rendered helpless by the snake's entanglement; when the second is still able to defend himself, although injured, and when the third still has a glimmer of hope for escape."²²⁹

Beyond the iconography, it is thus the *heuristics of movement*—displaying three bodily states, three possible responses to the same situation—which gives the sculpture its fundamental truth: pathetic and instinctive [pulsionnelle]. For the anthropological truth of the *Laocoön*, Goethe tells us, is the fact that "a human being reacts with only three kinds of emotion to his own suffering and the suffering of others: fear, terror, and pity (*Furcht, Schrecken und Mitleiden*), that is to say the anxious anticipation of approaching evil, sudden awareness of present suffering, and compassion (*Teilnahme*) for present or past suffering. All three reactions are represented as well as evoked by this work, and they are portrayed with appropriate gradations."²³⁰

The *Laocoön*, therefore, is in no way the snapshot of a narrative sequence. Instead, it constitutes a *heuristic of moving time*, a subtle montage of three moments, at least, and of three different pathetic motions. The Hellenistic sculptor and his Roman copyist did not wish to show a simple effect, the fixed result of an action, but rather the link—that is to say, the dynamic interval and the work of montage—between a cause and its effects; and they did this, Goethe says, in accord with a "basic principle": "The artists have portrayed a physical effect together with its physical cause."²³¹

How could Warburg, in his own research on Renaissance *Pathosformeln*, not have been fascinated by such an analysis? Do not Pollaiuolo's figures, in the guise of several "actors" ["actants"]—which an iconographer would consider to be so many distinct personages—present regular variations of the same pathetic action viewed from several angles at once, as one can verify by looking at the archers of the great London *Saint Sebastian* or the nude males of the famous *Battle*, often cited by Warburg?

Goethe's point of view, moreover, yields two essential methodological justifications. The first, in praise of fruitful *singularities*, which are omnipresent in Warburg, is set forth by Goethe in his statement that "if one wants to talk about an outstanding work of art, we are practically compelled to talk about art, for a work embodies all aspects of art, and anyone, according to his ability, can derive general rules from a specific case."²³² Second, Goethe did not analyze the *Laocoön* with the intention of separating the different arts, by classification or hierarchy, as Lessing set out to do, but inversely, with the intention of drawing together the *threads of affinity* among diverse modes of expression. From this point of view, Goethe's lesson remains unsurpassable: it can be found in Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, but also in Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk [Arcades Project]*, in Bataille's review *Documents*, and in the theoretical writings of Eisenstein.

While Goethe, finally, opened up for Warburg the way toward a *morphology of pathos*, Nietzsche offered him the possibility of thinking about its dynamics.

It was by returning, once again, to *The Birth of Tragedy* that Warburg was able to find the means to truly get beyond the academic opposition between passion and action; for Nietzsche, better than anyone else, was able to demonstrate the nature of the *power of pathos*. When suffering becomes tragic art, when "the unconscious force [becomes] productive of forms" (*die unbewusste formenbildende Kraft*), pathos reveals its dynamism, its exuberance, and its fecundity, etc.²³³ Nietzsche's entire aesthetics is concerned with the problem of *intensification*, whether in the case of a Dionysian dancer who exaggerates his gesture and, like a musical *Laocoön*, "girds himself around with snakes," or in that of the "language of gestures," that corporal element that is so important in Nietzsche's definition of Dionysian activity.²³⁴

Not only is pathos not opposed to form; it engenders it. And not only does it engender it; it raises it to its highest degree of incandescence. By intensifying form, it gives it life and *movement*. As a result, it furnishes form's *moment* of effective action. As Gilles Deleuze has rightly observed, it is from pathos in its manifestation as power that becoming and time themselves arise:

the will to power is manifested as the capacity for being affected, as the determinate capacity of force for being affected. . . . the capacity for being affected is not necessarily a passivity but an *affectivity*, a sensibility, a sensation. . . . This is why Nietzsche always says that the will to power is "the primitive affective form" from which all other feelings derive. Or better still: "The will to power is not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*." Pathos is the most elementary fact from which a being arises.²³⁵

* * *

Here, then, are the philosophical beginnings of Warburg's research on the "emotive formulas." Let us note that it is strictly contemporary, and strictly complementary, to Alois Riegl's research on "ornamental formulas." Riegl, as we know, wanted to locate the anthropological aspect of his own research in the concept of the *Kunstwollen*, or "artistic will."²³⁶ Warburg, for his part, began from a more specifically Nietzschean notion of the "will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*), envisaged, however, not from the angle of a natural selection of "strong" forms occurring at the expense of "weak" ones, but from the precise angle of a "primitive affective form" (*primitive Affekt-Form*).²³⁷ Warburg's *Pathosformeln* are none other than those "primitive affective forms." It is important to point out, though, that one must evaluate each of these three notions—form, affect, and the primitive—in the light of the other two. In Warburg's view, the discovery of the "primitive formulas" could no more be reduced to a simple chronological investigation than it could exist without the help of philology and history. For it is in history that the primitive is not only discovered; it is there that it is formulated, takes shape, and is constructed, as well.

It is not by chance, therefore, that Warburg wanted to use the top floor of his library to extend its holdings devoted to the foundations of psychology—books on perception, “emotion” and the “will,” the unconscious and dreams, imagination, memory, and the theory of symbols—by covering an entire wall with works on the “history of gestures” from Antiquity to his own day.²³⁸ There one can find the Greek, Latin, and medieval physiognomies, the Renaissance treatises, Giovanni Bonifacio's *Art of Signs*, John Bulwer's *Chirology* and texts of Descartes, and Charles Le Brun's *Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière*. These are joined by Johann Jacob Engel's *Ideas on Gesture*, with its famous conceptual distinctions—which intersect the ancient rhetorical categories of *significatio* and *demonstratio*—its “rules of complete expression” of the soul by the body, its careful attention to the processes of “gradation” and “increase” (in other words, *intensification*), its theory of expressive *ambiguity*, and, finally, its very apposite remarks on *time* in the production of expressive movements.²³⁹ Also to be found there are the physiognomic writings of Paillot de Montabert, Schimmelpennink, Carus, and Lavater, not to mention countless further elaborations of the subject by nineteenth-century authors along both academic lines (in the fine arts) and positivist ones (in the natural sciences).

Amongst this rich harvest of attempts at codification one small work stands out. Seemingly more modest than many others, it nevertheless played a decisive role in Warburg's project of identifying and analyzing the long persistence of the “primitive affective formulas” deriving from Greco-Roman Antiquity and transmitted to the contemporary world. There is no doubt at all that this book helped Warburg leave the domain of traditional physiognomy for that of the *Pathosformel*, and to subvert the notion of simple historical continuity in favor of the time of the *Nachleben*. Although relatively old, as it dates from 1832, this work legitimated Warburg's attempt to move the “artistic iconography” of gestures from the level of descriptive inquiry, examples of which were abundant in his period, toward that of solidly grounded anthropological research. A work of the Italian scholar Andrea de Jorio, *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano*, sought to document the persistence of ancient gestures in Neapolitan popular culture.

Having compared an *archaeological* series (taken from figurative representations, namely bas-reliefs and vase painting in the museum in Naples) with a, so to speak, *ethnographic* series (taken from real gestures observed by the author in the poor quarters of the same city), Andrea de Jorio concluded that there was a “perfect resemblance” between the two series²⁴⁰ (figs. 30 and 31). In short, the Neapolitans' *present gestures* could be considered as gestures *all'antica*, although they had no connection with any “imitation” or any “renaissance” of Antiquity. Warburg certainly must have recognized in this temporal and cultural paradox the seeds of his own hypotheses on the fate—the *Nachleben*—of the emotive formulas throughout the long ages of Western representation.

Between the work of Andrea de Jorio, which no doubt owed much to the philosophy of history of Giambattista Vico and to certain writings of

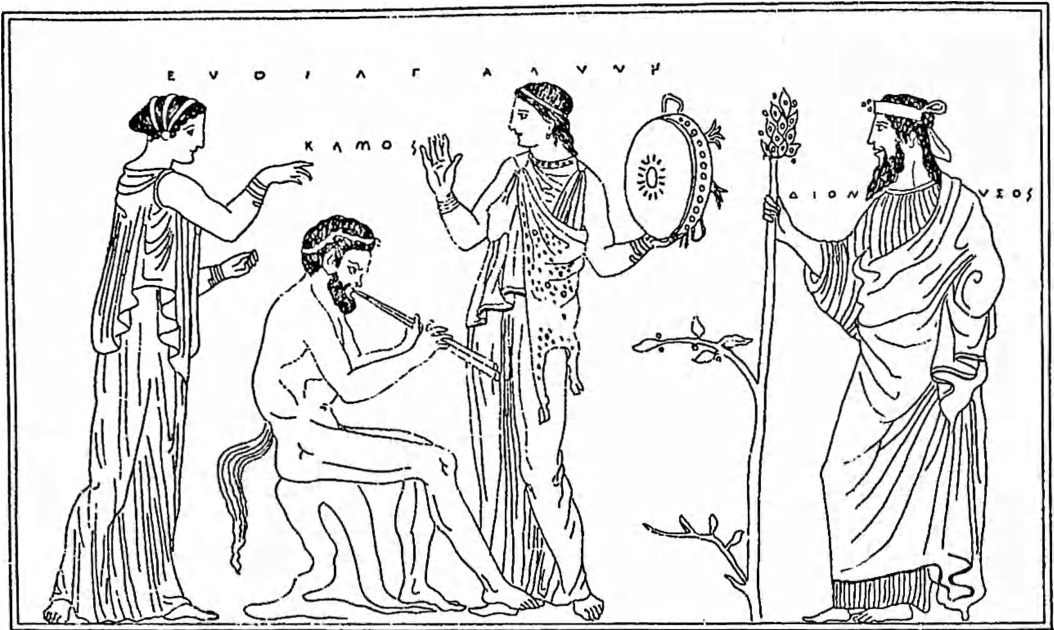


FIG. 30 Anonymous Greek, *Nymphs and Satyr with Dionysos*, fifth century B.C.E. Drawing of a vase painting. Reprinted from Andrea de Jorio, *La mimica degli Antichi investigata nel gestire Napoletano* (Naples, 1832), pl. xviii.

eighteenth-century Jesuit scholars,²⁴¹ and that of Warburg, one obviously has to take into account the considerable development of anthropology in the nineteenth century. In *Primitive Culture*, Tylor devoted two whole chapters to the survival of “emotional and imitative language,” in which the Neapolitan case, as opposed to the English, provided him with an incontrovertible example of “primitiveness”:

In the great art of speech, the educated man at this day substantially uses the method of the savage, only expanded and improved in the working out of details. . . . So far as we can judge, the visible gesture and the audible word have thus been used in combination since times of most remote antiquity in the history of our race. . . . To this prominent condition of gesture as a means of expression among rude tribes, and to the development of pantomime in public show and private intercourse among such peoples as the Neapolitans of our own day, the most extreme contrast may be found in England, where, whether for good or ill, suggestive pantomime is now reduced to so small a compass in social talk, and even in public oratory.²⁴²

The circle—encompassing Neapolitans, ancient Greeks and Romans, and “primitive” peoples—was completed a few years later by Wilhelm Wundt when, in the chapters of his monumental *Völkerpsychologie* devoted to “expressive movements” (*Ausdrucksbewegungen*) and to the “language of gestures” (*Gebärdensprache*), he reproduced the gestures of the Neapolitans and compared them directly with those of the North America Indians²⁴³ (fig. 32). Here is something

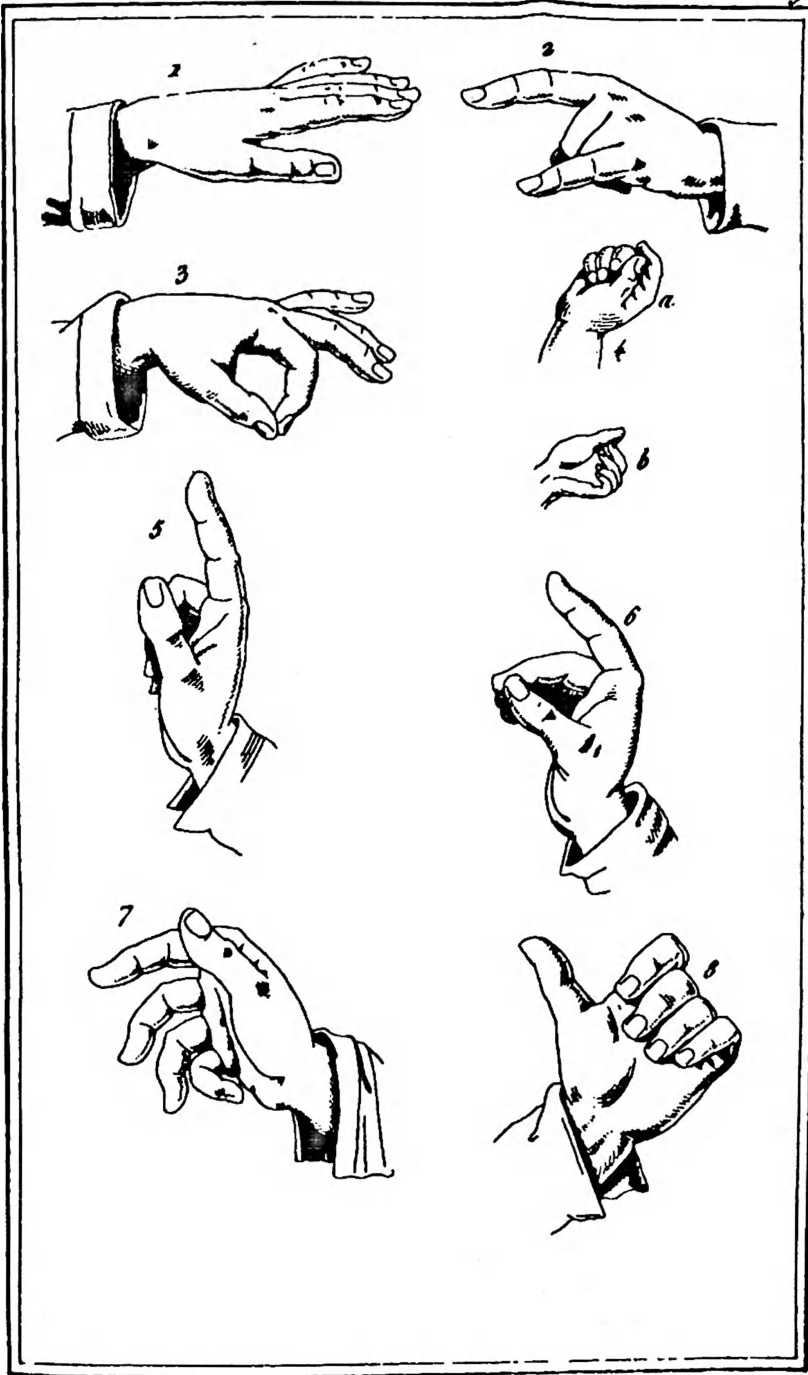


FIG. 31 Neapolitan symbolic gestures. Reprinted from De Jorio, *La mimica degli Antichi*, pl. xix.

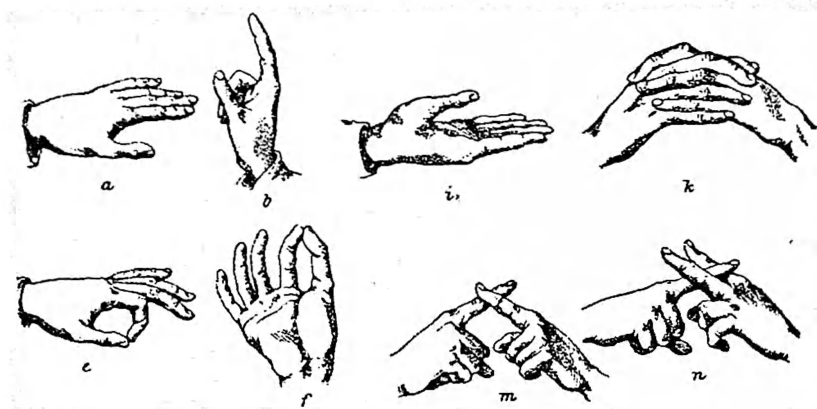


FIG. 32 Neapolitan [a-f] and North American Indian [i-n] symbolic gestures. Reprinted from Wilhelm Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie: Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythos und Sitte*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1911), 1:195, 197.

that would undoubtedly interest an art historian whose areas of studies ranged between Florence and Oraibi, between figurative survival (pictorial, artistic, Italian), on the one hand, and bodily survival (acted out, ritual, Indian), on the other. Warburg studied Wundt all the more attentively since his own teacher Schmarsow had already used and intelligently elaborated the latter's ideas.²⁴⁴

Given the heuristic use of his "interdisciplinary" readings, Warburg obviously did not need to adopt the entire conceptual framework underlying Wundt's writings. It was enough for him to separate out a few valuable elements. With respect to Warburg's interests, the *Völkerpsychologie* presented three aspects or, better, three *levels of articulation* capable of supporting his project of creating an anthropology of "primitive affective formulas." The first level concerns the interplay of the *biological* and the *symbolic* in the definition of the "language of gestures." Wundt was interested, to begin with, in the way in which the gesture is constituted, starting from an affective motion, as a "formula" and as evolved "syntax."²⁴⁵ Observing the extreme emotion displayed in the figures of Donatello or of Niccolò dell'Arca (fig. 22), Warburg must have asked himself the same sort of question: why is the efficaciousness of an "emotive formula"—its immediate simplicity, its intensity, and its empathetic power—so often linked with the very complexity of its construction and of its manipulation of signs?

The second level of articulation concerns the interplay of mimicry [le mimique] and of plastic form [le plastique] in the very notion of gesturality [gestualité]. Wundt was interested in the gestures of the Neapolitans and of the Indians for their intrinsically figurative values: he compared them to "transitory signs or [to] picture[s] sketched in the air" (*ein flüchtiger Hinweis oder ein in die*

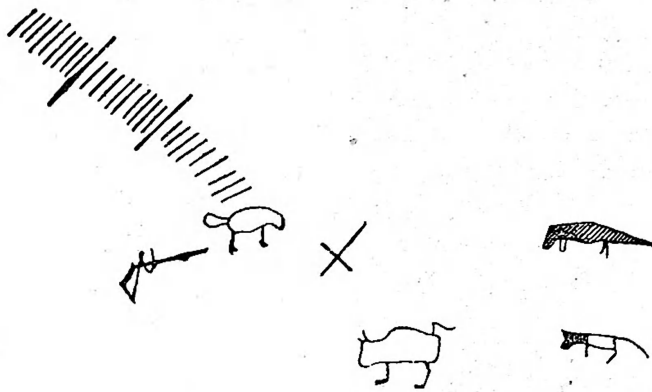


FIG. 33 Commercial letter of a North American Indian written in pictographs. From Garrick Mallery, "Sign Language Among North American Indians Compared with That Among Other Peoples and Deaf-Mutes," *Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* 1 (1881): 382. Reprinted from Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, 1:251.

Luft gezeichnetes Bild), giving as an example, borrowed from the classic study by Garrick Mallery, the hand sign produced by crossing both index fingers²⁴⁶ (fig. 32). This *bodily gesture*, which in certain Native American tribes denotes symbolic exchange, the "signature" of a contract," is found as a *pictographic sign*—a simple little cross drawn in ink—in a business letter reproduced by Wundt a little further on; there the cross occupies the interval between two items of exchange, guns in return for cattle (fig. 33).

This level of articulation was crucial for Warburg, just as it was for Wundt; for it set forth an anthropological hypothesis on the plasticity [*plasticité*] and mimetic quality [*mimétisme*] of bodily movements understood as elements of a symbolic order. Reciprocally, it provided an aesthetic hypothesis according to which all anthropomorphic figuration is rooted in bodily motor activity. For Warburg, as for Wundt, "inscription of the image" (*Bilderschrift*) could occur only on the basis of a "language of gestures" (*Gebärdensprache*).²⁴⁷

The third level of articulation concerns the interplay of the *bodily* and the *psychological* in the actual production of every gesture and in the figurability of every "emotive formula." In concluding the chapter of his *Völkerpsychologie* that deals with the "psychological character of the language of gestures,"²⁴⁸ Wundt returns to a group of hypotheses that he elaborated a few years earlier in his long essay on "physiological psychology." Since in that work he was systematically seeking out the "bodily bases of the life of the soul," it is understandable that the "movements of the soul" (*Gemüthsbewegungen*) are described there—following Darwin—in terms of their bodily expressions.²⁴⁹ It would, however, be a misinterpretation of his hypotheses to reduce them to a simple biological evolutionism; for, as Michel Espagne has aptly observed, in Wundt's work the

“primitive” is “not defined in terms of races or biological characteristics, but strictly in terms of psychology.”²⁵⁰

Finally, one further aspect of Wundt’s psychology must have interested Warburg. According to Wundt, the process of *representation* itself is based on the bodily capacities of *tactility* and *motricity*,²⁵¹ with the result that the genesis of “elementary aesthetic sentiments” is to be understood in terms of a polarity of pleasure and displeasure, of attraction and repulsion, to the detriment of questions of judgments of beauty and ugliness, questions concerning which Warburg, too, displayed a precocious contempt:

The psychological examination of the aesthetic sentiments has been carried out, for the most part, in very poor conditions, because the impulse for undertaking this study had as its essential point of departure that sentiment of the beautiful, understood in the restricted sense, which has been the chief concern of the theory of the fine arts and of the branch of knowledge which emerged from it under the name of aesthetics. That is how it happened that the simplest cases of pleasure and of displeasure have almost entirely dropped out of sight, even though they constitute a fundamental basis, indeed a necessary one, when it comes to explaining complex aesthetic effects.²⁵²

All these hypotheses no doubt helped to elicit Warburg’s first elaborations of the concept of the *Pathosformel*, and this would have been all the more natural since they were discussed and employed by two of Warburg’s own teachers. The first, August Schmarsow, not only commented on Wundt’s theses regarding the relationships between the “mimic” and the “plastic”; he also put them to the test—and, indeed, did so in Florence, where Warburg was initiated into the Renaissance—in the concrete cases of the relief sculptures of Ghiberti and Donatello.²⁵³ The second, Karl Lamprecht, shared Wundt’s ambition of establishing a genuine “history of psychism”—that psycho-history that Warburg himself was later to call for.²⁵⁴

* * *

If the history of art—or, rather, the history of images in general—wound up occupying a central position in this vast intellectual project, it is because Warburg had become certain of one thing: the *psyche* leaves traces of its presence in history. It makes way for itself and *leaves its mark on visual forms*. This is what, at first, his notions of the “dynamogram” and the “emotive formula” were meant to capture. This is also what justified his view that history required the twin foundations of ethnology and psychology.

It is not surprising to learn that Karl Lamprecht, guided by the hypothesis of a parallelism between phylogeny and ontogeny, not only established the bases of a historical anthropology but also, like Wundt before him, turned his attention to experimental psychology. This is how it came about that at the

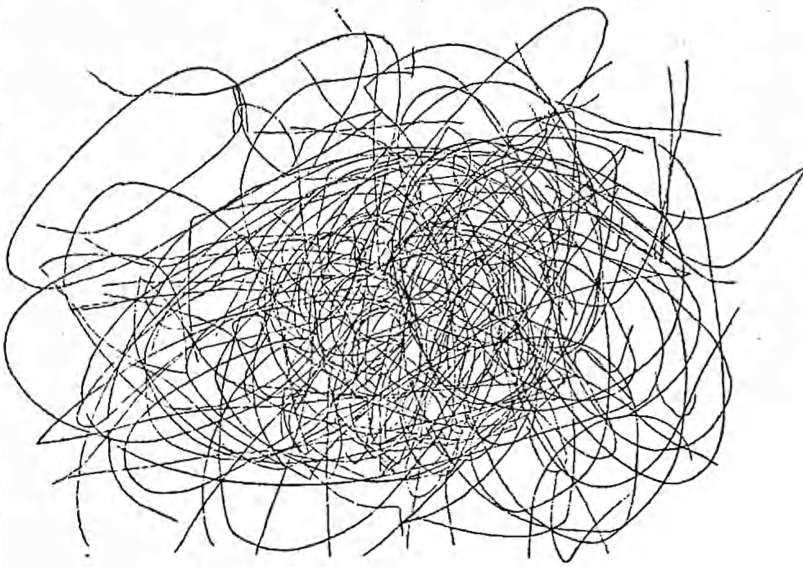


FIG. 34 Child's scribbling. Reprinted from Helga Eng, *Kinderzeichnen vom ersten Strich bis zu den Farbenzeichnungen des Achtjährigen* (Leipzig: Barth, 1927), 5.

start of the twentieth century a vast campaign was undertaken, at his initiative, to assemble children's drawings from every country in the world. They were mainly free drawings, but also included, as the experimental method requires, some that were made on the basis of a single protocol (a story to illustrate, namely that of "John with his Nose in the Air"), which would, for this reason, permit cross-cultural comparison. Within one year Lamprecht had already gathered a collection of forty thousand children's drawings, the global study of which was entrusted to Dr. Siegfried Levinstein.²⁵⁵

For his part, Warburg accorded such a prominent place to the world of childhood—children's drawings and books for children—in the organization of his library because its imagery offered an exemplary domain for the application of the notions of the *Pathosformeln* and *Nachleben*. Warburg counted on the motor and gestural energy of the children's drawings (fig. 34), but also on the permeability displayed by the cultural world of childhood with respect to the long persistence of myths, thanks to the intermediary role played by stories and legends. In the course of his travels among the Native Americans of New Mexico, Warburg asked his informant Cleo Jurino—who was priest and painter of a sacred *kiva*—to draw for him the famous snake lightning of Hopi mythology (fig. 35). Here he acted as a good ethnologist, like Franz Boas when he sought to define the casuistry of "primitive graphic formulas."²⁵⁶ But Warburg did more than that: he followed, at the early date of 1895, the exact protocol for psychological inquiry suggested by Lamprecht:



10. Tzitz - Chui
, Si Buffenb/Caspa

ii In 4 Royal mission, In
jahr d. 1798 d. Pflanz aufst im
neig di Waffsch/gerist, Ad
einfallt auf man bei 4
Jahre. kann.

In Sprache d. Tzitz Chui:
1. die Medall mit dem
Mannesfuss fesselt seit 1876
Cleo Jurino aus Cobiti; der
Tzitz Chui oder der Tzitz
Chui in mehreren Teilen 17
in Hotel Palace in Santa Fe;
d. 16 Jan 1896 jugendzeit.
C. J. ist geblieben bei Malen
des Baumwollens in der Tzitz
Printen des Chipeo handbuch.

1. Aisoben Jant d. Pflanz
(Aisoben) fesselt
2. Kuchelwoll in Caspa
3. Tzitz Chui die fesselt
in 1876
4. Baumwoll des waffsch/gerist
5. heisch die Pflanzwoll
6. Kuchel(?) Caspa
2. printenwollend fesselt

FIG. 35 Cleo Jurino (Warburg's Native American informant), *Drawing of a Serpent in the Shape of a Lightning Bolt*, 1895. Reprinted from Aby Warburg, "Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika," 1923, III.93.1, fig. 4. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

I once invited the children of such a school to illustrate the German fairy-tale of "Johnny-Head-in-the-Air" (*Hans-Guck-in-die-Luft*), which they did not know, because a storm is referred to and I wanted to see if the children would draw the lightning realistically or in the form of the serpent. Of the fourteen drawings, all of them very lively, but also under the influence of the American school, twelve were drawn realistically. But two of them depicted indeed the indestructible symbol (*das unzerstörbare Symbol*) of the arrow-tongued serpent, as it is found in the kiva²⁵⁷ (fig. 73).

What was Warburg looking for in this experiment? The "primitive formulas" of animal energy (snake) and cosmic energy (lightning)? Certainly. But, right from the start, he understood the paradox implied by the mode in which this very "primitivism" appears: as an impure and fragile minority—two drawings out of fourteen. In short, in a symptomatic mode. It is not the archetypal reflection of a phylogenetic source, as Lamprecht, perhaps, might have wished. Rather, it is the complex network of *tangled times*, "indestructible symbols," and disfigurements due to history—all in a single *dynamic line* of snake-lightning drawn by a child's hand.

Is there a logic to these emotive formulas? Is there even a single domain where this logic is valid, given that it would have to encompass everything from the pure motor activity of the drives to the most elaborate symbolic constructions? How do the plastic forms and ritual constraints work together to make all of that function? How is the memory of gestures woven, and how is it able to persist, and become transformed? What common problems linked, in Warburg's eyes, the complex sculptured figure of the priest Laocoön, as refined as it is intense, to the crude figure of the Hopi priest, daubed all over with paint and grasping between his lips a snake that he displays to the photographer like a circus performer bringing his act to a close (figs. 36–37)?

Just to begin to answer these questions, and to formulate them a little more precisely, one must keep in mind that *everything which occurs in bodies*—whether real or represented—*depends on a certain temporal montage* [*montage du temps*]. To seek out the “primitive formulas” of pathos is to seek to understand what *primitive* means at the *present moment* [*actualité*] of its motor expression, whether this present moment is the object of a photographic report done in the Vatican museums (in the case of the Greco-Roman priest) or in the mesas of New Mexico (in the case of the Indian priest). In any case, the relationship between the present moment and primitiveness is definitely governed by an *anachronistic montage*. And the theoretical elaboration of the concept of the *Nachleben* had no other ambition—though it was a considerable one—than to understand this temporal montage.

Wishing to scrutinize the destinies of various expressions of the primitive in the history of Western images—and there is no doubt that the Indian photographed in 1924 by an employee of the Smithsonian Institution is *also* part of the Western imaginary²⁵⁸—Warburg was obliged to entwine his discourse around the inherently twofold [duplice] structure of the anachronisms he encountered at every level of analysis. Thus, the historical point of view, which describes the *transformations* undergone by the *Pathosformeln*, could not do without an anthropological point of view, which alone was capable of accounting for the *tenacity* of these formulas.

The anthropological point of view, in turn, had to be divided into parts, according to whether one includes anthropology among the human sciences or among the natural sciences. The two positions coexisted in Warburg's period. Who could doubt that the *Laocoön*, that masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture, brought back to life [actualisé], while transforming and disguising it, a *cultural primitiveness* characteristic of the expression of tragic emotions? The art historian and the anthropologist of images are thus both interested in the epic sources describing the pain of the Trojan priest, as well as in the figurative vocabulary of the expression of pathos in Greek art generally. In fact, tracking

Fig. 36 Anonymous Roman, *Laocöon and His Sons* (detail), 50 C.E. Marble. From a Greek original of the third century B.C.E. Rome, Vatican Museum. Photo: The Warburg Institute.



down such sources probably occupied more of Warburg's everyday research than everything else put together.

But Warburg was still faced with the anthropological question on a second level, namely in terms of *natural primitiveness*. Does not Laocoön's tragic pain manifest an even more primordial relationship, albeit in a "sublimated" manner, as Warburg, like Freud, puts it? Could not this infra-symbolic and infra-narrative relationship be that of the human body to physical suffering and to the violence of animal combat? It is very clear that the *proximity of the human and the animal* constitutes an essential motif of the *Laocoön*, but this is also true of the American Indian ritual studied by Warburg. In both cases, man *stands face to face* with the animal as the mortal danger par excellence. In both cases, likewise, man *incorporates* or puts on the animal, turning his own death—or, rather, its instrument—into something like a second skin. In the Hellenistic statue (fig. 36), the snakes appear to be almost an "over-arching musculature" of the three personages, or perhaps their innards rendered visible by a kind of phantasmal inversion of the inside and the outside. In the snake ritual (fig. 37), the animal is displayed as something the man decorates himself with, making himself capable—if only artificially—of absorbing its substance.

The essential savagery of the *Laocoön*, along with its relationship to the primitive and to animality, still appears in Warburg's archive devoted to the *Nachleben der Antike* in the period of the Renaissance. It is significant that there the Greek hero is often represented as a hairy savage rather than an honorable priest of Apollo (fig. 38). It is no less significant that the caricatures of the masterpiece, which are rare, have heavily emphasized its animal aspect. For



FIG. 37 Anonymous American [photographer], Hopi Indian during the serpent ritual, 1924. Photo by Ralph Murphy. The Library of Congress.

example, a woodcut by Niccolò Boldrini, done around 1550 after a drawing by Titian, shows the unhappy Trojans in the form of "pathetic" monkeys struggling with the snakes (fig. 39).

Horst Janson, in an article published by the Warburg Institute in 1946, demonstrated the link between this image and the scientific controversy that pitted Vesalius against the Galenist physicians of his time. Vesalius suspected that Galen's anatomical observations were erroneous, not only on account of their errors of interpretation, but also for the empirical reason that they were based on the autopsies of monkeys rather than of humans.²⁵⁹ Here we see how a *biological question*—all the more striking, retrospectively, due to its "Darwinian" aspects—could intersect with an *aesthetic question* that was crucial for this period: the question of the "ape of nature" (*ars simia naturae*), a phrase used in the Cinquecento to designate artistic resemblance as such.

Confronted with Titian's surprising image, art historians have neglected an extremely important interpretive path, one that was important to Titian himself, as can be seen, for example, in his famous *Allegory of Prudence*. I am speaking of physiognomy, which is based on an analogy between human forms and animal forms. Let us consider the three monkeys depicted in the pose of a famous ancient sculpted group. His literal use of the adage *ars simia naturae* [art is the ape of nature] is ironic, if not polemic or even virulent, and is not without a physiognomic reflection on the primitiveness of the agonistic theme represented here. With the *primitive* superimposed on the *ancient* in this manner, one experiences a new feeling in looking at the image. Its very subject, the fight against a dangerous animal, liberates passions and actions in such a way that man becomes—or again becomes—one animal confronting another. *Pugna simiae natura* [combat is the nature of the ape—Trans.], if one may put it that way: art apes nature, but the nature of physical combat is such that it returns us to the status of savages, or of apes caught up in the struggle to stay alive.

Who more than the physiognomist wants to classify the "primitive formulas" of human emotions? Who more than he wants to isolate the *animal* conditions—in the sense of "savage beasts" as well as of "animal spirits"—of human movements? We know that Leonardo da Vinci liked to play with notions of hybridization, as did Charles Le Brun at a later date. But a *natural science of the emotions* really appeared only with Camper, Lavater, and Charles Bell. The first developed a theory of the "pathetic nerves" and amused himself by drawing up a table of ancestry of the *ancient* god Apollo starting from a *primitive* face, that, indeed, of a monkey; the second established a fantastic archive of human and animal expression; and the third sought to base the expression of the emotions on the concept of reflex action together with a grammar of the musculature.²⁶⁰

But the "emotive formulas" in the sense Warburg meant were not to be understood in the light of such a reduction of expressive movements to the status of simple reflexes; no more than they could be understood in terms of a reduction of the pathetic gestures to the status of simple rhetorical conventions. One



FIG. 38 Girolamo Franzini, *Laocöon*, 1596. Woodcut. Reprinted from *Icones statuarum antiquarum Urbis Romae* (Rome, 1599).



FIG. 39 Niccolò Boldrini, *Caricature of the Laocoon*, possibly after Titian (detail), ca. 1550-60. Woodcut. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1922. 22.73.3-125. Photo: <http://www.metmuseum.org>.

could say that the *anthropological question of the gesture*, which Warburg introduced into the domain of images, lies between two extremes whose articulation he attempted to grasp with the notion of the *Pathosformel*. It addresses both the animality of the body in movement and its "soul," or, at least, its psychological and symbolic character, thereby recognizing that we are confronted, on the one hand, by nonhistory, by drives, and by the absence of arbitrariness that is characteristic of "natural" things, and, on the other, by history, with the symbols and the arbitrariness that characterize everything "cultural."

The theories of expression that Warburg was aware of all came up against the problem of the incommensurability of these two dimensions. But early on, one tool proved to be decisive (others followed later), offering the prospect of a solution to the problem: it was a theory of biological transformations applied to human and animal gestures. A theory capable of historicizing nature and able, in return, to provide somewhat of a biological foundation to the vitalist metaphors used by Warburg, which he usually borrowed from Burckhardt or Nietzsche. This theory was set forth in Charles Darwin's work on *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

* * *

Warburg discovered it in 1888, at the age of twenty-two, just when he was exploring Florence for the first time. During the period when he was admiring the Dionysian piles of ancient sarcophagi and studying their survivals in Donatello's tumultuous depictions of the emotions at San Lorenzo, the young historian was deeply engrossed in *The Expression of the Emotions* at the National Library in Florence. "Finally a book that gives me some help," he noted in his journal.²⁶¹ There is nothing in it, however, similar to the sublime cry uttered by Laocoön. In the book there are only animal parades, bristling cats, rictus observed in a monkey of the species *Cynopithecus niger* (fig. 40), and such things as experimental terrors provoked in an old man of "inoffensive character" and "limited intelligence" (fig. 41). How, then, could such a book provide the unexpected help Warburg needed to understand the figurative logic of the emotion-laden gestures of the Renaissance?

While all the commentators on Warburg have recognized the influence of Darwin on his theory of the *Pathosformeln*,²⁶² the question of how to interpret that influence remains an open one. One can argue, like Gombrich,²⁶³ for the presence here of "evolutionism" or even of "positivism" in Warburg, if one thinks that all he took from Darwin's book concerns questions of nomenclature. In 1885, for example, Paolo Mantegazza believed he was extending the range of the "Darwinian laws of expression" by virtue of a rigid classification based on the so-called alphabet of mimicry. (It was, in fact, a positivist adaptation of classical rhetoric: the worst possibility, in short.)²⁶⁴ Needless to say, this scientific prose had nothing in common with Warburg's style, which was always hypothetical and never doctrinaire.

FIG. 40 Mr. [Joseph] Wolf, *Cynopithecus niger* [crested black macaque] "when pleased by being caressed." Drawn from life, 1872. Reprinted from Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London, 1872), fig. 17.



There was no shortage of scholars in the nineteenth century who claimed to have justified, on evolutionary grounds, their desire to reduce the phenomena of expression—mimetic gestures and pathological movements—to typologies that were as precise as they were hierarchical. The "science of expression," situated as it is in the uncertain borderland of psychology and social codes, of physiology and racial prejudice, is an unstable domain, experimental and interdisciplinary by nature. It did produce a few monumental bodies of work, such as those of Wilhelm Wundt and Ludwig Klages.²⁶⁵ But we know that this kind of psychology and anthropology wound up being an excellent tool for police work—as in the famous undertakings of Lombroso—and later for the racial theories that flourished in Germany well before the Nazis put them into practice.

Warburg directly suffered on account of all those things he grouped together under the term the *Monstrum* of the human condition. He suffered from his own "psychological monsters," and he suffered from the seisms of history, first of all from anti-Semitism, that "monster" par excellence of Western culture.²⁶⁶ He defended, tirelessly and with no hope of success, wisdom—the *sophrosyne* of the ancient Greeks—against irrationalism of all stripes. Yet, like Freud and Benjamin, he had no choice but to recognize and attempt to understand the hold of these monsters on reason itself. *Homo sapiens*, as we well know, is a wolf—in other words, a beast—to man. And the records of culture are the archives where we can survey traces of thought intermingled with traces of barbarism.

For Warburg, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* in no way constituted a tool for a theory of the "natural selection" or of the "progress" of gestures from their earliest crude stages up to their perfect civilized expression. Quite to the contrary, Darwin's book enabled him to think about the *regression* at work in the images of even the highest culture (that is to say, ancient and Renaissance culture). He therefore did not see the "emotive formulas" of the *Laocoön* from the Winckelmannian angle of a presumed harmony representing the final point in a process of spiritual evolution, but rather from the angle of



FIG. 41 [T. W. Wood], *Terror*, 1872. Engraved from a photograph by G.-B. Duchenne de Boulogne (1856). Reprinted from Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, fig. 20.

the *survival of the primitive*. In other words, he saw them from the angle of an active conflict between nature and culture, or, more exactly, between the *actions* of the primitive drives [frayages pulsionnels] and symbolic *formulas*. The gestures of the *Laocoön* constitute the sublime “dynamogram” of a symbolic residue of primitive bodily reactions. That is the basic intuition Darwin was able to provide support for at just the moment Warburg was developing the notion of the *Pathosformel*.

There is one point we should emphasize here, namely Darwin's own starting point. *The Expression of the Emotions* does not provide the anthropologist or the art historian with an iconographic dictionary of human gestures, real or represented. Darwin wrote in the introduction to his book, “Many works have been written on Expression, but a greater number on Physiognomy—that is, on the recognition of character through the study of the permanent form of features. With this latter subject I am not here concerned.”²⁶⁷ Here, therefore, we are

far from the "vocabulary" of the language of gestures and from the "legibility" of facial expressions that Le Brun, Camper, and Lavater were seeking. What Warburg was able to find in Darwin was in no way a new, supposedly scientific response to the old academic questions regarding the "rules for the expression of the emotions."

What, then, did he find? Much more and much less than that. Darwin's cautious attitude with respect to epistemology led him, first of all, to give up on finding general rules. Right at the start he stressed that "the movements [are] often extremely slight, and of a fleeting nature" and that they are ceaselessly transformed by "sympathy" and the "imagination."²⁶⁸ But his ambition, going beyond rules, was to establish a principle and a "theoretical explanation" for this very subtlety.²⁶⁹ Warburg's interest in this principle may appear all the more mysterious inasmuch as Darwin quickly excluded from his field of study the purely artistic representation of the expressive movements, i.e., that of the "great masters of painting and sculpture": "I had hoped to derive much aid from the great masters in painting and sculpture, who are such close observers. Accordingly, I have looked at photographs and engravings of many well-known works; but, with a few exceptions, have not thus profited. The reason no doubt is, that in works of art, beauty is the chief object; and strongly contracted facial muscles *destroy beauty*."²⁷⁰

What Warburg found in the bristling cats, the simian rictus, the children's tears, and the terrors of the insane that Darwin analyzed throughout his book was a real *dialectical principle of the expressive gesture*. Why is it dialectical (though this terminology, of course, is not Darwin's)? Because it succeeds in conjoining three types of processes, all of which yield paradoxes. They are presented in the first chapter of his book under the title "General Principles of Expression." I will summarize them in a slightly different order than the author's, since what needs to be elucidated here is their use in Warburg's work rather than in their original field of application.

Impression furnishes the first fundamental principle. Darwin called it a "direct action of the nervous system" on the bodily gestures, the constituents of this action operating completely "independently from the first of the will, and independently to a certain extent of habit."²⁷¹ Here we have the physiological presuppositions of a principle of an *unconscious memory* governing human expressive actions.

Displacement furnishes the second principle. Unconscious memory and habit are so powerful that the biological "utility" of the expressive act generally recedes into the background. It is thus association which governs the entire gestural portion of the affective movements. "Whenever the state of mind is induced, however feebly, there is a tendency through the force of habit and association for the same movement to be performed, though they [may] not then be of the least use."²⁷²

Darwin calls the third principle that of *antithesis*. Its name suggests a capacity to *reverse* the process of association, thereby accentuating its physiological "lack

of utility"; but it also stresses the expressive capacity itself, since in such cases it can become, paradoxically, *intensified*. "Certain states of the mind lead to certain habitual actions, which are of service, as under our first principle. Now when a directly opposite state of mind is induced, there is a strong and involuntary tendency to the performance of movements of a directly opposite nature, though these are of no use; and such movements are in some cases *highly expressive*."²⁷³

It is interesting to observe that at the end of his long analyses, Darwin arrives at two conclusions that must be considered together. On the one hand, he asserts the biological *necessity* of expression:

Actions of all kinds, if regularly accompanying any state of the mind, are at once recognized as expressive. These may consist of movements of any part of the body, as the wagging of a dog's tail, the shrugging of a man's shoulders, the erection of the hair, the exudation of perspiration, the state of the capillary circulation, labored breathing, and the use of the vocal or other sound-producing instruments. Even insects express anger, terror, jealousy, and love by their stridulation. With man the respiratory organs are of especial importance in expression, not only in a direct, but in a still higher degree in an indirect manner.²⁷⁴

This necessity is hereditary. Accordingly, Darwin can be certain that human gesture, even in the most complex societies, bears the trace of a primitiveness that has survived in its most basic forms. Thus, "We may likewise infer that fear was expressed from an extremely remote period, in almost the same manner as it now is by many [people]; namely, by trembling, the erection of the hair, cold perspiration, pallor, widely opened eyes, the relaxation of most of the muscles, and by the whole body cowering downwards or held motionless."²⁷⁵

On the other hand, Darwin clearly recognized the biological *uselessness* of most expressive gestures. In the beginning, he writes, they are "movements which are serviceable in gratifying some desire, or in relieving some sensation, [and] if often repeated, [they] become so habitual that they are performed, whether or not of any service, whenever the same desire or sensation is felt, even in a very weak degree."²⁷⁶ In short, unconscious memory, which both preserves indefinitely the primitiveness of expressive movements and causes them to appear at certain moments, detaches these movements—via the processes of association and antithesis—from their immediate necessity. In Warburg's terms, it transforms them into *formulas* that may be put to use in all the domains of culture.

Darwin, moreover, is unable to resist the temptation of concluding his book with a passage from Shakespeare,²⁷⁷ just as, before him, Duchenne de Boulogne—who is mentioned several times in *The Expression of the Emotions*—was not able to end his *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine* without an "aesthetic part" in which the subjects of his physiological experiments were used to make a comparison between "natural" gestures and the emotional states of Lady Macbeth and . . . of Laocoon himself²⁷⁸ (fig. 42). But why this recourse, this return to the image and to art? No doubt because Darwin, at one



FIG. 42 G.-B. Duchenne de Boulogne, *Expressive Movements of the Forehead and the Eyebrow* (detail), 1852-56. Photographs. Reprinted from *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine* (Paris, 1862), pl. vii.

time, proposed *imitation* itself as a fundamental principle, according to which, even among the animals, natural "necessity" meets up with social construction, and indeed with the arbitrary dimension of culture:

That there exists in man a strong tendency to imitation, independently of the conscious will, is certain. This is exhibited in the most extraordinary manner in certain brain diseases, especially at the commencement of inflammatory softening of the brain, and has been called the "echo sign." Patients thus affected imitate, without understanding, every absurd gesture which is made, and every word which is uttered

near them, even in a foreign language. In the case of animals, the jackal and wolf have learnt under confinement to imitate the barking of the dog. How the barking of the dog, which serves to express various emotions and desires, and which is so remarkable from having been acquired since the animal was domesticated, and from being inherited in different degrees by different breeds, was first learnt, we do not know; but may we not suspect that imitation has had something to do with its acquisition, owing to dogs having long lived in strict association with so loquacious an animal as man?²⁷⁹

This is how the three Darwinian principles of expression—along with the new paths they opened up concerning the use of symbols and imitation—were able to become constituent elements of Warburg's *Pathosformel*. The principle of *impression* or unconscious memory is found, in Warburg, in a whole rich vocabulary of *Prägung* and *Engramm*: what survives from Antiquity in Botticelli is an "animation"—of gestures, draperies, and hair—whose power of inscription or of "striking" (*Prägung*) must be imagined as operating in time's material being [dans la matière du temps].²⁸⁰ If the emotive formulas employed by Mantegna and Dürer are so "archaeologically faithful," that does not mean simply that the two artists did a good job of copying their ancient models; it also means that modern man, whether he wants to or not, confronts the world "energetically" by means of "expressive impressions" (*Ausdrucksprägungen*) which, even though they might have been buried, have never disappeared from his cultural soil or from his "collective memory."²⁸¹

* * *

That is why, when he introduced the *Mnemosyne* project in 1929, Warburg emphasized the concepts of impression, the "engram," and the unconscious memory of the Dionysian:

It is in the area of mass orgiastic seizure that one should seek the mint (*Prägewerk*) that stamps the expressive forms (*Ausdruckformen*) of extreme inner turmoil on the memory with such intensity—inasmuch as it can be expressed through gesture—that these engrams of affective experience survive in the form of a legacy preserved in the memory (*diese Engramme leidenschaftlicher Erfahrung überleben als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut*). They serve as models that shape the outline drawn by the artist's hand, once the extreme values of the language of gesture emerge into the daylight through the formative medium of the artist's hand.²⁸²

Warburg never systematized these hypotheses concerning unconscious memory. (And his reluctance to systematize is nowhere more evident than here.) Each conceptual borrowing, he felt, was a trap: the outlines of a solution were never free from collateral dangers. Thus, the Darwinian model of reflex action (the impression considered as a "direct action of the nervous system") was not able to account fully for the cultural processes of symbolic sedimentations that

characterize the *Nachleben*. This is why Warburg turned at one point to Ewald Hering's hypotheses about memory as a "general function of organized matter," hypotheses that Samuel Butler used against Darwinism itself, and that were elaborated by Richard Semon in the notion of, precisely, the "engram of energy."²⁸³

Organic matter, according to Semon, is endowed with a very special property: every action, every energetic transformation that it undergoes, leaves an impression. Semon calls it the *Engramm* or "memory image" (*Erinnerungsbild*). Whereas the sensations or "original excitations" cease to exist (*Verschwinden der Originalerregungen*), the engrams of these sensations survive (*Zurückbleiben der Engramme*), and these will play the role of substitutes, whether in a discrete or an active manner, in the subsequent life of the organism.²⁸⁴

This is a very strange way—but a very interesting one, in Warburg's eyes—of approaching biological thought itself; for here it is done from a psychological point of view according to which time is considered as the energy of memory. What could be called the *engraphing* of the "original excitations" is linked to the memorization process of a latency operator [*latence opératoire*] that waits to act until the opportune moment occurs for a "partial return of the [original] energetic situation," what Semon at one point calls a moment of *ecphoria*. Here, then, was a model of *energetic survival* capable of satisfying, even if only partially, several of the requirements posed by Warburg's notions of the *Nachleben* and the *Pathosformel* in order to be able to apply them to the cultural study of images.

Let us immediately note that these borrowings were solely of a heuristic nature: they in no way indicate his adherence to a particular biological dogma. They keep company in his thought, moreover, with references to the "formal impression" that Anton Springer found in Hegel's philosophy of history, with Eduard von Hartmann's "philosophy of the unconscious," and with Tito Vignoli's "paleontology of the mind," not to mention the omnipresent Goethean morphology (a theory of the memory of forms), and Thomas Carlyle's Romantic conception of historicity.²⁸⁵

But let us return to Darwin. The principle of *displacement* stated in *The Expression of the Emotions* corresponds to Warburg's first intuitions, when, in 1893, he was seeking to define the mode of survival of the ancient emotive formulas in the "accessory forms in motion"—those of garments and of hair—of Botticelli's figures, who are so strangely impassive and "indifferent."²⁸⁶ Displacement is indeed a good term for the figural law that is so effective in the paintings of this Florentine master; for all the "passionate agitation of the soul" (*leidenschaftliche Seelenbewegung*), or "interior cause," occurs in the form of an "externally animated accessory" (*äusserlich . . . bewegtes Beiwerk*), as if an unconscious energy—Warburg speaks of "elements devoid of will"—was seeking the *subjectile* of its impression in the material of the draperies or of the hair, which is so "indifferent" and yet so plastic²⁸⁷ (fig. 43) [translation modified by the author and, accordingly, by the translator—Trans.].

This brings us to the antipodes of physiognomy as that term is generally understood. Warburg's recognition of *expressive displacement*—what he will



FIG. 43 Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus*, ca. 1484–86 (detail). Tempera on canvas. Florence, Uffizi Gallery.

call, in 1914, a "shift of emphasis in the language of bodily gestures"²⁸⁸—in fact displaces all previous knowledge concerning expression and bodily movements in the visual arts. For it is not a thing that is displaced, but its very ability to move. Here we are beginning to understand how the bodily forms surviving through time [les formes corporelles du temps survivant] arise not only in the phenomenon of the *contre-temps*, but also in that of *countermovements*. It is often through a *displaced* movement—in every sense of the term—that intensity is achieved: it arises by surprise, just where it is least expected, in the *parergon* of the body (draperies, hair) or of the representation itself (ornaments or architectural elements, such as the ornaments of Sassetti's tomb or Ghirlandai's famous staircase *in abisso* at Santa Trinita).

These, therefore, are radical displacements. One can always look for, and find, further sources of Warburg's *Pathosformel*. Had not Alfred von Reumont already used the expression "accessory in motion"?²⁸⁹ Had not Jacob Burckhardt already stressed the role, by turns solemn and dynamic, of draped cloth in the Renaissance?²⁹⁰ And had not Nietzsche himself already praised the tragedies of Aeschylus for having "contributed the free drapery of the soul?"²⁹¹ That does not change anything, however. No one besides Warburg, either before or after him, has ever understood so profoundly the efficacy of the process by which a symptom is revealed through *the intensity generated by a displacement*. Of all his contemporaries, only Freud, as we will see later in detail, produced similar analyses of unconscious formations, dreams, fantasies, and symptoms. And this amounts to saying that Warburg, already in this period, was starting to deal with the actual functioning of an "unconscious [realm] of forms."

It is not surprising, therefore, that Warburg accorded no less importance to the third phenomenon identified by Darwin as a "general principle of expression," namely antithesis. As adapted by Warburg to the *Pathosformel*, the principle of antithesis appears in the two processes that he calls "inversion of meaning" (*Bedeutungsinversion*) and "energetic inversion" (*energetische Inversion*). The emotive formula cannot exist without polarity or without "energetic tension" (*energetische Spannung*), but the plasticity of the forms and forces, in the period of their survival, resides precisely in their ability to convert or invert the tensions borne by the dynamograms: a polarity can be brought to its "maximum degree of tension" or, alternatively, it can be "depolarized"; its "passive" value can become "active," etc.²⁹²

In short, the emotive formula is characterized by this paradox: its role of *intensifying the affect displayed in forms* goes hand in hand with a kind of *indifference to contradiction*; it is always allowed to drop one meaning to take on the antithetical meaning. Thus, the pagan maenad can become an announcing angel, as in Agostino di Duccio (fig. 18). Thus, an agonizing wound can become the subject of a miraculous cure, as in Donatello's altar at the Santo. And thus, the gesture of terror in one of the figures of the ancient group of the *Niobides* can become a gesture of the victorious hero in the David by Andrea del Castagno²⁹³ (fig. 44).

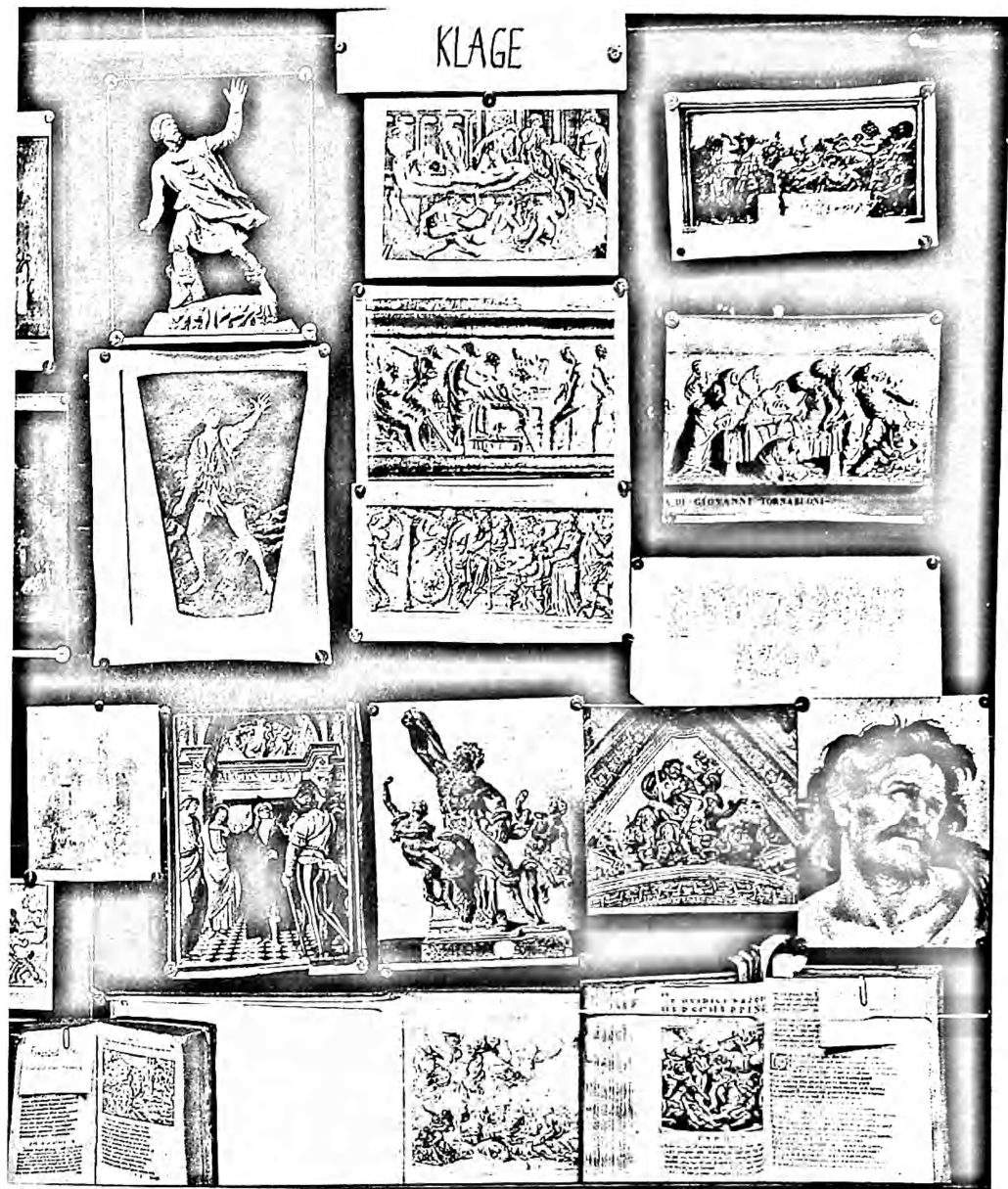


FIG. 44 Aby Warburg, *Lamentation* (detail). Plate from "Urworte der pathetischen Gebärdensprache," 1927. Exhibition organized at the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

FIG. 45 Aby Warburg, *Dynamic Schema of the "Degrees of Ornament,"* 1890. Ink drawing. Taken from the "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," 1:106. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

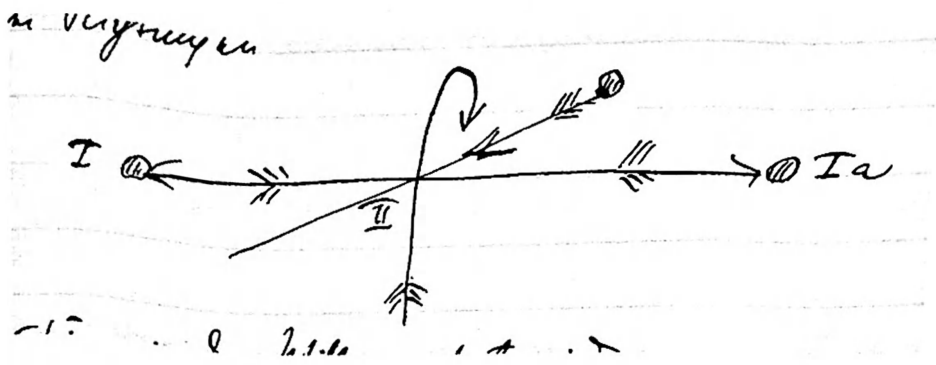
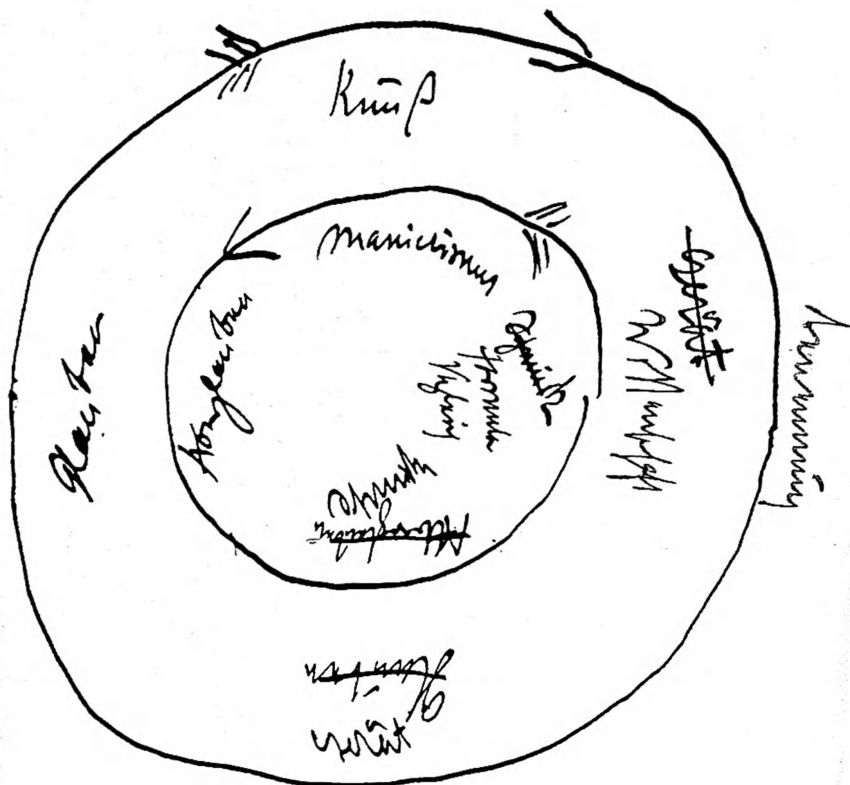


FIG. 46 Aby Warburg, *Dynamic Schema of the Relationships Between Tools, Belief, Art, and Knowledge,* 1899. Ink drawing. Taken from the "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," 2:59. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.



At this point it is probably obvious why Warburg's thinking about images is so bound up with terms like "oscillation" (*Schwingung*), "compromise" (*Vergleich*), and "ambivalence" (*Ambivalenz*). In his youthful works, Warburg tried to find a synthetic formulation for the numerous paradoxes he encountered in this domain, and to this end he produced many diagrams displaying oscillatory phenomena (figs. 23–25) and "dynamic inversion"²⁹⁴ (figs. 45 and 46). Later, he turned to a dialectical conception of the unresolved tensions: systole and diastole, *ethos* and *pathos*, Apollonian and Dionysian, and so on. Finally,

he began to look at culture through the dark lens of his own psychopathological experience: a schizophrenic breakdown and manic-depressive cycle.²⁹⁵ He had come to understand that the twofold life of images is the site of a genuine psychomachia, one whose conflicts [débats], desires, and struggles are inherent in all cultures, and whose *Pathosformeln* survive and appear before us as a field of fossilized movements.

CHOREOGRAPHY OF INTENSITIES: NYMPH, DESIRE, AND INNER CONFLICT

Inner conflicts, desires, struggles: everything is mixed up in the *Pathosformel*. Everything acts in concert, everything is exchanged, and everything confronts everything else. The intensity goes hand in hand with exuberance—that tragic exuberance that Nietzsche termed Dionysian. The emotional images of the early Renaissance, such as can be found in profusion in Donatello's bas-reliefs in Padua or in the pulpits of San Lorenzo in Florence, still evoke those piles of snakes that Warburg never ceased to encounter along his path (fig. 76). Each of the organs of these great organisms is animated by its own energy, each coils up around the other, and each maintains its own orientation in opposition to the other's. One cannot schematize or synthesize such an agglomeration of elements—independent and competing, and yet so intimately linked together. Warburg recognized from the very beginning that each of the objects he was studying formed an "enigmatic creature" (*ein rätselhafter Organismus*).²⁹⁶

Is there a typology of pathetic formulas? Warburg asked himself that question. In 1905, he began using a folio-size notebook with a cover made of marbled paper (showing vortices, spirals, and serpents coiled around each other). He entitled it *Schemata Pathosformeln*, apparently wanting to record the typology in question in this register. He made pencil sketches of several famous images—such as Giotto's allegories in Padua—and carefully went over them in ink. He drew, as was his habit, a proliferation of tree-form diagrams, hypothetical genealogies, and opposing pairs. He set up, on double-page spreads, large tables with rows and columns. There we can find lists of "degrees of mimicry," whose entries include such terms as "race," "dance," "pursuit," "abduction or rape," "combat," "victory," "triumph," "death," "lamentation," and "resurrection" (*Lauf, Tanz, Verfolgung, Raub, Kampf, Sieg, Triumph, Tod, Klage, Auferstehung*). But the majority of the entry boxes have been left empty; for the project was undoubtedly hopeless (fig. 47). Let us then close the big notebook with its vortices, spirals, and snakes coiled up around each other²⁹⁷ (fig. 48).

The attempt to establish these schemas had, therefore, failed. Twenty years later, the abandoned *Schemata Pathosformeln* were replaced by the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a nonschematized montage of a corpus of images which was already quite large and which, in principle, was infinite. Warburg worked on it constantly but never put it in a definitive form. Iconography can be organized according to motifs, or even types, but the emotive formulas define a field that Warburg considered to be strictly *trans-iconographic*. Given that, how could he account

Irritament & Pathosformel	Mimik						4 2 1
	Mimik Lächeln	Mimik Schmerz	Mimik Trauer	Mimik Wut	Mimik Mitleid	Mimik Gnade	
Lauf							
Tanz							
bescheiden Vorführung							
Rausch							
Kampf							
Sieg							
Triumph myth.							
Triumph (real)							
Triumph allegor.							
Tode Klage							
Empörung							

FIG. 47 Aby Warburg, *Table of the "Emotive Formulas,"* 1905-11. Ink and pencil. Taken from "Schemata Pathosformeln," III.138.1. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

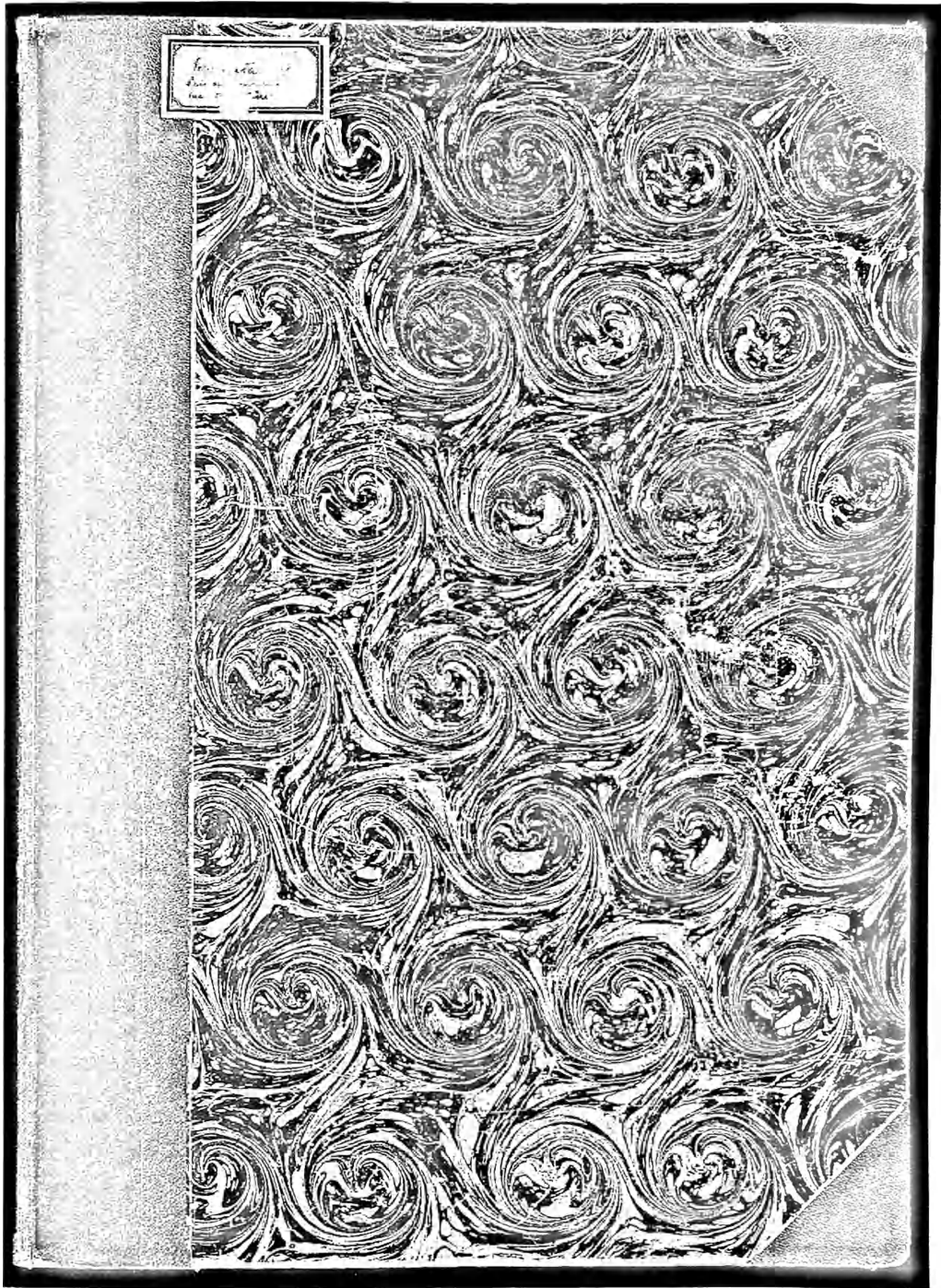


FIG. 48 Aby Warburg, manuscript cover, "Schemata Pathosformelen," 1905-11. Folio notebook. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

for an operation which conjoins the three "principles of expression" he adapted from Darwinian biology? And, since it is a matter here of cultural anthropology, how could he find, even going beyond Darwin, the relevant paradigms for conceiving the *intensity of symbolic forms*?

Warburg first turned toward a linguistic paradigm, which meant examining the status of the "formula" within the expression *Pathosformel*. When, in 1893, he announced his intention to study the "force which determines style" (*stilbildende Macht*) in Botticelli by examining the process of the "intensification of movement" (*gesteigerte Bewegung*) [translation modified—Trans.],²⁹⁸ it was not by chance that he used the adjective *gesteigert*. The latter does, of course, mean intensification or amplification in general, but it also refers, more specifically, to the grammatical use of the comparative. The linguistic analogy is thus present from the start. In his manuscripts, Warburg never ceases to work with the levels of intensification that he calls, precisely, *comparative* and *superlative*.²⁹⁹ And what first interested him in the representations of the *Death of Orpheus* by Mantegna and Dürer (figs. 3 and 28) was the exhumation, as he put it, of very ancient "antique superlatives of gestural language" (*Superlative der Gebärdensprache*).³⁰⁰

We know the important role played in this conception by Hermann Osthoff's linguistic theories concerning the formal characteristics of suppletion in the Indo-European languages. According to Osthoff, intensification requires a *change in the root*, a radical displacement: in Latin, *melior* (better) does not have the same root as *bonus* (good), and *optimus* (best) requires still another displacement.³⁰¹ Warburg expresses this phenomenon in the following terms:

As early as 1905, the author [Warburg is speaking of himself] had been aided in his studies by reading Osthoff's text on the suppletive function in the Indo-Germanic languages. He had shown, in summary, that certain adjectives or certain verbs, in their comparative or conjugated forms, can undergo a change in their basic root without the expression of the energetic identity of the quality or action in question suffering as a result; to the contrary, although the formal identity of the basic form may have disappeared, the introduction of the foreign element serves only to intensify the original meaning (*sondern dass der Eintritt eines fremdstämmigen Ausdrucks eine Intensifikation der ursprünglichen Bedeutung bewirkt*). One finds, *mutatis mutandis*, an analogous process in the domain of the gestural language which structures works of art (*die kunstgestaltende Gebärdensprache*), when one sees, for example, a Greek maenad appear in the guise of the dancing Salome of the Bible, or when Ghirlandaio, to represent a serving girl bearing a basket of fruit (fig. 67), very deliberately borrows the gesture of a figure of Victory depicted on a Roman triumphal arch.³⁰²

In short, it is *foreignness*, which here assumes the power of intensifying a gesture made in the present by linking it to the phantasmal time inhabited by the survivals. It is foreignness which, in the anachronistic collision of the

Present (the servant) and the Past (the Victory), opens up a path for style's future development, its very capacity to change and to become entirely reformulated, a phenomenon Warburg sometimes referred to by the term *Umstilisierung*, or "restylizing."

Such, then, is the power possessed by survivals, in language as in the body and in images. For Warburg, every transformation—every protension toward the future, every intense discovery, every radical new development—involves a return to "original words" (*Urworte*). That is why, in the end, Warburg considered his final project, the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, to be a quest, via survivals, metamorphoses, and sedimentations, of forgotten or "lost time" [temps perdu] and of the phantasmal "dynamic" characteristic of certain "original words of the gesture language of the emotions" (*Urworte leidenschaftlicher gebärdensprachlicher [Dynamik]*).³⁰³ Just like the "primal words" of Karl Abel—from which Freud, in 1910, derived his famous argument regarding "antithetical sense" (*Gegensinn*)³⁰⁴—Warburg's *Urworte* are plastic materials destined to undergo successive impressions, ceaseless displacements, and antithetical reversals.

It would thus be a serious mistake to look in Warburg's anthropology for a description of the "origins" of some phenomenon in the sense of the pure "sources" of its later destiny. "Original words" exist only as *survivals*, that is to say, as impure, masked, contaminated, transformed, or even antithetically reversed (fig. 44). They pass like a breath of temporal strangeness through Renaissance images, but there is no way they can be isolated in their "natural state," not even in the ancient sarcophagi. Strictly speaking, such a state of nature has never existed as such.

Likewise, it would be a serious mistake to try to find in this linguistic paradigm an "iconological" reduction of images to words. There are no reductive operations in Warburg. His philological passion, his debt to Hermann Usener, his admiration for the paleography of Ludwig Traube, his friendship with André Jolles and Ernst Robert Curtius (who dedicated to Warburg his monumental *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, and then used the notion of the *Pathosformel* in the literary field)—all this certainly indicates a profound affinity among these fields of study, but it in no way means that the study of images is a branch of the study of words.³⁰⁵ As early as 1902 Warburg wrote that in his search for "sources" he was not aiming to explain works of art by means of texts but, rather, at "restoring the natural connection between word and image" (*die natürliche Zusammengehörigkeit von Wort and Bild*).³⁰⁶

This connaturality is inscribed in the history of bodies as much as it is in the history of words. Thus, Botticelli's eroticism—think of the mythological figures of *Spring*, whose roundness is so light and yet conveyed with such nuance—does not correspond solely to its literary "sources," for example to what one can read in Politian. It is also, as it were, *haunted corporeally* by the "original rhythms" which already play across the surfaces of ancient sarcophagi (fig. 49). Well before Salomon Reinach and Marcel Mauss,³⁰⁷ Warburg understood the necessity of establishing a historical anthropology of gestures which would not

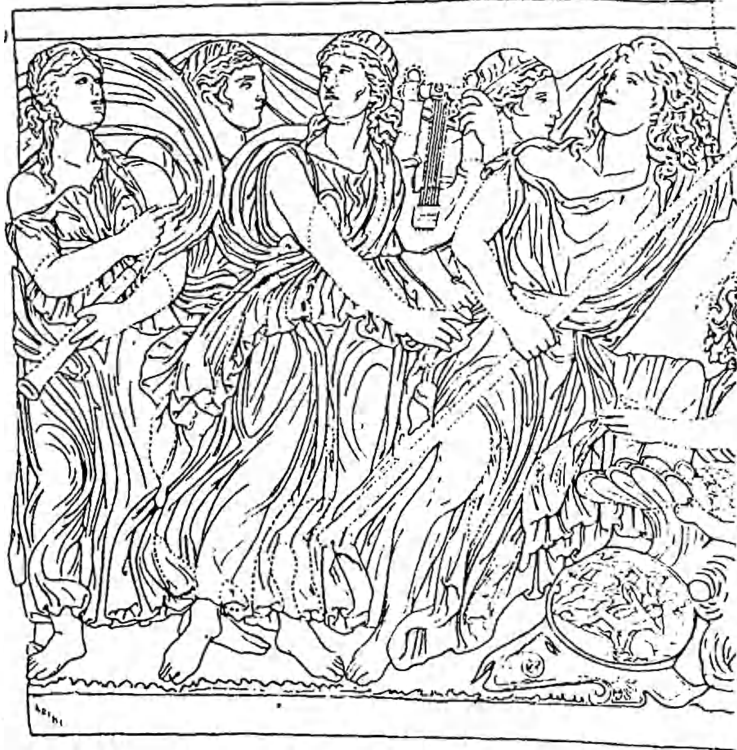


FIG. 49 Anonymous Roman, after a Greek original, *Achilles on Skyros* (detail). Drawing after a sarcophagus at Woburn Abbey. Reprinted from Aby Warburg, Sandro Botticelli "Geburt der Venus" und "Frühling": Eine Untersuchung über die Vorstellungen von der Antike in den Italienische Frührenaissance (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1893), 15.

be held captive by the naturalist or positivist physiognomies of the nineteenth century, but which, on the contrary, would be capable of examining *the technical and symbolic constitution of bodily gestures* in any given culture.

* * *

This explains the importance of a second paradigm, which I will call *choreographic*. Its role was to question more radically the status of the "formula" inasmuch as the latter produces a "pathos," i.e., a physical and emotional impact on the human body. One might venture the hypothesis that "bodily techniques"—greetings, dances, rules of combat, resting positions, and sexual positions—offer a privileged site for the "connaturality of word and image" that Warburg was looking for. In studying Politian's *Stanze* and Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, the historian should not be satisfied with simply positing a relationship between

the "literary source" and its artistic "result." He or she should consider the whole thick layer of anthropological data in which the social rules of amorous seduction are found alongside the etiquette observed by Florentines when dancing the *ballo in due*, or better, the *bassa danza* called "Venus."

In *The Birth of Venus*, what is the Hour (or the Grace) doing with her dress blowing in the wind and her large cape displaying all that movement? An iconographer attentive to the story itself would say that she is welcoming Venus on the shore and holding out to her a piece of clothing to cover her nakedness. Warburg would say, in addition, that she is dancing on the right side of the painting. What are Zephyr and Chloris (or Aura) doing? Warburg would say—beyond the fact that they are the source of a breeze pushing Venus's shell toward the shore—that they are dancing, wrapped around each other, albeit in the air. And what is Venus herself doing? She is dancing motionless before us; that is to say, she is turning her simple pose into a choreography of the body on display. What are the figures doing in *Spring*? They are all dancing. What are the servants doing in the cycle by Ghirlandaio in Santa Maria Novella, apart from pouring water into a pitcher or offering a plate of fruit? They, too, are dancing, as much as they are simply moving about, and they are central to the dynamic of the image, even though they are marginal in the distribution of the figures relevant to the iconographic theme.

This is what Warburg was attentive to at first. In the case of Botticelli (1893) or Ghirlandaio (1902), but also in those of Leonardo and Agostino di Cuccio, and of Mantegna and Dürer, the question of the *intensified gesture* constantly arose, especially when a *stép* became a dance. Nietzsche, in his article on "The Dionysian Vision of the World," had already spoken of dance as an "intensified language of gesture" (*gesteigerte Gebärdensprache in der Tanzgebärde*),³⁰⁸ which is a way of describing the conversion of a natural gesture (walking, taking a step, simply appearing) into a plastic formula (dancing, spinning around, strutting about). Warburg elaborated the notion of the *Pathosformel* in large part to account for this choreographic intensity, which permeates all of Renaissance painting and which, since it is a matter of feminine grace (of "*venuste*"), he summed up, going beyond its conceptual designation, in a multiform [*transversale*] and mythic personification as *Ninfa*, the nymph.

Ninfa, therefore, will become the impersonal heroine of the dancing, feminine *Pathosformel*—impersonal, for she unites in herself a considerable number of incarnations, of possible characters. As early as 1895 Warburg thought of devoting a monograph to her. It would have been all the more paradoxical for having been the work of two authors; since he conceived it as being the fruit of a—fictive—correspondence with his friend André Jolles.³⁰⁹

Ninfa is, first of all, the heroine of those "transitory movements of hair and garments" (*die transitorischen Bewegungen in Haar und Gewand*) that Renaissance painting passionately sought to "capture" (*festzubalten*), making them the displaced index of the pathos borne by the images.³¹⁰ She is the *auratic* heroine par excellence. Not only does Warburg associate the *nymphae* with the

aurae in iconological terms; he also implies that the classical representation of feminine beauty (Venus, nymphs) really comes to "life" only in response to the action, the breath (aura) of an "exterior cause" (*äussere Veranlassung*):³¹¹ a strange occurrence in the atmosphere, for instance, or in the texture of some material (fig. 43). This process was carefully described a generation before Botticelli by Alberti in *De pictura* [*On Painting*].

I am delighted to see some movement in hair, locks of hair, branches, fronds and robes. The seven movements are especially pleasing in hair where part of it turns in spirals as if wishing to knot itself, waves in the air like flames, twines around itself like a serpent, while part rises here, part there. In the same way branches twist themselves now up, now down, now away, now near, the parts contorting themselves like ropes. . . . However, where we should like to find movement in the draperies (*cum pannos motibus aptos esse volumns*), cloth is by nature heavy and falls to the earth. For this reason it would be well to place in the picture the face of the wind Zephyrus or Austrus who blows from the clouds making the draperies move in the wind. Thus you will see with what grace the bodies, where they are struck by the wind, show the nude under the draperies in suitable parts. In the other parts the draperies blown by the wind fly gracefully through the air.³¹²

Ninfa is thus the heroine of this kind of physically and emotionally moving encounter, in which an "exterior cause" produces some "ephemeral movement" along the body's edges—a movement, it may be remarked, as organically sovereign, and as necessary and inevitable, as it is transient. *Ninfa* is incarnated in the wind-woman, in *Aura*, in the goddess *Fortuna*, whom Warburg described as the "embodiment of worldly energy" (*Stilbildung weltzugewandter Energie*).³¹³ *Ninfa* is incarnated—that is to say, she is as much woman as goddess: terrestrial Venus and celestial Venus, servant and victory, dancer and Diane, castrating Judith and feminine angel, as can be seen by looking at plates 46 to 48 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*³¹⁴ (figs. 69–72).

Aerial but essentially incarnate, ungraspable but essentially tactile. Such is the beautiful paradox of *Ninfa*, and the text of *De pictura* gives a good account of the technical aspects of representing her. It is sufficient, Alberti explains, to make a wind blow on a beautiful draped figure. Where the body receives the breeze, the material is pressed flat against the skin, and this contact results in something like the relief of a nude body. Elsewhere, the material is agitated and spreads out freely, almost abstractly, in the air. This is the magic of the draped figure. Botticelli's Graces, like the ancient maenads (fig. 49), join together these two antithetical modes of the figurable: air and flesh, volatile fabric and organic texture. On the one hand, the cloth shoots forth on its own, creating its own morphology in the form of volutes; on the other hand, it reveals the intimate aspects of the corporeal mass (which are both physically and emotionally moving). Could we not say that all of choreography lies between these two extremes?

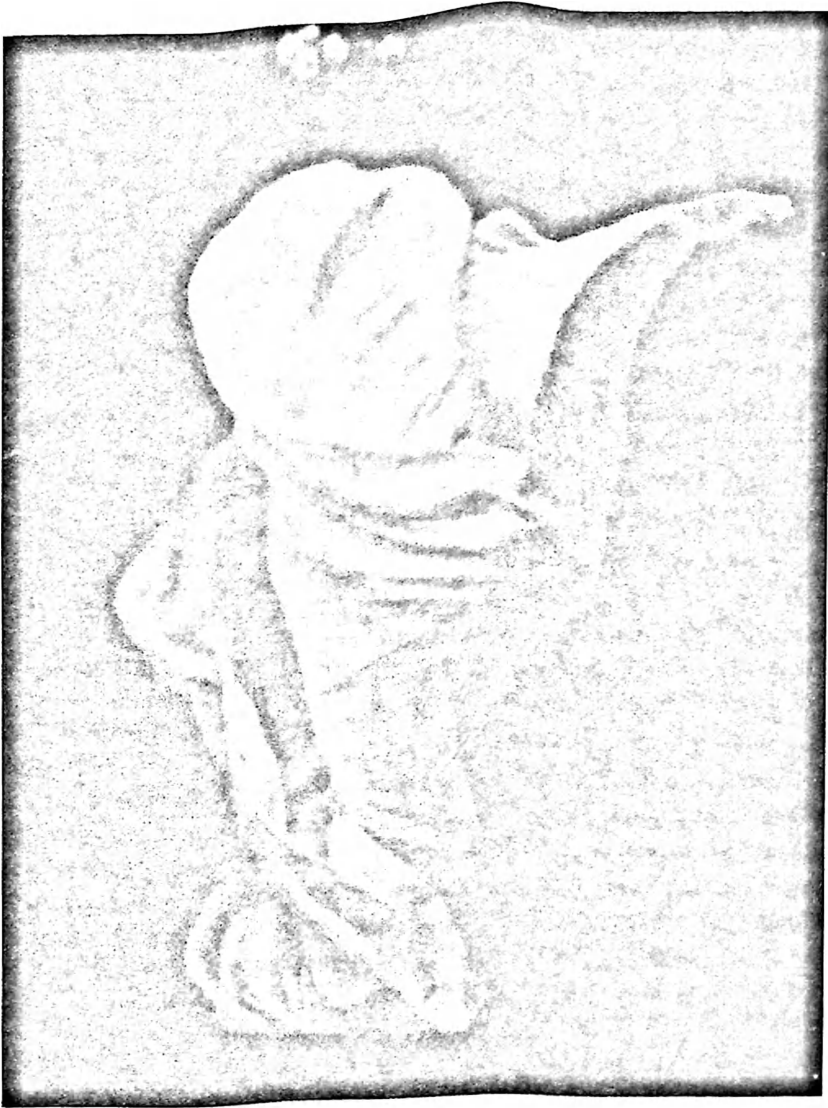
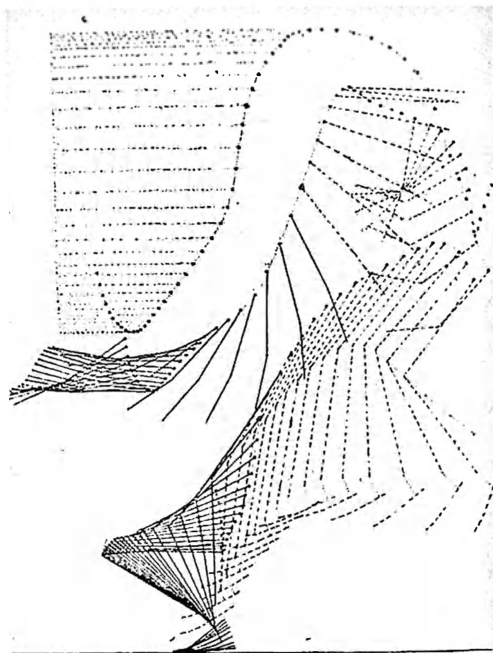


FIG. 50 Thomas Rivière, *Loïe Fuller in the Danse du Lys*, 1896. Photograph.

Moreover, how can one fail to observe that this paradox of the *Pathosformel* encompasses a contemporary phenomenon which is manifest, on the one hand, in the abstract and oversized dynamograms deployed by Loïe Fuller, with her fabric volutes (fig. 50), and, on the other, in the dynamograms produced by the chronophotography of Étienne-Jules Marey, which are purified and abstract, but also organic (fig. 51). *Ninfa*, we can now see, offers the possibility of joining the “external cause,” like the atmosphere, the wind, and the “internal cause,” which is, fundamentally, desire. *Ninfa*, with her hair and clothing in motion, thus appears as a meeting point, itself always in motion, between outside and inside, the atmospheric law of the wind and the visceral law of desire.

FIG. 51 George Demeny, *Elastic Fall on Tiptoe*. Drawing on tracing. Reprinted from Marey, *Le mouvement*, 138 (with the caption "Deep jump with legs bent to break the fall").



The contemporary phenomenon I am speaking of unites Taine and Ruskin, Proust and Burne-Jones, Segantini and Max Klinger, art nouveau and symbolist poetry, Hofmannsthal and D'Annunzio, Fortuny and Mallarmé, Isadora Duncan and Loïe Fuller, among many others. It unites them around a motif which is both dynamic and archeological: one could call it a fin-de-siècle "maenadism" [ménadisme fin de siècle]. Warburg discovered it perhaps when visiting the Munich exhibition 1888, while watching a performance by Isadora Duncan; or it may have come from the aesthetic influence of his wife, Mary Hertz, who was an artist close to the milieu of the German symbolists.

Curiously, all this material is looked at in a new way in an archeological work that Warburg probably read—and, especially, looked at—very closely, namely a lengthy treatise by Maurice Emmanuel entitled *La danse grecque antique*. The author joins his strictly archeological study of a large number of figurative representations (sculpture in the round, relief sculpture, vase painting) with technical considerations and remarks informed by contemporary aesthetics, turning, in this connection, to the authority of the official ballet master of the Paris Opera. Now, in order to create a measure of unity within the anachronism thus produced, Maurice Emmanuel called upon Marey himself: chronophotography became for him, as it was for Duchenne de Boulogne, the perfect experimental means for incarnating in nineteenth-century bodies choreographic formulas derived from a totally different epoch, namely those found on Greek vases of the fifth century B.C.E.³¹⁵



FIG. 52 Anonymous Greek, *Dancing Nymphs*, end of fifth century B.C.E. Drawing of a vase painting. Reprinted from Maurice Emmanuel, *La danse grecque antique* (Paris, 1896), 103.

On the one hand, then, we find Maurice Emmanuel's clearly excessive efforts to use archaeology to demonstrate a similarity between the ancient *Pathosformeln* and contemporary dance moves. (The archaeologist here looks at Greek vases as if he were looking at photographs.) On the other hand, the repeated attempts, drawing on choreography and chronophotography, to test the possibility of embodying these same ancient formulas demonstrate that their power to elicit dynamic and stylistically interesting responses, their power of *Nachleben*, had not at all diminished around the turn of the twentieth century. And Gabriele Brandstetter has shown how, thanks to the studies of archaeologists, the *Pathosformeln* of Antiquity played a decisive role in what she calls the *Toposformeln* of the choreographic avant-garde in Europe.³¹⁶

It is not surprising that, in Maurice Emmanuel's book, the question of the draped cloth—whether found in freely floating volutes of fabric or in the revealing of bodily movements—is both important and frequently addressed (fig. 52). One dances with one's clothing as much as with one's body; or, rather, the clothing becomes something like an interstitial space, which itself dances, between the body and the atmosphere it inhabits. That is why the draped cloth,



FIG. 53 Anonymous Greek, *Maenad and Satyr*, Hellenistic period. Drawing of a bas-relief. Reprinted from Maurice Emmanuel, *La danse grecque antique d'après les monuments figurés* (Paris: Hachette, 1896), 198.

an “accessory form in motion,” in Warburg’s phrase, is found in all the categories that Maurice Emmanuel proposes, from “ritual and symbolic” gestures to “concrete” or “decorative” ones, from “mechanical” and “expressive” ones to those he calls “orchestrated” [“orchestiques”].³¹⁷

Nor is it surprising to see the Dionysian motif—maenads and bacchants—inject its excessiveness into the beautifully measured classical steps, jumps, and positions. The dancing body, with its reproducible gestural vocabulary, gives way to a more mysterious, more “primitive,” and more instinctual choreography, a choreography of *nonreproducible movements* associated with rituals too violent to be reconstructed under the baton of a ballet master of the Paris Opera. Thus, Maurice Emmanuel evokes the “extreme limit of curvature camber . . . reached by that bacchant who advances with very small steps and on half toe”³¹⁸ (fig. 53). He evokes the very *flamenca* action of “turning round while standing on the sole of the foot or on half-toe [which] sometimes accompanies strange curvatures or bending of the knees.”³¹⁹ He also evokes the funeral dances of the ancient Greeks in terms of a “gesticulation” composed of the participants tearing up their clothing, beating their breasts, and pulling out their hair.³²⁰ Finally, he evokes the Dionysian dances and, more generally, the *orgiastic* dances:

Ritual enthusiasm gave rise to the *orgiastic dance*. The latter is not the exclusive domain of the followers of Dionysus. The cult of Rhea and the Orphic mysteries evoked strangely violent movements, transforming the participants into frenetic, hallucinating individuals. It is possible that even the cult of Apollo made a place

for orgiastic dances; for enthusiasm, according to Strabo, is close to divination. Let us recall the contortions of Pythia. They are not without analogies to the ecstatic poses and outlandish movements of a great number of the dancers depicted on vases and reliefs. . . . No doubt the maenad who holds a human foot and dances, with her head upside down, an orgiastic dance is a purely symbolic representation: it recalls the legend of Dionysus Zagreus being torn apart by the Titans. But homophagy, reduced to the laceration of animals, was practiced in the nocturnal ceremonies in honor of Zagreus. The initiates shared the raw flesh of a bull, and, in their enthusiasm, they imitated Dionysus, whom Euripides portrayed immolating a male goat and relishing its palpitating flesh. The maenad of Scopas tearing apart a kid and all the subsequent related activities can give us an idea of these dances in which the violence of the movements appears to exclude any kind of eurhythm^y.³²¹

This question of eurhythm^y, or rather of its absence, is essential. Maurice Emmanuel recognizes that in contrast to the "modern fashion of regulating dances in large, uniform sections" [en masse]—which is a quite academic approach based on the "rigorous simultaneity of identical movements executed by all the dancers [according to a] symmetrical arrangement"—the Greeks "always prefer dissymmetry [and] apparent disorder."³²² That is why, following Warburg, we say that their *Pathosformeln* allow displacement and antithesis in order to let the dancers interlace dynamically, analogously to what would occur in a pile of snakes. Eurhythm^y, along with symmetry and measure, thus cedes its place to something like a complex *polyrhythmy*, an apparent disorder from which burst forth solitary geometries and asymmetric groupings, imposing thrashings about and moments of excess.

It is necessary to understand, moreover, that with excess comes the Dionysian element and, with the latter, the tragic. It is necessary to understand that with the tragic comes the fight of beings among themselves, and the fight within themselves, that intimate combat between desire and suffering. And that the choreographic paradigm comes interlaced with another, more terrifying one, the *agonistic* paradigm: in short, the eternal War that Heraclitus speaks of. I have already indicated how the problematic of the emotive formulas emerged from Warburg's very early interest in certain iconographic themes that all involve a fight to the death: the battle of the centaurs (fig. 17), the death of Orpheus (figs. 3 and 26 to 28), Laocoön (figs. 29, 36 and 38 to 39), and the Niobides, not to mention the Old Testament figures of David and Goliath (fig. 44) or of Judith and Holofernes (fig. 71). And not to mention the sublime battles depicted by Leonardo, Michelangelo—such as his own *Battle of the Centaurs* in the Casa Buonarroti—and Raphael, all of them evoked by Warburg from the Heraclitean angle of the "impulse . . . toward conceiving and reshaping living movement in terms of the elevated style of the great art of the pagan ancestors."³²³

* * *

With the entry of *Ninfa*, the tumult of violent death opens a serpentine path to the choreography of desire, which Warburg sometimes calls a “stylization of energy” (*Stilisierung der Energie*) and sometimes “personages brimming with life” (*Lebensvolle Gestalten*).³²⁴ The nymph eroticizes the struggle, revealing the unconscious links of aggression and the sexual drive. That is why Warburg was so interested in the topics of rape, of abduction, of “amorous pursuit” scenes (think of Pollaiuolo’s *Apollo and Daphne*, which Politian put into verse in his *Giostra*), and of one what might call, by analogy, *Ninfa*’s “erotic victory” over her mutilated enemy (think, once again, of Botticelli’s *Judith* and of *The Death of Orpheus* by Mantegna and by Dürer).³²⁵

Ninfa, therefore, eroticizes—for *Eros* is cruel—the combat of beings with one another. Then she ends up uniting all that in her own body: she herself becomes conflict, intimate struggle of self against self, a knot that cannot be disentangled of conflict and desire, antithesis in the form of impression. The agonistic paradigm and the choreographic paradigm are now one and the same: it is the Dionysian paradigm, which, henceforth, imposes the figure of the nymph as *maenad*, whether she appears in pagan guise or in Christian:

At this time there was indeed an actual Director of the Academy in Florence, the sculptor Bertoldo di Giovanni. He taught young artists by acquainting them with the ancient treasures of the Medici that he administered. Only a few of his works have been preserved, but they prove that like almost no other, Bertoldo, the pupil of the late Donatello, subscribed to the ancient formula of pathos with body and soul. Just as a *maenad* tosses an animal that has been torn apart, so too Mary Magdalene, mourning at the base of the cross, clenches the hair she has torn out in an orgy of grief.³²⁶

The Magdalene by Bertoldo di Giovanni (fig. 54) is obviously Dionysian, in the exact sense in which Nietzsche defined the term at the very beginning of *The Birth of Tragedy*: the “tremendous horror that seizes [her]” no less than the “blissful ecstasy” that seems to accompany it—“when she is suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena.” The “principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations [Warburg would have said: no matter which one of its formulas], seems to suffer an exception.” In her movement, still choreographic and already agonistic, Bertoldo’s Magdalene seems to provoke a “collapse of the *principium individuationis*,” and, as a result, she causes a welling up “from *the most intimate depths*”—an intimacy which here appears as the drama of the “difference of the sexes” (a point Nietzsche insists upon in this same passage).³²⁷

Obviously naked, and provocative under her transparent garment, Bertoldo’s Magdalene is *Ninfa*, though a very devout, Renaissance one, who dances at the naked feet of Christ as an ancient *maenad* would dance, body held close to body, with the naked satyr she is trying to excite (fig. 53). This Magdalene is closer, in terms of figuration, to Botticelli’s *Judith*, who so cruelly—and so



FIG. 54 Bertoldo di Giovanni, *Crucifixion*, ca. 1485 (detail). Bronze relief. Museo Nazionale del Bargello. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

sensually—displays Holofernes's disheveled head (fig. 71), than to any of the pious, innocent women depicted by Fra Angelico. One may truly say that she incarnates the *Nachleben* of paganism, exhibiting both impression (Darwin's first principle) and "primitiveness." On the other hand, where an iconographer must separate pain and desire—the Magdalene, in the context of this scene from the evangelists, is obviously all pain—the anthropologist of the *Pathosformeln* would discover a much more complex rhythm: this is a dynamogram in which the signs of mourning (the hand tearing out hair, the kneeling position of the second woman, which is a more ritual version of the first's gesture) merge with the signs of an unknown desire (the hand which brandishes its organic trophy, the seminudity of the body, the disorder of the clothing, the feet raised in half-toe position). Displacement (Darwin's second principle) is thus at work here, resulting in the acting out of a struggle between desire and mourning, that is to say, of two emotions generally considered to be antithetical (Darwin's third principle).

Here, then, is *Ninfa* experiencing the inner conflict of her own contrary movements. In the face of Christ's Passion (*Leiden Christi*), the nymph's passion (*Leidenschaft Nymphae*) unites a horrible suffering of the soul with a savage bodily joy (combining *Leid* and *Freud*). Warburg, at the end of his life, will view the *Pathosformeln*, those "original words" of mimetic expression, from the point of view of a genuine "drama of the soul" (*Seelendramatik*) in which images reveal their "ecstatic," perhaps "demonic" dimension, even in their sublimated occurrences.³²⁸

The process of de-demonising [*Entdämonisierungsprozess*] the inherited mass of impressions, created in fear, encompasses the entire range of emotional gesture, from

helpless melancholy to murderous cannibalism. It also stamps the mark of uncanny experience [*der Prägrand unheimlichen Erlebens*] on the dynamics of human movements [*humane Bewegungsdynamik*] that lie in between these extremes of orgiastic seizure—states such as fighting, walking, running, dancing, grasping—which the educated individual of the Renaissance, brought up in the medieval discipline of the church, regarded as forbidden (*verboten*) territory, where only the godless were permitted to run riot, freely indulging their passions. . . . The Italian Renaissance sought to absorb this inherited mass of [phobic] engrams [*phobische Engramme*] in a peculiar, twofold manner [*Zwiespältigkeit*]. On the one hand it was a welcome encouragement for the newly liberated spirit of worldliness, and gave courage for the individual, struggling to maintain his personal freedom in the face of destiny, to speak the unspeakable [*Unaussprechliche*].

However, to the extent this encouragement proceeded by means of a mnemonic function, i.e., had already been reshaped before by art using preexistent forms [*durch vorgeprägte Formen*], this restoration remained an act positioned between impulsive self-release [*triebhafter Selbstentäußerung*] and a conscious and controlled use of forms [*formaler Gestaltung*] (in other words, between Dionysus and Apollo), and provided the artistic genius with the psychic space for coining expressions out of his most personal formal language. "This compulsion to engage with the world of pre-established expressive forms [*vorgeprägte Ausdruckswerte*] . . . signifies the decisive critical moment [*die entscheidende Krisis*] for any artist intending to assert his own character."³²⁹

This "decisive crisis," however, does not concern just the Magdalene caught in the paradoxical excitement [*jouissance*—the basic meaning of this French word is "enjoyment," but it includes sexual pleasure, specifically, orgasm—Trans.] of her lamentation. It concerns the memory of forms and artistic creation itself. When he works with an "old hereditary store" of pagan *Pathosformeln*, when he agrees to follow *Mnemosyne*, the mother of the nine Muses, the artist finds himself caught in the inevitable situation, at once structural and structuring, of a coming and going between "instinctual alienation" (*triebhafter Selbstentäußerung*) and "formal creation" (*formale Gestaltung*). Everything oscillates, everything stirs, everything acts together with something else: one cannot construct any forms without abandoning oneself to the forces around one. There is no Apollonian beauty without a Dionysian background.

Let us consider, one last time, those Nietzschean terms. What is the "decisive crisis" if not that moment of walking the tightrope, that knife-edge moment in which "blissful ecstasy" totally embraces "tremendous terror"? In which the resurfacing of what is "most intimate," linked as it may be to the "duality of the sexes," suddenly consummates the "collapse of the principle of individuation"? In which the forms of knowledge are all of a sudden disoriented because they are "suffer an exception"?³³⁰

What, finally, is this moment which witnesses the conflict and the interlacing of the present time of pathos and the past time of the survival, of the

image of the body and the signifier of language, of the exuberance of life and the exuberance of death, of the expenditure of organic energy and ritual convention,³³¹ and of the burlesque pantomime and the tragic gesture? What is this moment, if not that of the *symptom*—that exception, that disorientation of the body and of thought, that “rupture of the principle of individuation,” that “resurfacing of the most intimate,” which, in Warburg’s day, could only be comprehended by Freudian psychoanalysis”?

THE IMAGE AS SYMPTOM

Fossils in Motion and Montages of Memory

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE SYMPTOM: FROM WARBURG TOWARD FREUD

Warburg's undertaking is as modest as it is arduous, as honest in its foundations as it is dizzying in its realization; going against the grain of all of art history in its positivist, schematic, and idealist guises, Warburg simply wanted to respect the essential complexity of its objects. This entailed a willingness to confront intrications, stratifications, and overdeterminations; for Warburg probably considered art history's every object to be a complex pile—fascinating and dangerous—of moving snakes (fig. 76).

How can one describe the *moving skein of time*, going beyond the notion of history conceived as a continuous strand of Vasarian filiations? How can one describe the *moving skein of images*, beyond those activities, so walled in and prudently hierarchized, that our academies call the "beaux-arts"? It was to respond to these questions that the notions of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel* were introduced. They were meant to allow the historian studying Renaissance visual culture to better comprehend what *overdetermination* means, to grapple with the polyvalence and plasticity of images, and to undertake intense work in the realm of things and symbols. The word "survival" allowed him or her to grasp the temporal *overdetermination* of history; and the expression "emotive formula" made it possible to grasp the meaningful overdeterminations of the anthropomorphic representations that are so familiar in our Western culture.

In both cases, a specific type of work on the part of memory—that sovereign *Mnemosyne* engraved on the façade of the library in Hamburg—tangled and untangled the threads of this moving skein.

One could formulate the overdetermination of the phenomena Warburg studied in terms of a minimal condition describing the oscillating flutter [battements]—the “eternal pendulum” (fig. 25)—of things that are always acting on each other in states of tension and polarity: impressions interacting with movements, latencies with crises, plastic processes with nonplastic ones, forgettings with rememberings, repetitions with contretemps, etc. I propose that “symptom” is the right term for the dynamic of these structural flutterings.¹

“Symptom” would then designate that complex serpentine movement, that nonresolved intrication, that nonsynthesis that we have previously approached in terms of the *phantom*, and then of *pathos*. Symptom would then serve to designate the heart of the tension-laden processes within images that, following Warburg, we are trying to understand: the heart of the body and of time. Heart of time-as-phantom [temps-fantôme] and of body-as-pathos [corps-pathos], along the dynamic border region where deficient representations (such as the quasi-invisibility of the wind in the hair or the robes of *Ninfa*) meet with excessive representations (such as the quasi-tactility of the bruised flesh of the *Laocoön*). What the paradoxical temporality of the *Nachleben* seeks to grasp is really the temporality of the symptom. What the paradoxical corporality of the *Pathosformeln* seeks to grasp is really the corporality of the symptom. And, according to Warburg, what the paradoxical meaning of the *Symbol* seeks to grasp is really the meaning of the symptom—the symptom understood here in its Freudian sense, that is to say, in a sense that subverted and contradicted all the existing medical semiologies of the period.

With this proposition, our reading obviously enters a new stage. While Tylor’s “survivals,” Burckhardt’s “vital residues,” Nietzsche’s Dionysian “primitive affective forms,” and Darwin’s “general principles of expression” constitute indisputable *sources*—among others—of Warburg’s notions, Freud’s “symptom formation” constitutes, rather, an *interpretive* device [*interprétant*]: it can help us, it seems to me, to clarify, and even to develop and to *unfold*, the temporal, corporal, and semiotic models Warburg employed. It seeks to express what those models *sought to grasp*, which is a way of giving them a practical value that they seem to have lost long ago. It is also a way of admitting that this reading will be oriented in a certain direction, and therefore debatable (and polemical as well, since it questions or disputes the dominant orientation concerning Warburg’s heritage, namely the neo-Panofskian one).

In this interpretive orientation, therefore, we are measuring the ambition of Warburg’s “science without a name” by the yardstick of its own incompleteness. The theoretical construction of the *Nachleben* was interrupted during the years 1918 to 1929, which were marked by Warburg’s psychotic experience but also by the writing of the fragmentary theoretical remarks known as the *Grundbegriffe* or “fundamental concepts.”² And this was just the time when Freud developed

his concept of symptomatic interruption, a veritable theory of the *unconscious contretemps* and *countermovement*, which Ludwig Binswanger communicated to his patient, who was also his intellectual interlocutor (and who remained so until the end). The Freudian notions, reexamined in part by Binswanger, clarify and "open up" the notion of the *Nachleben* (in that it aimed at a metapsychology of time) and of the *Pathosformel* (in that it aimed at a metapsychology of gesture). One understands better, in this connection, why one can say that Warburg was a "historian of images" only inasmuch as he sought to examine history's *unconscious* as an unconscious of images.

To settle this question, it is not sufficient to say that Warburg had an imperfect knowledge of Freud, which is what Gombrich asserts, as a crucial precaution, at the very beginning of his "intellectual biography."³ Nor is it enough to say that Freudian concepts did not "enter into [Warburg's] system," as Bernd Roeck has written more recently.⁴ Theoretical convergences are not necessarily doctrinal affiliations, especially in a type of thinking that insistently refused to take the form of a system. Now, analogies clearly exist, as Gombrich himself occasionally observed,⁵ as have other commentators, sometimes with a certain embarrassment, as expressed, for example, in this assessment by Willibald Sauerländer: "[Warburg] comes close to Freud, whom he never seems to have appreciated very much."⁶

What this embarrassment expresses is doubtless nothing other than an intimate tangle, in Warburg himself, of *familiarity* and *strangeness* in the face of Freudian psychoanalysis. The familiarity—what "brings him close"—can be recognized at first glance: Warburg and Freud both studied culture by examining its discontents, its dark continents, its areas of anachronisms and of survivals, and therefore of its repressions. That is why Warburg never ceased to call for a "psychology of culture" whose privileged materials would be figurative styles, beliefs, and symbols.⁷ Freud, symmetrically, accorded crucial importance to the extensions of his theory of psychopathology into the domain of the "history of civilization."⁸ As early as 1929, Thomas Mann discerned the common element in Warburg's and Freud's undertaking in speaking of a "form of modern irrationalism that is unequivocally resistant to any reactionary misuse one makes of them."⁹

This "irrationalism"—the ambiguity of Thomas Mann's own formulation could be debated here—is nothing other than a *rational attempt* to understand the sovereign, *obscure work* of something for which Warburg (like Riegl, moreover) sought throughout his life to find an adequate vocabulary: from the "will" as conceived by Schopenhauer and the "will to power" according to Nietzsche, up to the "unconscious" of psychoanalysis. Why, then, would Warburg "never have appreciated very much" his Viennese contemporary? Because, Gombrich tells us, he "disliked and rejected" the Freudian way of sexualizing the psychological at every turn.¹⁰

There remains an easy way—but it is, of course, a bad solution—to keep the psychoanalysis and reject its inventor: one just has to invent a Jungian Warburg.

Gombrich, in this regard, writes that Warburg wanted to have nothing to do with Freud, whereas "*Jung's approach was certainly not uncongenial to him.*"¹¹ Did Warburg and Jung share a common interest in myths, beliefs, and the transmission of symbols? Undoubtedly (though this interest was shared by many others as well). Did they share a common explanation of these phenomena in terms of the notion of archetype? Certainly not. Gombrich himself admits he never found a single citation of Jung in Warburg's work—neither in the unpublished manuscripts nor in the published writings.¹²

It was Fritz Saxl who first steered the understanding of Warburgian survivals in the direction of Jungian archetypes.¹³ The most notable result of this was the acquisition and incorporation of the archives of the *Eranos-Jahrbücher* in the photo collection of the Warburg Institute in London in the 1950s. This, it seems to me, wrongly orients the study of Warburg's heritage, simplifying to the point of trivialization the models of time implied by the notion of the *Nachleben*. When Saxl, in 1947, elucidated his own temporal models, it became clear that the Warburgian polyrhythms, impurities, and discontinuities had given way to a simple game of "continuity and variation" in the history of images. Where Warburg sought out the symptomatic tenacity of forms or "formulas" at the heart of the gaps in meaning that he discerned—the famous "dynamic inversions"—Saxl looked for "*continuity in the meaning of images,*" which was a way of linking survival with the archetype, on the one hand (the atemporal side of "continuity"), and with *revival*, on the other (the historical side of "variation").¹⁴

* * *

The affinity of Warburg's "science without a name" and psychoanalysis lies elsewhere. Looking for the direct *sources* is useful but insufficient.¹⁵ Less useful would be to look for this affinity in common *topics* (for example, trying to compare what Warburg and Freud said about Leonardo da Vinci). One must look, rather, at the fundamental level of the construction of a *point of view*: why is it that an anthropology of images had to take into account the work done by unconscious memory? Why did it need, at a certain point, something like a metapsychology? How did it come to use a particular, and paradoxical, model—the symptom in the Freudian sense—that turned *Kulturwissenschaft* in general and art history in particular into a veritable *psychopathology* of cultural objects? These are the questions that we must now try to answer.

There is, to be sure, nothing extraordinary about the fact that Warburg approached the problems of cultural history from the angle of *psychology*: it is a characteristic of his period, that is to say, of that period when the human sciences were developing an internal critique of positivism, a critique which would give rise to modern psychoanalysis and historical anthropology. Here again, Warburg's teacher was Karl Lamprecht, who, already in 1886–87, instilled in his pupil the certainty that every historical problem, at a given moment, has to be

posed in psychological terms. Lamprecht invented, within the study of history, the notion of the "psychic field" (*seelische Weite*); he considered the monuments of the past to be relics of the work of "memory" (i.e., of a psychological faculty), and as such requiring an analysis of their "symptomatic" (*symptomatisch*) value.¹⁶

This point of view was put forth at all levels of analysis and used to characterize history in its most general sense down to its most specific objects. Whether it was Georg Simmel establishing a whole philosophy of history with respect to "conscious or unconscious motivations" or, fifty years later, Marc Bloch affirming that "historical facts are, essentially, psychological facts,"¹⁷—in all these cases *history in general* is called upon to construct a psychological point of view for itself. One therefore understands that, *a fortiori*, the *history of art* and of images cannot be undertaken without employing such a point of view.

Thus, Hubert Janitschek, whose courses Warburg attended in 1889, was already calling his studies on Italian Renaissance art essays in "social psychology."¹⁸ As for Wölfflin, Berenson, Schmarsow, and Worringer, they all took as their point of departure an "aesthetic psychology," namely that of empathy, in setting forth their own "fundamental concepts." It is thus not surprising that, right from the start, Warburg called himself a "psycho-historian." Like Lamprecht, and like Riegl with his *Kunstwollen*, he wanted to render operational a transindividual notion of the psychological in the study of images within a cultural field: a notion that would not wind up restricted to novels about subjective intentions—whether heroic, in the manner of Vasari, or simply "ego-centered" [*moiïques*], like the psychobiographies of artists that are so common in art history—but rather one that could be seen working at the level of the *forms themselves*. More often than not, this search was carried out in the margins of the artistic representations involved, whether in the purely graphic effort of a child's drawing in which a psychological state is so well conveyed or, on the contrary, in the obsessive precision of certain medieval ornamentation.¹⁹ Warburg's attention to "accessories in motion" derives directly from this research into the symptoms displayed by forms.²⁰

In 1923, Warburg wrote that "I keep in mind a particular notion of my library's purpose, namely as a primary collection for studying the psychology of human expression" (*eine Urkundensammlung zur Psychologie der menschlichen Ausdruckskunde*).²¹ (This can also be said of his work in general.) What, then, is the "science without a name" invented by Warburg if not a vital metamorphosis of traditional art history—seemingly a *history of objects*—into a *history of the psyche* as it is found incarnated in styles, forms, "emotive formulas," symbols, phantasms, and beliefs, in short, in everything that Warburg meant by the term "expression" (*Ausdruck*)? A metamorphosis in which "historical psychology" profoundly alters the positivist view of *history*, and in which "expression" profoundly modifies the idealist view of art.

"Historical psychology"? That means that the time of the survivals is a *psychological time*, a hypothesis that must be considered on several levels at once.

First, the *motifs* of survival are naturally linked to those of great psychological power: highly emotional representations, dynamograms of desire, moral allegories, figurations of mourning, astrological symbols, etc. Next, the *domains* of survival are those of style, of gesture, and of symbols inasmuch as these are the vectors of exchange among heterogenous times and places.²² Finally, the *processes* of survival can only be understood on the basis of their "connaturality" with the psychological processes in which the *presence [actualité] of the primitive* is manifested—whence Warburg's interest in the instinctive or phantasmal characteristics, whether latent or urgently expressed, of the *Pathosformel*.

It is highly significant that at the very period of writing his thesis on Botticelli—in which, moreover, he was making a place, discreetly but masterfully, for the topics of the dream, unconscious desire, erotic pursuit (*erotische Verfolgungsscene*), sacrifice, and death—Warburg undertook a vast "fundamental" work, which was never completed, on the "psychology of art." In the approximately three hundred pages of this manuscript, written between 1888 and 1905, he was already elaborating an entire psychological and philosophical vocabulary (though one could not call it a system) designed to stimulate questions as difficult as those of "art and thought," the relationships between "form and content," the "theory of the symbol," the status of "anthropomorphism," the "association of ideas," "images of thought," and so on.²³ And when he began this in 1888, Warburg was only twenty-two!

In all these attempts to develop a "psychology of art"—which continue up through the *Allgemeine Ideen* of 1927²⁴—the vocabulary of "expression" remains omnipresent. If all of history is based in psychology, then, according to Warburg, the entire *history of images* is necessarily based in the *psychology of expression*. We still have to determine what such a formulation is aiming at, which is something I have already begun to indicate: it is aiming at a *psyche* that is not confined to the usual heroic novels centered on the artistic "personality." It aims, therefore, at a more fundamental and broadly conceived *psyche*, more impersonal and transindividual. It is a question of revealing the existence of a psychological state of the kind usually referred to in discussions of body and soul, word and image, representation and movement, and the like. Anthropologically speaking, this state is central to the concept of imitation in classical aesthetics, which, however, usually winds up giving a rather impoverished account of it.

* * *

This implies not only that the *Nachleben* should be conceived as a *psychological time*, but also that the *Pathosformel* should be understood as a *psychological gesture*. Gertrud Bing was aware of this basic characteristic: what the "Pathos formulae" "ma[ke] visible is not a quality of the external world . . . , but a state of the emotions." And she concludes with the following observation, which is that of a historian somewhat frightened by the swamps of the psychological domain in which she has just dipped her toe: "We are here treading on

dangerous ground.”²⁵ But Warburg’s requirement was just that, despite the potential danger: the *Pathosformel* should not be translated in terms of the semantics, or even semiotics, of bodily gestures, but in terms of *psychological symptomatology*. The “emotive formulas” are the visible symptoms—bodily, gestural, explicitly presented, figured—of a psychological time irreducible to the simple schema of rhetorical, sentimental, or individual vicissitudes.

But where does one find the theoretical paradigm capable of meeting Warburg’s demands? This, over the long term, was the goal of his obstinate research. No doubt its vocabulary remained that of expression, but its point of view was definitely that of the *symptom*. For expression, according to Warburg, is not the reflection of an intention: it is, rather, the *return in the image of something that has been repressed*. That is why the *Nachleben* appears as the time of a *contretemps* in history (in the sense of the development of styles), and why the *Pathosformel* appears as the gesture of a counteractivity in history (in the sense of the *storia* represented by an image).

Thus we need the term “expression.” But why call it a symptomatic expression? What type of symptom is involved? Symptom of what? And, above all, *in what way* is it a symptom? Warburg looked first—without being too sure of really finding what he was looking for there—in the area of medicine. Early on, in 1888, it is the medical metaphor that comes to his mind when he wants to signal his desire *to go beyond the epistemology* accepted in his field, as well as his desire to be done with the “aestheticizing art history” of connoisseurs and of “so-called cultivated amateurs” (*sogenannte Gebildete*): “We of the younger generation want to attempt to advance the science of art so that anyone who talks in public about art (*Kunstwissenschaft*) without having specially and profoundly studied this science should be considered just as ridiculous as people who dare to talk about medicine without being doctors (*die sich über Medizin zu reden getrauen, ohne Doctoren zu sein*).”²⁶

When Warburg later comes to speak of his desire for *epistemological displacement*, it is again medicine which, along with anthropology, will help him dismantle the judgments about taste offered by “aestheticizing art history.” He needed ethnology—via the trip to Hopi country—to teach him what *primitive* means, and medicine to teach him what *symptom* means, in order to be able to replace traditional art history with an anthropology of images capable of “organically” grasping the stylistic and symbolic phenomena he studied in the context of the Florentine Renaissance, and then of the German Reformation:

Aside from this, I had developed a downright disgust with aestheticizing art history (*aesthetisierende Kunstgeschichte*). The formal contemplation of images—not conceived as a biologically necessary product (*als biologisch notwendiges Produkt*) situated between the practices of religion and art (which I understood only later)—seemed to me to give rise to such a sterile trafficking in words that after my trip to Berlin in the summer of 1896 I tried to switch over to medicine. I did not yet have any notion that this American journey would make so clear to me precisely the

organic interconnections between art and religion among primitive man, and that I would so distinctly see the identity, or rather the indestructibility, of primitive man, who remains the same throughout all time (*die Unzerstörbarkeit des primitiven Menschen zu allen Zeiten*), such that I would be able to demonstrate that he is an organ in the culture of the Florentine early Renaissance as well as later in the German Reformation.²⁷

In fact, Warburg—in Berlin between December 1891 and March 1892—had already taken the psychology courses designed for premedical students. Thus, it is clear that in the eyes of the young historian of images, *medicine* meant first of all *medicine of the soul*. Starting from this point, which is accepted by most of those familiar with his work,²⁸ the question arises of knowing which psychological, or rather *psychopathological*, framework Warburg needed in order to establish his stylistic analysis and symptomatology of Renaissance culture. It seems too vague simply to speak of an attempt to discern the “symptoms of a state of the collective soul.”²⁹ There is even less justification in linking the question of the symptom to that of finding a “meaning in history” in Hegel’s sense, as Gombrich does. And there is little point in trying to explain Warburg’s recourse to the psychopathological paradigm by reference to Tito Vignoli, an evolutionist as obscure as he is original.³⁰

It was only starting in 1918, from the depths of his psychotic breakdown, that Warburg began to perceive how close his intellectual project was to that of psychoanalysis. By excluding this episode from his biographical account of Warburg, Gombrich has wound up censoring an important epistemological aspect of the latter’s work.³¹ It was a question, once again, of leaving the demons of the Freudian unconscious—like those of Nietzsche’s Dionysian world—under the ancient parapets of a *Mittleuropa* in ruins. It was a question, too, of providing the “Warburg tradition,” which would henceforth be an Anglo-Saxon one, with the return to order of a philosophy of the faculties (Nietzsche and the eternal return traded by Panofsky for Kant and the *a priori*) combined with a “positive” psychology (Freud and the phantasm traded by Gombrich for Popper and perception). In order to overcome this censorship, we must now try to imagine the path which led Warburg toward Freud.

DIALECTIC OF THE MONSTRUM, OR CONTORTION AS A MODEL

The “historical psychology of expression” that Warburg dreamed of making into the theoretical foundation of an anthropology of images is, therefore, something he envisaged above all as a *psychopathology*. Warburg’s history of images seeks to analyze the pleasure the Renaissance took in formal inventions, but also the “culpability” of the remembered retentions [retentions memoratives] manifested in them. It evokes the movements of artistic creation, but also the “self-destructive” compulsions at work in the very exuberance of the forms. It underscores the coherence of the aesthetic systems, but also the “irrational

element" of the beliefs that sometimes underlie them. It looks for the unity of stylistic periods, but also for the "conflicts" and "compromise formations" that can traverse them and fracture them. It considers the beauty and charm of the masterpieces, but also the "anguish" and the "phobias" for which they provide, Warburg says, a "sublimation."

Of course, in discussing this whole vocabulary, which is surprising from the pen of a historian of humanism, we have to examine its theoretical archaeology. It already tells us that if the symbol was at the center of Warburg's concerns, it was not as an *abstract synthesis* of reason and the irrational, of form and matter, etc.,³² but rather as the *concrete symptom* of a split ceaselessly at work in the "tragedy of culture." When Warburg looked at an emotional Magdalene by Niccolò dell'Arca, by Donatello, or by Bertoldo di Giovanni (figs. 22, 24), it became clear to him that the gestural "expression" was *symbolic* only because it was first of all *symptomatic*. The gestural formula "expresses" something here only inasmuch as it crystallizes in the female saint a moment of intensity that appears, above all, as a real *intrusion in the symbolic order* of the evangelical story: it is the moment of a *contretemps* which repeats, in the Magdalene's body, the unbridled desire of the ancient maenads.³³ It is the gesture of a *countereffect* which remembers, in the body of the Magdalene, a paganism that the whole symbolic content—the sacrifice of the incarnate Word—wants nothing to do with. Thus, it is truly something like a symptom.

One could say that Warburg's art history, in both its models of time—the *Nachleben*—and its models of meaning—the *Pathosformel*—sought to understand its key objects on the basis of their *critical effects*: from the "erotic pursuits" in Botticelli and Pollaiuolo (in which Savonarola rightly saw the insolence of an "orgiastic desire at work"³⁴) to the "extremes of this new gestural language," which, in Donatello and many others, display a "unseemly agitation in their expressions."³⁵ From the irruption of Arabic astrology in a fifteenth-century Ferraran fresco to the German Reformation's obscure dealings with astrological beliefs,³⁶ we feel, on each occasion, the degree to which "the necessity to confront the formal world of predetermined expressive values—whether they derive from the past or the present—represents for each artist . . . the decisive crisis (*die entscheidende Krisis*)."³⁷ In the end, Warburg saw in the dance of these "decisive crises" all of Western culture agitated by a symptomatic oscillation of which he himself had felt the full force: "Sometimes it looks to me as if, in my role as psycho-historian (*ich als Psychohistoriker*), I tried to diagnose the *schizophrenia* of Western civilization (*die Schizophrenie des Abendlandes*) from its images in an autobiographical reflex. The ecstatic 'Nympha' (manic) on the one side and the mourning river-god (depressive) on the other (*die ekstatische Nympha [manisch] einerseits und der trauernde Flussgott [depressiv] andererseits*)."³⁸

Underlying the critical effects, therefore, there exists an *order of causes*, one that in the end, in 1929, Warburg apprehended using the psychopathological vocabulary of schizophrenia (a Deleuzian term ahead of its time, it would seem) or of manic depression (a term directly linked to the psychotherapeutic work he

did with Ludwig Binswanger). As early as 1889, Warburg had referred to this order of causes in speaking of unnatural “movements without motivation” (*ohne Motivierung*), movements “connect [ed] to desire” (*im Zusammenhang mit dem Wunsch*).³⁹ Forty years later, that is to say, on the eve of his death, the “psychohistorian” had at his disposition the Freudian concept of the unconscious. But, as if he were afraid that the substantivized notion (*das Unbewusste*) might lead him away from the dynamic process that he was attempting to characterize, he preferred, once again, to keep searching among the piles of moving snakes: he preferred to speak of a “dialectic of the monster” (*Dialektik des Monstrums*).⁴⁰

What, then, is this order of causes? It is the eternal conflict with a formidable, sovereign, and unnameable *thing*. Consider the themes that are omnipresent in Warburg’s work in his final years: the “combat with the monster” (*Kampf mit dem Monstrum*) in ourselves; the “psychological drama” (*Seelendrama*) of culture as a whole; the “complex and dialectical” knot (*Complex und Dialektik*) linking the subject with this mysterious Monstrum, defined, in 1927, as an “original formal cause” (*Urkausalitätsform*).⁴¹ This, in Warburg’s eyes, was the fundamental and “troubling duality” (*unheimliche Doppelheit*) of all the facts of culture: the logic they display also allows the eruption of the chaos they are combating; the beauty that they invent also permits the irruption of the horror they are repressing; and the freedom they promote allows the continuance of the instinctive constraints they are seeking to destroy.⁴² Warburg liked to repeat the adage *Per monstra ad astra* [Through the monsters to the stars] (of which the famous Freudian phrase *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* [Where id was, there ego shall be] seems to offer a variant). But how should one understand this? It can only mean that whatever else may happen, one must deal with the powers of the monster.

Critical effects and unconscious causes. What the “dialectic of the monster” describes is none other than a structure of the symptom. For the latter accounts for both repression and the return of the repressed: repression in the guise of “compromise plastic formulas” (*plastische Ausgleichsformel*) which scarcely rise above the “threshold of consciousness” (*Schwelle des Bewusstseins*); and the return of the repressed in the “crisis” (*Krisis*) and the “symptomatic” (*symptomatisch*) figure, both of which spring forth with the “maximum degree of energy-laden tension” (*höchste energetische Anspannung*). This is how Warburg formulated the idea as early as 1907, compressing this terminology into just four lines in his article on Francesco Sassetti.⁴³ Later, the “dialectic of the monster” will take on visual form in the eight-footed sow of Landser engraved by Dürer and in the horrible composite figures of the woodcuts published as anti-Catholic propaganda (fig. 19).⁴⁴

When Warburg, in connection with these figures, speaks about a “world of prophetic monsters” (*Region der wahrsagenden Monstra*),⁴⁵ I believe it is possible to understand his expression in the two senses required by a twofold discipline like “historical psychology.” On the historical side, the monsters of Lutheran propaganda are meant to be “prophetic” of a political and religious defeat of

the papacy. On the psychological side, they unwittingly convey an unconscious truth (*Wahrheit*) by means of—by the visual representation of—those legendary (*Sage*) monsters with composite bodies. That is why, in Warburg's view, these images constitute prophetic (*wahrsagend*) objects par excellence. That is why art history must be not only a history of phantoms, but also a history of prophecies and symptoms.

However that may be, we must henceforth understand the *Pathosformeln* as bodily crystallizations of the "dialectic of the monster." As *symptomatic moments* [*moments-symptômes*] of the anthropomorphic image, the emotive formulas were clearly viewed by Warburg in terms of the dialectic of repression ("compromise plastic formulas") and the return of the repressed ("crisis" and "maximum degree of tension"). What is described by the *image in motion* [*image en mouvement*], of which Warburg wanted to produce an atlas, indeed an album of its genealogy in Western culture, is nothing other than *symptomatic movements* [*mouvements-symptômes*].⁴⁶ But in terms of what paradigm are the latter to be understood? In Warburg's period there was no shortage of attempts to scrutinize the "movements of expression," even up to the point of their state of pathological repression. These ran from the "physiognomic mechanism" studied by Theodor Meynert in his *Psychiatry* (1884) up to the "pathology of the symbolic consciousness" as set forth by Ernst Cassirer (1929), with, in between, the disorders of expressive gesture analyzed by Karl Jaspers in his *General Psychopathology* (1913).⁴⁷

There is no doubt that the French school of psychology, too, was able to assist Warburg in his undertaking. For example, Théodule Ribot formulated a theory of unconscious memory, a "psychological heredity"—his own *Nachleben* of the faculties and instincts—of which he sought examples as far afield as in the history of Medicean Florence.⁴⁸ And, in fact, he offered an explanation of expressive gestures—his personal notion of the *Pathosformeln*—in the course of elaborating a whole theory of the *unconscious realm of movement*, in which the *psyche* was understood in terms of a "latent motor activity" distributing its "motor residues" throughout all the strata of mental life.⁴⁹

* * *

But, more than anything else, it is the clinical treatment of hysteria—as triumphant as it was spectacular at the end of the nineteenth century—that seems to have provided the most pertinent symptomatological model for the "dialectic of the monster" as understood by Warburg. The hysterical symptom combines the expressive *Pathosformeln* of the crisis and the *Nachleben* of a latent traumatism that returns in the intensity of the patient's movements. (Incidentally, the particle *nach* of the verb *nachleben* conveys the possibility of a simulation; and this was the point of view taken by the specialists in mental disorders since the eighteenth century.) In this context, the key figure was Charcot, the uncontested master thinker concerning the functioning of the symptom, and

the uncontested ballet master of the presentation of hysteria as a spectacle at the end of the nineteenth century.

The affinity of the hysterical body as conceived by Charcot and of the *Pathosformel* as conceived by Warburg has recently been defended by Sigrid Schade. Besides the fact that two works by Charcot and his collaborator Paul Richer could be found in Warburg's library,⁵⁰ the psychopathology of the former, she maintains, comes close to the *Kulturwissenschaft* of the latter in several essential respects. These two areas of knowledge present themselves as explorations of a clinical archive, make abundant use of photography, and end up taking the form of iconographic repertoires.⁵¹ As a result, Warburg's atlas of emotive formulas (figs. 44, 69–71, 86–87, 90–91) may, she thinks, be seen as a historical equivalent of the famous synoptic table—produced by Richer under the guidance of his teacher—of the “complete and regular grand hysterical attack.”⁵²

The great virtue of bringing these two thinkers together is that it overcomes a case of censorship in the Warburgian tradition—a “blind spot,” in Schade's words.⁵³ Art history, in fact, wanted to have nothing to do with the *pathological* extensions of *pathos* as Warburg understood it, refusing to see that its very status as a humanist discipline was owing to Warburg's having established something like a “pathological discipline.”⁵⁴ Sigrid Schade is thus right to speak of Charcot as a “predecessor” of Warburg regarding interdisciplinarity, the creation of an iconographic collection, and the observation of bodies given over to the movements of *pathos*, of passion, and, indeed, of Dionysian madness.⁵⁵ And we should add here that Nietzsche's allusions in *The Birth of Tragedy* to the dance of Saint-Guy and to the figure of the insane young boy in Raphael's *Transfiguration* have exact counterparts in the plates that Charcot and Richer devoted to the same themes in their work on *Les démoniaques dans l'art*.⁵⁶

Finally, can anyone fail to be struck by the analogy between the Dionysian figures of *Ninfa* in Warburg and the figures of the hysterical women drawn by Richer at the Salpêtrière (figs. 55, 56)? Could one not say, then, that the backward-looking path adopted by Charcot in his “retrospective medicine”—modern hysterics, Christian mystics, ancient maenads—finds its historical and aesthetic justification in Warburg's analysis of survivals? Yet, in looking at the question more closely, it seems to me that the ground of this analogy is filled with traps: indeed, it gives way with every new step.

Every use Charcot makes of the figures actually derives from an epistemic operation aimed at reducing the essentially protean, labile, and metamorphic character of the hysterical symptom—that pile of moving snakes traversing the body—to the simple status of a regular *table* [*tableau*] possessing the force of a law that is as much temporal as visual. Whether through recourse to hypnosis, to galvanic experimentation, or to the establishment of an “iconography,” Charcot's concern was always the same: *to master the differences* of the symptom. And that was only possible, concretely, by further deranging [suraliéner] the hysterical patients by making them shape themselves in accord with the pathetic images that preceded them in the master's “artistic iconography.”⁵⁷ That

FIG. 55 Anonymous Greek, *Dancing Maenad*, from a *Neo-Attic Relief*. Drawing of a relief in Louvre Museum. Reprinted from Warburg, "Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer," fig. 21.



was only possible by developing a historical sophism twinned by an *iconographic sophism* in which real bodies—suffering bodies—were ordered to conform to the images of the figures collected in the atlas, thereby appearing to be “proofs” of a clinical table established once and for all.⁵⁸

If Richer’s hysterical patient resembles Warburg’s maenad so closely, that is first of all because Richer wanted to draw his hysterics in the manner of an archaeologist making a graphic record of an ancient sculpture. There is nothing like that in Warburg: the *montage* of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* respects discontinuities and differences, never erasing the temporal hiatuses (for example, between an archeological record and a contemporary photograph). In contrast, Charcot’s *tableau* aims at continuities and resemblances, establishing a temporal unity in the unfolding of the “complete and regular grand hysterical attack.”



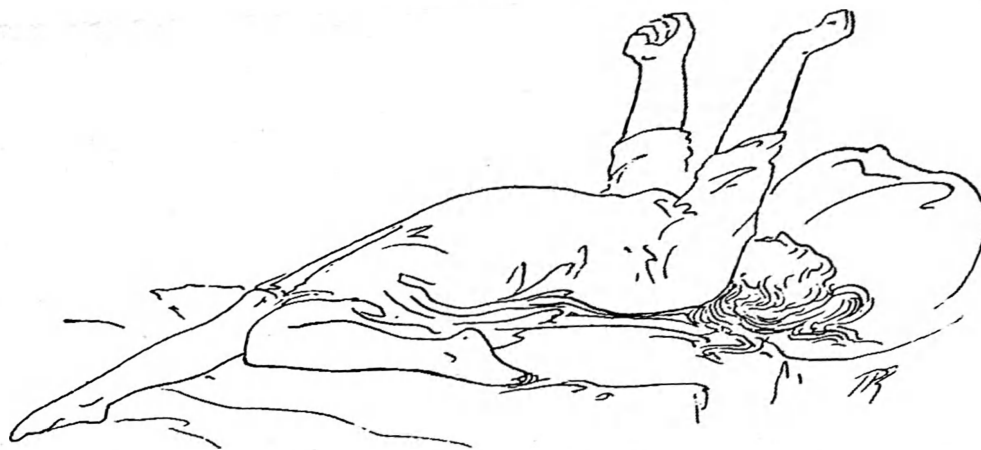
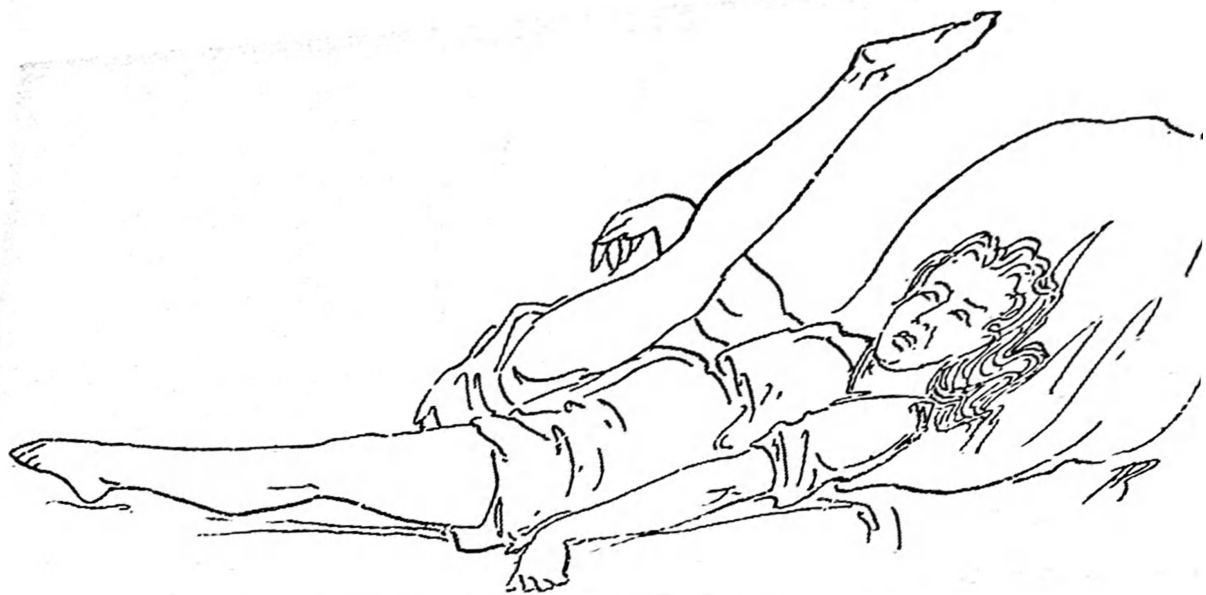
FIG. 56 Paul Richer, prodromal phase of a major hysterical attack. Reprinted from Richer, *Études cliniques sur la grande hystérie ou hystéro-épilepsie* (Paris, 1881), 5.

Consequently, Warburg's "science without a name" subverts all the premises of medical iconography as Charcot understood them. In the latter, the *hysteric* is a master signifier [signifiant-maitre] to which everything—from the depiction of the maenad to the living patient present in the clinic—must be reduced. In the former, to the contrary, *Ninfa* remains a floating signifier, moving from one incarnation to the other with nothing seeking to thwart her.

In the final analysis, it has to be recognized that Charcot's and Warburg's symptomatology are opposed on almost every level. According to Charcot, the symptom is a *clinical* category reducible to a regular table and to a well-defined nosological criterion. Whereas, according to Warburg, the symptom is a *critical* category that explodes both the "regular table" of stylistic history and the academic criteria of art. Charcot always wanted to bring the symptom back

FIG. 57 Paul Richer,
major hysterical attack:
contortions or illogical
movements. Reprinted
from Richer, *Études
cliniques*, 72.

FIG. 58 Paul Richer,
major hysterical attack:
contortions or illogical
movements. Reprinted
from Richer, *Études
cliniques*, 73.



to its specific *determining* factor (whether traumatic, neurological, or possibly even toxic), whereas Warburg considered the symptom to be a constantly active and constantly open source of *overdetermination*. On the one side, then, we find the quasi-totalitarian protocol of the "complete and regular attack"; on the other, an erratic *intrication*, a pile of moving snakes for which one would be hard-pressed to fix, as in Charcot's table, the coordinates.⁵⁹

One last observation will clearly underscore the great distance that separates these two epistemological models of the symptom. The famous "general principles of expression" set forth by Darwin, the importance of which for Warburg we have seen, find very little place in Charcot's model of the hysterical symptom. The *impression* of course accounts for the traumatic memory at work in the attack, where it is concentrated in the period of the so-called *attitudes passionnelles* or *poses plastiques*.⁶⁰ But what about *displacement*? and *antithesis*? One must agree that Charcot and Richer defended a conception of the "poses plastiques" that is characterized precisely by the absence of the *plasticity* required by



FIG. 59 Paul Richer, major hysterical attack: contortions or illogical movements. Reprinted from Richer, *Études cliniques*, 76.



FIG. 60 Paul Richer, major hysterical attack: contortions or illogical movements. Reprinted from Richer, *Études cliniques*, 77.

these two Darwinian principles. They appear only negatively, as it were, pushed out to the depths of the most intensely disturbed portion of the attack—into the famous, detested period when the hysteric defies her master and when the master, outstripped by the events, gets out of the situation only by invoking the two terms of “illogicality” [illogisme] (she does just any old thing) and of “clownishness” [clownisme] (she’s mocking us). This is the period of the so-called *contortions*, which were drawn by Richer (figs. 57–60), because it was usually impossible to take photographs of them, given the flux of movements that were either too disordered or hidden under the straitjacket that was finally placed on the patients.⁶¹

This is, if one allows me to use a slightly vulgar expression, the *period of the tours de force*; and it is not without reason that Monsieur Charcot has given it the picturesque name of *clownishness* [clownisme], evoking in this way the muscular exercises practiced by acrobats. Actually, this period consists of two phases, that of *illogical*

postures or contortions, and that of *large movements*, both of which demand a suppleness, an agility, and a muscular power which might well astonish the onlooker, and which, during the period of the convulsives of Saint-Médard, had appeared to be so much beyond the resources of nature that only divine intervention seemed able to account for them. . . . Here, the patient assumes the most varied, the most unexpected, and the most improbable positions.⁶²

* * *

And here is the decisive turning point. It fell to Freud to elaborate an understanding of the hysterical symptom capable of going beyond the rigid model of the clinical table, of accounting for the changing intrications—or overdeterminations—and of respecting the essential plasticity of the processes involved. Now, how did Freud manage to get beyond Charcot's iconography? First of all, he, too (as Lucille Ritvo has shown), returned to the three Darwinian principles of impression or "memorative repetition," of displacement or "derivation," and, finally, of "antithesis" or the possibility of something turning into its contrary.⁶³

The notion of *impression* allowed Freud to understand how the symptom turned an existing unconscious memory into something active in the present. *Displacement* allowed him to explain the constant interplay of figural intrications and signifying metamorphoses, thereby offering him a dynamic manner of considering the complexity of the phenomena. And *antithesis* allowed him to describe the ways in which the unconscious, by means of the symptom, got around, or "ignored," logical contradiction and the temporal sequence of trivial biomorphisms [le temps des biomorphismes triviaux]. Significantly, Freud approached the problem of the symptom at exactly the point where Charcot had left it: at the empty center [creux] of the "illogical movements"—that negative moment in the "dialectic of the monster," that "maximum degree of tension" in the *Pathosformeln*, as Warburg might, perhaps, have expressed it.

With Freud, the hysterical symptom—the royal road of psychoanalysis, "the unconscious formation" in the full sense of the term⁶⁴—ceases to depend on an iconography; it is neither a "table" [tableau] (whether representational or taking the form a protocol) nor a "reflection" (not even of a trauma). Rather, it establishes the *dynamograms* of multiple *polarities* combined in a jumble or erratically linked one with another, and sometimes swarming like snakes: combining touching of the body with taboos, advances with defenses, desires with censures, crises with compromises, intrications with disintrications, and so on. The symptomatic moment as such springs up at the dialectical pivot of these polarities. Freud observed it—even before having interpreted it—in a situation that was probably not that in which a patient was being cured in a doctor's office. (One can imagine one of the large halls at the Salpêtrière hospital, perhaps Charcot's amphitheater.)

In one case I observed, the patient pressed her dress to her body with one hand (as the woman) while trying to tear it off with the other (as the man). These simultaneous contradictory actions (*diese widerspruchsvolle Gleichzeitigkeit*) largely obscure the situation (*die Unverständlichkeit*) which is otherwise so plastically portrayed in attacks (*eine im Anfall so plastischdargestellte Situation*), and thus serve very well to conceal the unconscious phantasy which is actually at work (*Verhüllung der wirk-samenunbewussten Phantasie*).⁶⁵

This was an admirable lesson in how to look.⁶⁶ Where Richer spoke of the hysterical contortion in terms of “the most varied, most unforeseen and most incredible positions”—and, as such, impossible to comprehend through an iconography—Freud, for his part, succeeded in discerning the *formula of this* corporal *pathos*, the *formula of this* gestural *chaos* which explodes in the attack. In this “image of the moving body” (“*corps mû en image*”)—as Pierre Fédida expresses it in taking up the question of the symptom⁶⁷—in this jumble of disordered movements, Freud was able to recognize an exemplary structure. It is worth examining it in detail; for here his lesson in how to look is joined with a profound anthropological lesson concerning the “dialectic of the monster.”

The first element of this structure is the *plastic intensity* of the bodily forms and of the movements generated. The hysteric undergoing a crisis offers the observer a “situation that is so plastically represented” (*eine so plastisch dargestellte Situation*) that his gaze is simultaneously caught (captured, fascinated) and denied (stunned). The “situation” represented in the attack appears destined to “incomprehensibility” (*Unverständlichkeit*) because, for one thing, it is visually so intense. Freud starts, therefore, with a phenomenological given that cannot be ignored, one as obvious, in his view, even if difficult to interpret, as the Dionysian intensity of a disheveled Magdalene at the foot of the cross was for Warburg. Let us recall, moreover, that Goethe had started from this same observation regarding the desperate gestures of the *Laocoön*. The “active intensity” of this sculpted group, Goethe thought, “infinitely exceeds . . . the capacities of our understanding. A genuine work of art—we view it, and it touches us, it speaks to our mind, yet we cannot really know it” [translation modified—Trans.].⁶⁸

The second essential element of this structure (and the second factor rendering the situation “incomprehensible”) is its *contradictory simultaneity*. Here an extreme action turns into a counteraction. The intensity turns into antithesis, accomplishing work that is at once organic and transgressive. What is happening here? Two contradictory motions confront each other in a single body. Freud describes this dialectic—exactly as Warburg would have done for a Magdalene of Niccolo dell’Arca—by observing what happens to the “accessory in motion,” that is to say, the patient’s dress: it is torn away by the half-man from the half-woman, while being clasped by the half-woman against the aggression of the half-man. The result is an *intrication in motion*, a “dynamogram” of “mixed polarities.” “The symptom is the fulfillment of a pair of contradictory wishes,”

Freud wrote in 1899.⁶⁹ The text we are examining takes up this notion again at the point where Freud states the law of the *dual constitution of all unconscious formations*⁷⁰—a law whose application to the field of images in general Warburg would doubtless not have rejected.

Here, the Darwinian principle of antithesis receives such a radical extension that the idea itself of “emotive expression” seems to burst asunder. The symptom, according to its etymology, refers to that which falls, not to that which signifies. With it, the signs themselves explode: they shoot up and spread out, and then collapse, replaced by a new burst of fireworks. Freud notes this already when he describes the symptom as being *overdetermined* not only at the synchronic level (having several meanings at the same time) but also at the diachronic level (undergoing modification over time).⁷¹ In short, the symptom in Freud’s sense offers a very exact account of what Warburg was seeking to understand in tracing the constant oscillations between “extreme polarizations” and “depolarizations” and the “ambivalences” they generate. Is it surprising, then, that the vocabulary of *conflict* and *compromise* was as necessary for the definition of Warburg’s *Pathosformel* as it was for Freud’s *Symptombildung* (symptom formation)? “We already know that neurotic symptoms are the outcome of a conflict (*Konflikt*) which arises over a new method of satisfying the libido. The two forces (*Kräfte*) which have fallen out meet once again in the symptom and are reconciled, as it were, by the compromise (*durch den Kompromiss*) of the symptom (*der Symptombildung*) that has been constructed. It is for that reason, too, that the symptom is so resistant (*so widerstandsfähig*): it is supported from both sides.”⁷²

This capacity for “resistance” can be just as well be understood as a capacity for survival, for *Nachleben*. The historical tenacity of the *Pathosformeln* would thus be explained, metapsychologically, by the intrication in them of conflicts that are “maintained” over time and of compromises that are always possible. In the Magdalene sculpted by Bertoldo di Giovanni (fig. 54), the ancient maenad “survives” so well only because mourning and desire are maintained in their *conflict*, preserved in a state of tension but intertwined [intriqués] in a cleverly chosen ambiguity: one that makes possible the *compromise* of the entranced pagan dancer and the tearful Christian saint. Freud writes that the symptom is “a chosen piece of ambiguity with two meanings in complete mutual contradiction.”⁷³ This reads like a description of everything that interested Warburg about the survival of the ancient *Pathosformeln*, for example, the desperate gesture of the ancient *Pedagogue* which survives, inverted, in the triumphant one of the Renaissance figure of *David* (fig. 44).

Thus, the symptom plays with antithesis. It creates “incomprehensible situations” through its ability to confer a plastic intensity—that is to say, a piece of phenomenal evidence presented all at once to an observer, like a sculpture—on the most complex games of “contradictory simultaneity.” Here we find the coexistence and interaction of conflicts and compromises, “reaction formations” (*Reaktionsbildungen*) and “substitution formations” (*Ersatzbildungen*).

Here, too, repressed representations and repressive representations coexist and change places. Freud had already pointed out the existence in the dream of a process which can also be observed in the symptom, and which he named "reversal into the opposite" (*Verkehrung ins Gegenteil*): "Reversal, or turning a thing into its opposite, is one of the means of representation most favored by the dreamwork. . . . It produces a mass of distortion in the material which is to be represented, and this has a positively paralyzing effect . . . on any attempt at understanding the dream. . . . Hysterical attacks sometimes make use of the same kind of chronological reversal in order to disguise their meaning from observers."⁷⁴

Now, consider what Freud says about hysterical contortion. It is exactly what Warburg says about those figurative formulas which are capable of surviving: the play they make with antithesis—that is to say, their *insensitivity to logical contradiction*, to use another Freudian expression—displays simultaneously their *transformative* work and their *tenacity*, their capacity for eternal return. But there is further similarity, for both Warburg and Freud devote special attention to what I will call the *formal pivots* of all these reversals of meaning.⁷⁵

In his 1908 article Freud gives us an important lesson in how to look inasmuch as he accepts the complexity of the phenomenon (the pile of moving snakes which constitutes the "incomprehensible situation" of the hysterical attack), without, however, giving up the attempt to find a structure. And when he finds this structure, he does not impoverish it by schematizing what he sees, as Richer did, or by seeking an idea "behind" what he sees. Nor does he seek to convey its iconographic detail, as Richer tried to do, which is, in any case, an impossible task, given the disorder of the "illogical movements." Rather, he suddenly discerns a line of formal tension, a kind of *moving line of symmetry*: sometimes sinuous and sometimes broken, in accord with the body, which alternately relaxes and contracts. This line may be dancing or explosive, but it is always there, right at the empty center [au creux même] of the gestural chaos that it distributes on both sides of its elusive geometry.

No doubt Charcot's clinic—where the numerous "hemi-sensibilities" and "hemi-anesthesias" were to be seen—had prepared Freud for this way of looking. But everything which, in Charcot's eyes, was still evidence of disorder, all the "incomprehensible" and "illogical" aspects of the situation, Freud now saw as organized around an axis that orients the masculine fantasy on one side and the feminine fantasy on the other. Simultaneously conjoining and confronting the two contradictory terms, it does not resolve the complexity; it organizes and diffuses it, spatially and rhythmically. It is the pivot—itself subject to agitated motion, it should be emphasized—around which the contortion develops in all its irregularity.

This symmetry in motion thus offers a *formula* for the critical *pathos* exploding in the attack. In this context, how can one not think of the very particular way in which Warburg discerned the structure of the emotions at work in the paintings of Botticelli and in the frescoes of Ghirlandaio? Everywhere in them

he observed the structuring power of the visual pivots. In Botticelli, it was the organic border of the body and of its "accessories in motion," hair and draped clothing; in Ghirlandaio, it was the architectural border of the ground and the underground, from which there arises so strangely, at Santa Trinita, the genealogical portraits of the Medici children.⁷⁶ Dancing around these *visual pivots*, if I may put it that way, we see all the contradictions, all the conflicts at work in the image: harmonies with ruptures, beauties with terrors, resemblances with dissimilarities, present times with past times, and lives with deaths. The morphological law of the pile of snakes is undoubtedly complex, overdetermined, and impossible to schematize. But it exists, and it can be glimpsed. One never grasps it completely, but one can approach it, and brush up against it in the rhythm itself of the moving intrications presented by the image.

One final point should be noted regarding this visual work of "contradictory simultaneity": the intuition common to Freud and Warburg perhaps derives, once again, from Goethe's aesthetics and morphology. Speaking of that other human contortion and that other pile of snakes represented in the *Laocoön*, Goethe, right at the start, stressed the importance of the antitheses at work in that sculpture (figs. 29, 36): "[The *Laocoön*], in addition to all its other merits, is at one and the same time a model of symmetry and diversity, tranquility and motion, contrasts and gradations. The viewer perceives these varied qualities as a whole that is partly physical, partly spiritual."⁷⁷

Everything is split in two, everything is in opposition, and everything is intricately interwoven [*s'intrique*] in the *Laocoön*. The sculptor, says Goethe, "shows us in a single figure the motion together with its cause." In it one can see the "extremely varied activities" of the three figures grappling with the snakes. Beyond that, "all three figures are engaged in a twofold action" (*eine doppelte Handlung*), so that all degrees of complexity extend to all levels of the formal organization.⁷⁸ Finally, Goethe sees in the very choice of subject represented—human bodies twisting around in the contorted grip of the reptilian bodies—an exemplary morphological advantage. It allows the artist to *sculpt multiple forces* and to show the anthropological significance of the contortion itself (whether in the case of insanity, or that of pain, or in a masterpiece of sculpture), namely the knotted antithesis of *movement* and *paralysis*.

The artist's choice of subject is one of the best imaginable. Human beings are battling against dangerous creatures which do not have to rely on large numbers or tremendous strength, but rather attack separately on separate fronts (*als ausgeteilte Kräfte*). Hence, concentrated resistance is ineffective; indeed, the snakes, because of their elongated bodies, are capable of rendering three people almost defenseless without injuring them. As a result of the figure's immobility, a certain sense of tranquility and unity pervades the group, despite all movement. There is a gradation in the activity of the snakes, only one coiling itself around the victims, the other provoked and causing injury.⁷⁹

Moved by multiple forces, acting doubly, generating compromises, under-going conflicts that keep it in a state of tension between movement and paralysis, the image is clearly that “enigmatic organism” (*rätselhafter Organismus*) that Warburg discerned in each of his investigations into the culture of the Renaissance.⁸⁰ That he was thinking of Nietzsche’s Dionysian realm rather than clinical examples of hysteria *stricto sensu* is not in doubt. But Nietzsche himself had been careful to define the Dionysian using the example of “enigmatic organisms” capable of all kinds of metamorphoses: that is to say, capable of being moved by multiple forces and of reacting to them through multiple gestures. In short, they are capable of playing all the roles at once, as Nietzsche puts it with regard to “certain hysterical types”: “In the Dionysian state . . . the whole affective system is excited and enhanced: so that it discharges all its means of expression at once and drives forth simultaneously the power of representation, imitation, transfiguration, and every kind of mimicking and acting. The essential feature here remains the ease of metamorphosis, the inability not to react (similar to certain hysterical types who also, upon any suggestion, enter into any role).”⁸¹

This, then, is an “enigmatic organism.” The enigma—the “incomprehensible situation” Freud speaks of—derives in large part from a third structural element of the symptom: *displacement*. Freud completely recast the principle that Darwin had designated by the term “association.” Above all, he allows us to understand why the symptomatic expression, however spectacular, violent, and immediate it might be, derives from a true *effort of dissimulation*, that “veiling of the unconscious fantasy at work” (*Verhüllung der wirksamen unbewussten Phantasie*) with which Freud concluded his magisterial description of the hysterical episode.

The symptom is hidden because it is metamorphosing, and it is metamorphosing because it is undergoing *displacement*. It does indeed present itself completely, without hiding anything—sometimes to the point of obscenity—but it presents itself as a *figure*, in other words, as a *detour*.⁸² And it is the displacement itself which allows a “repressed” element to make a *return*. While Warburg observed in Botticelli’s Venus a displacement of emotional intensity from the center (her nude body) toward the periphery (her hair blowing in the wind),⁸³ Freud observed in Dora a “displacement of sensation” (*Verschiebung der Empfindung*)—concomitant with an “reversal of affect” (*Affektverkehrung*)—from the “lower mucous membrane,” the site of “genital sensation,” toward the “tract of mucous membrane at the entrance to the alimentary canal,” the site of “disgust” and orality.⁸⁴ And this is how the organism becomes “enigmatic.”

The symptom shifts, changes places, allowing itself to be seen only in an equivocal fashion. That is its initial phenomenology, its “incomprehensible situation.” The symptom gives us access—immediately, intensely—only to the *organization of its very inaccessibility*. This inaccessibility is structural: it cannot be overcome by any further “key” from some iconological dictionary. It tells

us only that there are many doors to open and that, if there is an organization, it must be conceived in terms of movements and displacements—those “migrations” which, in Warburg’s view, constituted the entire trajectory of the *Pathosformeln*, and whose mobile geographies and histories of survival he tried to reconstitute in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*.⁸⁵

The symptom changes place: it migrates and metamorphizes. Is this not what Wittkower, believing he was being faithful to Warburg’s teaching, termed the “migration of symbols”?⁸⁶ Not entirely; for the symptom is characterized by a condition of inaccessibility and intrusion—repression and return of the repressed—something which is not necessarily true of the symbol. Freud clearly established this in a short article of 1916 entitled “A Connection Between a Symbol and Symptom.” The *symbol*, ordinarily made to be understood, becomes a *symptom* from the moment it changes place sufficiently to lose its original identity, when it proliferates to the point of smothering its meaning, transgressing the limits of its own semiotic field. Thus, taking off one’s hat in the street is a symbol in terms of social convention (politely greeting someone), and even in the folklore of dreams (the hat representing a genital organ). It becomes a symptom from the moment when an obsessive, for example, develops an endless sophistry of greeting, deploying a whole network of meanings capable of infecting everything around it (the displacement is a kind of epidemic). Then the head itself becomes, among other things, the organ that is subject to being cut off.⁸⁷

In short, the symptom is a symbol that has become incomprehensible, having been taken over by the workings of an “active unconscious fantasy” (*die wirksame unbewusste Phantasie*). It is now plastically intensified, capable of “contradictory simultaneity,” of displacement and, therefore, of dissimulation. What *work does the fantasy do*? It consists in attracting symbols into a domain that, literally, exhausts them: they become enriched, combining in such a way as to attain a kind of exuberance, but this exuberance also weakens them. The “attraction” of which they have been the object returns them to their state of *deformation*, to their ultimate, formless condition [leur vocation à l’informe]. Freud calls this a *regression* of symbolic thought toward pure “sensory images” in which the representation, in a certain sense, returns to its “raw material”: “We have done no more than give a name to an inexplicable phenomenon. We call it regression (*Regression*) when in a dream an idea (*Vorstellung*) is turned back into the sensory image (*sinnliches Bild*) from which it was originally derived. . . . In regression the fabric of the dream-thoughts is resolved into its raw material (*in sein Rohmaterial aufgelöst*).”⁸⁸

As a symbol that has become incomprehensible, the symptom appears, as such, inaccessible to exhaustive “notation”—inaccessible to both “synthesis” and to “decipherment.”⁸⁹ It asks to be *interpreted*, and not *deciphered* (as those iconologists who follow Panofsky seek to do in studying “symbolic forms”). The symptom is, first of all, a “silence in the supposed speaking subject” or, differently expressed, a “symbol written in the sand of the flesh.”⁹⁰ As a result, this is

paradoxical writing. The regression and the sensory image did not keep Freud from posing—metapsychologically—the problems of *unconscious inscription* and of the “mnemic trace.”⁹¹ Here we touch on the fourth structural element of our model: it reformulates the Darwinian principle of the *impression*, which Warburg had termed the *engram* (a point we will return to later). It tells us that the symptom is a survival, a *memory-bearing formation*.

This, perhaps, is the most important notion for our purposes. Can we not say that the *Mnemosyne Atlas* constitutes the keystone of Warburg’s anthropology of images? But what can we say about this memory? Closer to our time, Lacan sought to find in the notion of the *signifying chain* [*chaîne signifiante*] a response to the twofold requirement of the symptom and of unconscious formations in general; for it combines masking effects [effets de masque] and truth effects [effets de vérité], transformative forces and repetitive forces, and ceaseless displacements and indestructible impressions. This gave Lacan the idea of combining, in order to discuss the symptom, *le geste* and *la geste* [in French, *geste* is a deed and a gesture—Trans.], a move which yielded the notion of a carnal immediacy (a single instant) endowed with epic depth (a long history).⁹² Is this not the gesture [le geste] as Rilke envisaged it, that “gesture that rises up out of the depths of time”? Is this not the *Pathosformel*, in the form of a survival which owes its existence to movement? But how should one understand the memory that this gesture brings up, the *time-imprinted image* to which it gives life and movement?

IMAGES, TOO, SUFFER FROM MEMORIES

It is surely as a psychological process that Warburg investigated the memory at work in modern (i.e., Renaissance) survivals of the ancient image and its “primitive” emotive formulas. Whether he borrowed from Richard Semon the terms *Engramm* and “memory-image” (*Erinnerungsbild*), or whether he borrowed from Ewald Hering the hypothesis of memory understood as a “general function of organized matter,”⁹³ in either case, what that tells us is the degree to which, for Warburg, the psychological dimension had to be seen from a point of view that he himself termed “monist.”⁹⁴ The important thing was not to separate the *psyche* from its *flesh*, and, reciprocally, not to separate the *imaging substance* [*substance imageante*] from its *psychological powers*.

What, then, are these psychological powers? Warburg gives us an indication, in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*’s compilation of “fundamental concepts,” when he asserts that “the essence of images” (*Bilderwesen*) consists in taking a background of “original impressions” (*Vorprägungen*)⁹⁵ and “forming them into a style”—we could almost say “converting” them into a style. At the temporal level, this operation is called “survival” (*Nachleben*). At the plastic level, Warburg often calls it an “incorporation” (*Verkörperung*), that is to say, the way in which the ancient dynamograms find their figural formulas and take on a new plastic form at a later moment in their history.

It is clear that in Warburg's view the powers of the image, both the psychological and plastic powers, work at the level of the sedimented material—impure and agitated—of an *unconscious memory*. This is undoubtedly the most important lesson of Warburg's *Nachleben* and still today its most difficult lesson to defend. The historian and the art historian do not readily accept the idea that the very evidence employed in their work, history, is in some way disoriented, "obstructed," by a timeless (*zeitlos*) memory, a memory impervious to narrative continuities and to logical contradictions alike. But Warburg is very clear on this point:

To characterize the restoration of Antiquity as a result of a newfound awareness of historical facts (*ein Ergebnis des neueintretenden historisierenden Tatsachenbewusstseins*) and unconstrained artistic empathy is an inadequate descriptive evolutionary theory, unless one dares, at the same time, to descend into the depths of the instinct-driven interlacings of the human spirit with the material domain and its atemporal stratification (*triebhafter Verflochtenheit des menschlichen Geistes mit der achronologisch geschichteten Materie*). Only then does one reach the mint that coins (*Prägewerk*) the expressive values of (*Ausdruckswerte*) pagan emotion stemming from the primal orgiastic experience (*in dem orgiastischen Urerlebnis*): thiasotic tragedy.⁹⁶

One recognizes in the representation of this primitive event an enduring characteristic of the Dionysian model. But what the tragic figure points to is none other than an analytic immersion in the "depths of instinctual nature," beyond all "consciousness of historical factuality." Here, Freud, in 1929, picks up where Nietzsche left off. One could no doubt say a great deal about the similarities in the ways that Freud and Warburg had of investigating unconscious memories from the point of view of the *evolution* between phylogeny and ontogeny. (And let us remember that much earlier, Darwin had written about "missing links" and "principles of expression.") It seems to me, however, that a more urgent task is to examine those *disturbing elements within evolution* that, in both Warburg and Freud, are represented by the symptom formations. One could say, regarding this essential point, that Freud unpacked, and made it possible to read, all of Warburg's intuitions. While the latter discovered how it comes about that pathos is a privileged object of survival, the former explains to us how it is that pathos is, in the symptom, a privileged product of survival, its incarnation, so to speak.

The Freudian model of the symptom allow us, in fact, to unite—in a single *Pathosformel*—the plasticity of the *Verkörperung* and the temporality of the *Nachleben*. As a symptom formation, it is, in a certain sense, a survival that takes on a body. A body agitated by conflicts, by contradictory movements: a body agitated by the eddies of time. It is a *body from which there suddenly springs forth a suppressed image*. This is how Warburg must have understood it as he observed the tenacity, the springing forth, and the anachronism of the survivals against a background of forgetting, of latencies and of repressions. It is striking to

observe that Freud discovered in the symptom a temporal structure that was similar to this in every respect.

As early as 1895 he understood the decisive element in that “incomprehensible situation” produced by an attack of hysteria. Looking beyond even the “attitudes passionelles” and “poses plastiques”—which, for Charcot, were only “periods” within a sequence forming a typology of the crisis—Freud discovered that in the symptom *every gesture is pathetic*, that is to say, bears an affect. Even if it is contradictory, confused, illogical, or unformed. Every gesture is pathetic because everything that occurs in the body, at this moment, manifests the powers of a *suffering memory* [*mémoire en souffrance*].

Freud’s contribution can be recognized here in his reinterpretation of the Darwinian principle of impression: heredity (defended by Charcot) is only a condition. The cause itself lies in a specific memory that is at work in the patient.⁹⁷ All the movements produced in the attack are either “the affect [that] remains attached to the [*sic*] memory” or “direct expressions of these memories,” or both at once (principle of antithesis, contradictory simultaneity). In any case, Freud asserts, “*Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences.*”⁹⁸ It is her “image of the body in motion” [*corps mû en image*] that expresses this, in every possible way.

* * *

“To suffer from reminiscences”—a decisive statement. Psychoanalysis is practically born from this insight. At the same time, Warburg was discovering that in Ghirlandaio’s frescoes (fig. 67) the Florentine nymph *dances memories*, just as in Dürer’s drawing (fig. 3) Orpheus, literally suffers and *dies from memories*. If the symptom shows itself as an “incomprehensible symbol,” it does so, in the final analysis, because it is the product of a complex network in which a thousand and one “mnemonic symbols” are interlaced:

In all this, strictly speaking, the hysterical symptom is not behaving in any way differently from the memory-picture (*Erinnerungsbild*). . . . The difference lies only in the apparently spontaneous emergence of hysterical symptoms, while, as we very well remember, we ourselves provoked the scenes and ideas. In fact, however, there is an uninterrupted series, extending from the *mnemic residues* (*Erinnerungsreste*) of affective experiences and acts of thought to the hysterical symptoms, which are the *mnemic symbols* (*Erinnerungssymbole*) of those experiences and thoughts.⁹⁹

What does that mean? It means that in Freud’s view the symptom acts in the same way that the image acts according to Warburg: as a constantly new and surprising ensemble of “vital residues” of memory—as a crystallization, or a formula expressing a survival. And if here one must speak of memory’s image, it is on condition—a revolutionary condition—that one *dissociates memory and individual recollections* [*dissocier mémoire et souvenir*]. Consider the difficulties a positivist historian will encounter when faced with such a condition. In any

case, Freud's clinical observations of the symptom clearly taught him—as the *Pathosformeln* had taught Warburg—that *memory is unconscious*: “Consciousness and memory are mutually exclusive,” wrote Freud to Wilhelm Fliess as early as 1896.¹⁰⁰ This is another decisive proposition. Henceforth, the real task will be to understand why individual recollection [le souvenir]—such as we have at our disposition, for example, when Vasari draws on the great family novel of Florentine art—is often only an example of organized amnesia, a decoy, an obstacle to any truth beyond factual exactitude, in short, a screen.¹⁰¹ Reciprocally, one must try to understand the kind of work required to organize this paradoxical memory.

From the start, Freud realized the full complexity of what was involved. Although “torn up by the roots” and “deeply affected” by the recent death of his father, he wrote to Fliess, in November and December of 1896, three extraordinary letters in which his theory of the symptom became a hypothesis about memory in general. He wrote about indestructible “memory traces,” but also about a “process of stratification” and “material . . . subject[ed] to rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances.” “Repression” was still important an important factor,” but so, too, was the multiplicity of the “various species of ‘signs’” employed by the work of memory.¹⁰² The field of *Mnemosyne* was opening itself up to the topical and dynamic complexity of the unconscious *psyche*.

From this complexity at least two fundamental characteristics emerge that we have already recognized in Warburg's conception of the *Nachleben*. The first is that the unconscious memory can be understood only in the symptomatic moments [moments-symptomes] that arise as *posthumous actions* of a lost origin, whether real or phantasmal.¹⁰³ The second is that the unconscious memory arises only in the symptoms as a *knot of anachronisms* in which several heterogenous temporalities and several heterogenous systems of inscription are intricately: “Thus what is essentially new in my theory is the thesis that memory is present not once but several times over, that it is registered in various species of ‘signs.’ *Pathological* defense is directed only against memory traces from an *earlier* phrase which have not yet been translated. Thus an anachronism (*Anachronismus*) remains: in a particular province *fueros* are still in force. Relics of the past still survive (*es kommen ‘Überlebsel zustände*).”¹⁰⁴

Anachronism can perhaps be said to define the essential core of the notion of memory which appears here. At the level of logical structures, it appears as the *temporal mode of the overdeterminations* at work in every unconscious formation. Freud writes that in the symptom “the family trees intertwine,” with the result that they intersect again at certain privileged “nodal points”¹⁰⁵ that could be called “knots of anachronism.” But these interlacings are better described as *networks of openings*, of seismic faults opening up at every step one takes in the domain of history. In this context Freud himself introduces the astonishing image of a network, of a tree, indeed, of a *forest of wounds*—as if, at the anachronistic moment of its discharge, the symptomatic gesture constituted, all by itself, an entire library, à la Borges or à la Warburg, in which each new room was a new suffering memory [mémoire en souffrance].

The reaction of hysterics only appears exaggerated; it is bound to appear so to us, because we know only a small part of the motive forces behind it. . . . It is not the last, in itself infinitesimal, mortification which produces the fit of crying, the outbreak of despair, the attempted suicide—regardless of the axiom that effect must be proportioned to cause, but this trivial actual mortification has aroused and set working the memories of so many, far more intense, previous mortifications, behind all of which lies the memory of a serious one in childhood, one which the patient never got over.¹⁰⁶

This analysis is exemplary for our purposes inasmuch as it explains an *intensity* (the pathetic exaggeration of the gesture) by a *complexity* (the temporal overdetermination of the survival): it captures the essence of the entire dialectic of the *Pathosformeln*. Later, Freud will explain that it is precisely at the point where memory does its work that recollection [le souvenir] escapes, and that it is precisely at the point where the recollection escapes that the *gesture* arises in the present time of the symptom: “the patient remembers nothing of what is forgotten and repressed, but . . . he expresses it *in action*. He reproduces it not in his memory but in his behavior.”¹⁰⁷

* * *

The moment of reminiscence—which Warburg sought in images in the form of the *Pathosformel*—thus appears as essentially anachronistic: it is a present in which the survivals are agitated, in which they act. Such moments are anachronistic because they are *intense* and intrusive, and because they are *complex* and sedimented. In just a few pages of the *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud believed he could unite all the following phenomena: geological stratification, temporal inversion, concentric stratification around a center, a broken line that takes roundabout paths [*enchaînement sinueux*], the zig-zag line of the knight’s move, a ramifying system of lines, nodal points, and nuclei of foreign bodies, “an infiltrate,” the blocked flow [défilé], a Chinese puzzle, threads, confused or missing traces, etc.¹⁰⁸

This shows us the degree to which the anachronism of the symptom subverts the positivist models of causality and of historicity. Here everything occurs in a manner “contrary to the axiom *cessante causa, cessat effectus*.”¹⁰⁹ Everything occurs contrariwise to the factual hierarchies of the great and the small, of the antecedent and the consequence, of the important and the minor.¹¹⁰ Everything occurs, therefore, contrariwise to the expectations of the historical narrative and the familiar models of causal determination and of evolution:

In spite of all the later developments . . . none of the infantile mental formations perish. All the wishes, instinctual impulses, modes of reaction and attitudes of childhood are still demonstrably present in maturity and in appropriate circumstances can emerge once more. They are not destroyed but merely overlaid—to use the spatial mode of description which psycho-analytic psychology has been obliged to adopt. Thus it is part of the nature of the mental past (*seelisch*) that, unlike the

historic (*historisch*) past, it is not absorbed by its derivatives; it persists (whether actually or only potentially) alongside what has proceeded from it. . . . The strength in which the residues of infancy (*infantile Reste*) are still present in the mind shows us the amount of disposition to illness; that disposition may accordingly be regarded as an expression of an inhibition in development.¹¹¹

Here one grasps the magnitude of the project faced by Warburg in creating an “historical psychology” of culture. For, in such a project, *psychological time* overturns our very manner of conceiving what *historical time* is. If memory is unconscious, how does one go about constituting its archive? Is it surprising, in these circumstances, that the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg scarcely resembles a standard historical library? Or that the plates of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* scarcely resemble those of a historical or geographical atlas? On the other hand, is it surprising that a definition of unconscious memory like the now famous one of Lacan’s organizes its entire vocabulary around a list of archives¹¹²—figurative and disfigured, symbolic and instinctual, linguistic and unarticulated, cultivated and folkloric, etc.—in short, around precisely all those things that Warburg sought to pour into the psychological treasury of his library?

STIRRINGS, REPETITIONS, REPRESSIONS, AND DELAYED ACTIONS

Warburg has sometimes been criticized for never showing any sensitivity to the beauty of the Florentine masterpieces he studied. Admittedly, he liked to poke fun at “connoisseurs” and “attributionists” (*Kenner und Attributzler*)—whether Bode, Morelli, Venturi, or Berenson—as being “hero worshipers” inspired merely by the “temperament of a gourmand” (*Temperament eines Gourmand*).¹¹³ But how can one deny that he was sensitive to, and even overwhelmed and captivated by, the sovereign grace of his *Ninfa fiorentina*¹¹⁴ (fig. 67)? It is true that Warburg never simply contemplated images in a state of calm admiration; for him, *images appear graceful* to us at the moment a gesture is perceived (as in the nymph’s arched foot). But, as we have just seen, images also suffer from reminiscences: the gesture, though just barely sketched—and no matter how little intensified or displaced, and thus disquieting—*causes an unconscious memory to rise up* “from the depths of time.” For Warburg, visual admiration always elicits something like a basic anxiety about the stirrings of time.

The gracefulness of the image therefore elicits, in addition to its present manifestation, a twofold tension: toward the future through the desires it summons, and toward the past through the survivals it invokes. Warburg probably saw this double rhythm at work in every powerful image. For example, he contrasts “the ecstatic Nympha (manic) on the one side and the mourning river-god (depressive) on the other.”¹¹⁵ The author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is a bit like the river god of our fine discipline, art history; for, on a foundation of mourning, he presides both over its development and over its internal eddies.

What are these eddies? Orinary moments, *stirrings of time within history*. The Freudian model of the symptom not only provides a better understanding of the power of these stirrings, and of their dynamic and formal necessity; beyond that, the Freudian metapsychology of time allows us to observe the river itself, i.e., the river of survivals—the river of *Mnemosyne*—as if from the inside.

Better than Nietzsche's earlier notion of eternal return, Freud's later notion of repetition makes it possible to grasp with precision what Warburg was searching for in the "seismographic" and "dynamographic" temporality of images. What *Mnemosyne* seeks is indeed "beyond the pleasure principle": not simple beauty, not the recalling of memories as such—and still less the collection of reminiscences of the childhood of Western art—but the very mode of the *instauration of time in the image*. A Freudian project par excellence. Is there a single chapter of Freud's *Metapsychology* that does not discuss time? Do not the drives have a "destiny"? Do not representations undergo the forgetting caused by "repression"? Does not the unconscious proceed by "regressions," and does it not become displaced into the realm of "intemporality"—a seemingly privative characteristic to which we shall return? Finally, does not death constrain us psychologically to experience mourning, or perhaps melancholy?¹¹⁶

One could almost see in each Freudian notion the description of a mode of temporal functioning: fixation or abreaction, formation (of the symptom or of a compromise, etc.) or *acting out*, compulsive repetition or the principle of constancy, repression or delayed action [après-coup], latency period or secondary elaboration, regression or the primal scene, memory-as-a-screen or return of the repressed, and so on. All of these concepts simply follow the intertwined threads of the unconscious's mnemotechnical capacities. On this point, too, Freudian psychoanalysis shares with Warburg's "science without a name" a characteristic attitude toward any kind of doctrine-building. On the one hand, it adopts the prudence and modesty of the philologist (this is its *analytic* aspect, in the down-to-earth, materialist meaning of the term); while, on the other hand, it poses its "basic problems" (this is its *metapsychological* aspect) in a sequence of audacious theoretical moves which end up renouncing the tradition of the grand metaphysical systems, Kant's in particular.¹¹⁷

What Freud discovered in the symptom—and Warburg in survivals—is a *discontinuous temporal regime*: stirrings and contretemps which repeat themselves in repetitions that are all the less regular, and thus all the less predictable, for being psychologically autonomous. A discontinuous regime, then—"instead of the *a priori* conditions of the psychological apparatus according to Kant."¹¹⁸ A single example will allow us to measure the great distance which separates the analytical observation of *symptomatic time* and the philosophical construction of a *transcendental time*. In 1905, the same year in which Warburg untangled the survivals at work in the emotionally charged bodies drawn by Dürer (fig. 3), and the same year in which Freud described the unconscious fantasies at work in the hysterical body of Dora, Edmund Husserl gave several famous philosophical lectures on the *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*.

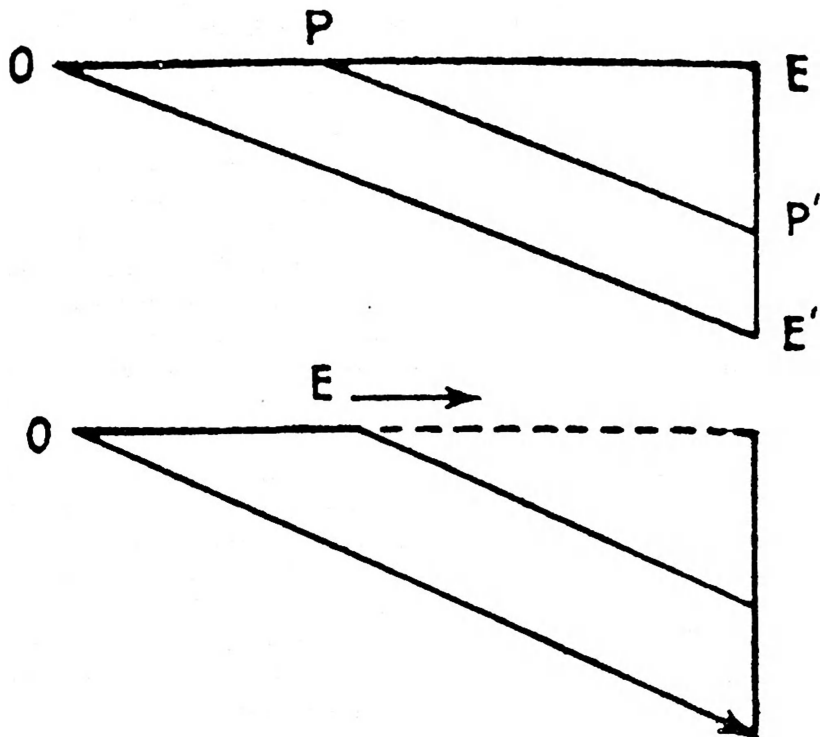


FIG. 61 Edmund Husserl, diagram of time, 1905. "OE: series of now-points. OE': the sinking down (*Herabsinken*). EE': the *continuum* of phases." Reprinted from Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1928), § 10.

My aim is not, of course, to provide the commentary that this comparison merits (an enormous task!). It is perhaps sufficient simply to consider the style of the diagrams that Husserl and Freud inscribed in the margins of their reflections in order to represent the temporal object of their respective investigations. Husserl's two triangles (fig. 61) clearly describe the "*continuum* of phases" which link the present instant of an object to its "past horizon." It is not surprising to find that the process involved is defined as a strict "flow." Husserl offers the following comment on these phases:

With regard to the "running off phenomenon," we know that it is a continuity of constant transformations which form an inseparable unit. . . . It is evident that we can also say of this continuity that in certain ways it is unalterable as to form. It is unthinkable that the continuity of phases would be such that it contained the same phase mode twice or indeed contained it extended over every temporal interval. . . . In our figure the solid horizontal line illustrates the modes of running off of the enduring object.¹⁹

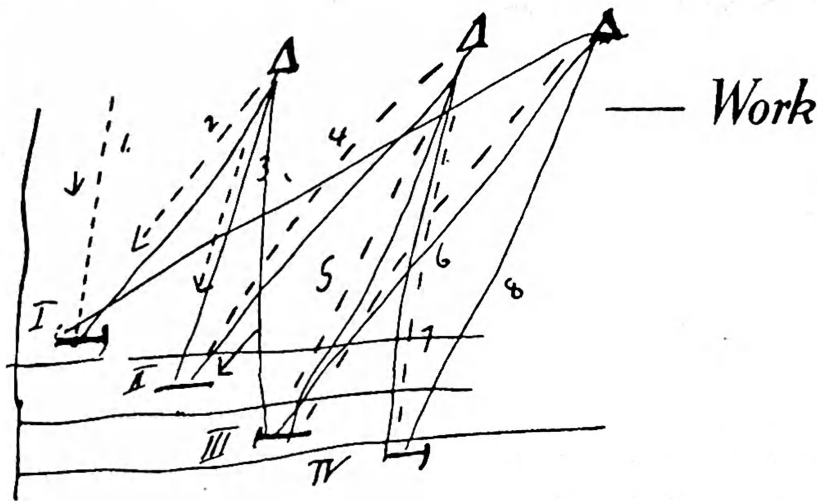


FIG. 62 Sigmund Freud, diagram of the symptom and of the "work." Reprinted from "Manuscript M," in Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse: Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess, Abhandlungen und Notizen aus den Jahren 1887-1902* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1962), 177.

Freud's three triangles, sketched as early as 1897 (fig. 62), are more expressionist and more troubled: tense, leaning to one side, tangled up among themselves, lying in different strata in relation to each other, and, in addition, accompanied by seven broken lines. Freud offers the following comment on them: "*Architecture of hysteria*. Probably as follows. Some of the scenes are accessible directly, but others only by way of superimposed fantasies. The scenes are arranged according to increasing resistance. Those which are more slightly repressed come to light only incompletely to begin with, on account of their association with those which are severely repressed. The path followed by analytical work proceeds by a series of downward lines. . . . *Symptoms*. Our work consists of a series of such stages at deeper and deeper levels."¹²⁰

Thus, where Husserl represented time as a continuous modification, a *flow*, as he put it, Freud saw in the symptom a multifold *collapse* of blocks of present times revealing a multiplicity of memory levels (noted in his schema as "I, II, III, IV, . . .") that are themselves subject to fissures or, on the contrary, to agglomerations of all types.¹²¹ The lines, the movements, the links, the directions, all of that is torn up into intervals, into crevices, into slippages in the terrain. The result is anachronisms, phase displacements, latencies, delays, aftershocks—to all of which there corresponds what Freud calls a kind of "work" (*Arbeit*), a word written in 1897 right next to the schema.

Time does not simply flow: it *works*. It constructs itself and it collapses; it crumbles and it undergoes metamorphosis. It slides, it falls, and it is reborn.

It buries itself and rises up again. It decomposes and recomposes: elsewhere or otherwise, under tension or in latencies, in the form of polarities or ambivalences, in musical times or in contretemps. This tells us that, above all, *Mnemosyne* confronts both the psychoanalyst and the historian with the question of multiple rhythms. Rhythms to be heard in the scansions of the chant (by which I mean the words of a lament), and rhythms to be seen in the dance of the symptom. The "work" to which Freud draws attention appears, in his drawing, to be that of constructing the optical angles required for three successive "points of view"—a heuristic of the gaze, we might call it—as if the eye were capable of "penetrating ever more deeply" into the temporality itself of the unconscious.¹²²

* * *

We are well aware that Freud himself characterized the unconscious by the famous term "timeless" (*zeitlos*). The unconscious would thus seem to be "atemporal." But what does that really mean? Should we take this formulation as grounds for removing all of psychoanalysis from the domain of history?¹²³ Certainly not. In fact, Freud posited the *Zeitlosigkeit* of the unconscious as a dialectical condition—the fecund negativity—of the temporal flow itself. For, beneath the river of becoming, there lies the riverbed, that is to say, the *other time of the flow* [*l'autre temps de l'écoulement*]. In it there are chunks which have broken off from the mountain, broken stones, sediments, geological impressions, and sands moved by a rhythm completely different from the one above. There exists, therefore, underneath the *chronology* of the river running through the gorges of the bed—whether these constitute corridors or obstacles—its *chronic* condition, the accidental elements of which, invisible at the surface, determine the zones of the whirlpools, the *anachronisms* of the current which suddenly bifurcates or turns abruptly [*se chantourne*]. (These are the zones where one risks drowning; there lie the dangers of the river, its symptoms.)

The Freudian "atemporal" (*zeitlos*) is like the Nietzschean "untimely" (*unzeitgemäß*): it should not be understood as a privative condition, as indicating something that the unconscious lacks, but, on the contrary, as the very condition of its work, of its exuberance, and of its complexity. Freud at first expressed this—with as much conviction as modesty—in terms of the *inalterability of the repressed memory*: "Again and again I have had the impression that we have made too little theoretical use of this fact, established beyond any doubt, of the unalterability by time of the repressed (*die Unveränderlichkeit des Verdrängten durch die Zeit*). This seems to offer an approach to the most profound discoveries. Nor, unfortunately, have I myself made any progress here."¹²⁴

Now, the inalterability of memory, its *chronic* character, does not signify its immobility. Quite to the contrary. The inalterability has a rhythm, one that Warburg detected in the emergence of the surviving forms of culture, and that Freud, for his part, attempted to describe using the metapsychological notion of *repetition*. I believe it is fair to say, keeping the relevant differences in mind, that

the Freudian *Wiederholungszwang* [compulsive repetition] stands to the destiny of the drives as the Warburgian *Nachleben* stands to the destiny of images.

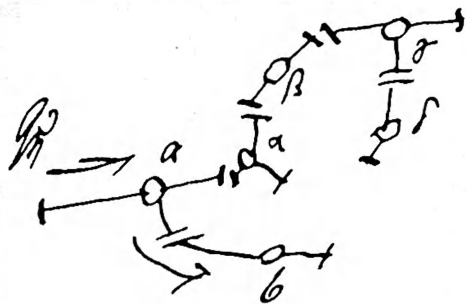
In the archaeology of this relationship, two references, at least, have to be taken into account. The first, once again, is Nietzsche's eternal return. Decisive in Warburg's elaboration of the models of time, it can also be linked to Freud's conception of repetition. This was the reading proposed by Gilles Deleuze in his *Difference and Repetition*, where he sets forth the following notions: the essential mobility of the unconscious; the preeminence of "virtual objects" which are essentially anachronistic "shreds of pure past"; the joint movements of Eros, Thanatos, and Mnemosyne in the destiny of the drives; the inevitable entanglement of *pathos* and *pseudos*, which "posits repetition as displacement and disguise";¹²⁵ and, finally, the *differentiating* status of the repetition itself—a status which is thus anxiety-provoking and always in motion: "Repetition is constituted only with and through the *disguises* which affect the terms and relations of the real series, but it is so because it depends upon the virtual object as an immanent instance which operates above all by *displacement*. . . . And, ultimately, it is only the strange which is familiar and only difference which is repeated."¹²⁶

Thus it is solely *difference which repeats* [*la différence se repète*] in the unconscious memory. That means, as well, that repetition delays or puts off [la répétition diffère], even if only by interrupting—in symptoms, or in survivals—the steadily proceeding flow of a historical becoming. Ghirlandai's *Ninfa* (fig. 67) surely introduces a *difference* in the story depicted in the fresco: just what is this young goddess doing in a scene which recounts the birth of Saint John the Baptist? Does she not introduce her difference vigorously enough to affect the style governing the pictorial treatment of all the other characters in the scene? Now, we know that this very difference was understood by Warburg as the occurrence of a *repetition*: that is to say, the survival, the unexpected return of the Greco-Roman motif of the figure of Victory on the walls of a Florentine Renaissance church.¹²⁷

While the philosophical approach to the notion of repetition is necessary, it is insufficient by itself in the case of Warburg, and that of Freud himself. An *anthropology of repetition* requires that the Nietzschean view be allied, however strange it might appear at first glance, with the Darwinian view and its famous "general principles" of emotional expression. Here again, repetition reveals itself to be a question of *impression*. Freud writes that "the patient," when he is in the grip of unconscious formations, "cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. . . . He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience . . . instead of remembering it as something belonging to the past."¹²⁸

In short, what one does not remember, i.e., the repressed, is repeated in one's experience as a symptom, as if one were struck by a similar process of impression. (Here one might think of a mold, a photographic impression [cliché], or typography, depending on the technical model one favors.) The "mnemonic

FIG. 63 Sigmund Freud, diagram of repetition, inhibition, and pathway, 1895. Reprinted from "Project for a Scientific Psychology," in Freud and Fliess, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*, 331.



traces," the "infantile residues" and their "inscriptions" on the magic writing pads of unconscious memory—all of that could now be brought together in a specific model of unconscious memory.¹²⁹ In these processes, generation and filiation follow extremely complex routes, whether it is a question of the transmission of quantities of energy (dynamograms) or of signifiers (symbols) (figs. 63, 64).¹³⁰ At around this time a new concept of psychological transmission begins to emerge, which is at once *material* and *phantasmal*. When Freud writes, as early as in 1900, that "their names make the children into *revenants*,"¹³¹ he is acknowledging both the materiality of the signifier and the spectral nature of its eternal return in the long history of family relationships. Warburg's requirements for understanding the history of images could not be better expressed than by this twofold criterion.

* * *

Material and phantasmal? There is one discipline which manages to employ these two criteria simultaneously: it is archaeology. When Warburg develops his full analysis of Ghirlandaio's *extant* frescoes on the basis of objects that have been *destroyed*—the Florentine votive portraits—whose appearance and function he seeks to establish through his exhaustive readings of the documents amassed in the *Archivio*, he is working as an archaeologist as much as an art historian.¹³² When Freud calls his interpretative "work" a process which consists of "stages at deeper and deeper levels"—or when he speaks of the "affective states" in the symptom as so many mnemonic "sediments"—he is also acting as an archaeologist of memory.¹³³ In both cases, it is a question of *looking at things which are present* (images offering their gracefulness, or symptoms offering their anxiety) *with an eye to absent things*, which, nevertheless, determine, like phantoms, the formers' genealogy and the very form of their present state. In both cases, this genealogy is apprehended in the *material* spatiality of the residues of destruction and in the *phantasmal* temporality of the occurrences of return.

The archaeological model occupied Freud throughout his life.¹³⁴ His thoughts about time—that is to say, about the paradoxes and disorders

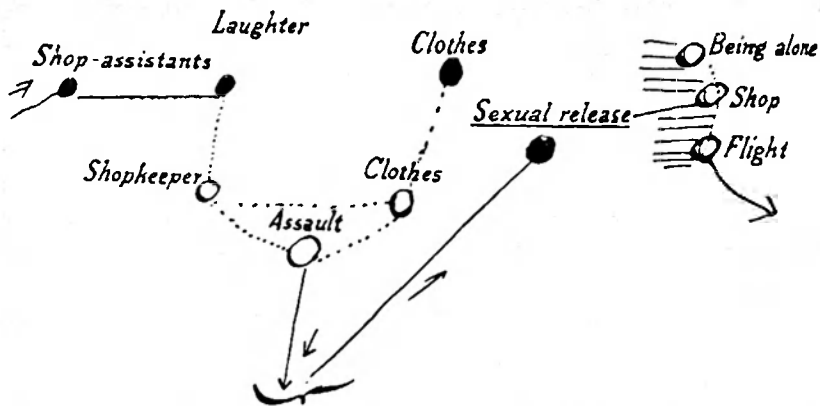


FIG. 64 Sigmund Freud, diagram of repression and remembering, 1895 (the black dots represent perceptions which were remembered by the patient). Reprinted from "Project for a Scientific Psychology," in Freud and Fliess, *Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*, 355.

[malaises] in evolution—were often indebted to it, for example when he linked the question of *stages* or of *stases* to the question of *strata*, i.e., of material depths. As early as 1896, at a time when he was trying to dig more deeply into the memory that "hysterics suffer from," Freud imagined himself amidst a field of ruins, trying to "remove the gravestones [gravats] and, on the basis of the visible remains, [to] discover what was buried there." This famous page concluded with a prophetic citation: *saxa loquuntur*.¹³⁵ Forty years later, the prophecy continued to exercise its power as a model:

The analyst has neither experienced nor repressed any of the material under consideration; his task cannot be to remember anything. What then is the task? His task is to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind or, more correctly, to *construct* it. . . . His work of construction, or, if it is preferred, of reconstruction, resembles to a great extent an archaeologist's excavation of some dwelling-place that has been destroyed and buried or of some ancient edifice. The two processes are in fact identical, except that the analyst works under better conditions and has more material at his command to assist him, since what he is dealing with is not something destroyed but something that is still alive. . . . Both of them have an undisputed right to reconstruct by means of supplementing and combining the surviving remains. Both of them, moreover, are subject to many of the same difficulties and sources of error.¹³⁶

Warburg would probably have agreed with this kind of reflection, except on one point, though an essential one. The opposition between *psychic memory*, the effects of which "bear on something which is still living," and *material memory*, the objects of which can be destroyed, is an opposition that would have

seemed rather trivial in the eyes of the "psycho-historian" of culture. For him, it is as misguided to omit the phantasmal aspect of archaeological objects as it is to omit the material aspect of psychologically induced instances of remembering. The history of images is traversed by *revenances*, by survivals, because culture—in the view of Warburg, as in that of Burckhardt, of Tylor, and of Nietzsche—is a "living" thing. The phantoms never worry dead things. And the survivals affect only the sphere of the living, to which culture itself belongs. If the destroyed antique models (the Greek "originals," as one says) have not ceased to haunt Western culture over the long arc of its history, it is because their transmission (the Roman "copies," for example) have created something like a network of "life" or of "survival," by which I mean an organic phenomenon affecting the culture's symbols, images, and monuments, as can be seen by tracing their reproductions, generations, filiations, migrations, circulations, exchanges, diffusions, etc.

Thus, there exist images which are like those "psychological formations" that, as Freud repeatedly states, cannot "be the victim of total destruction."³⁷ If there is a limit to the applicability of the archaeological model in psychoanalysis, it stems first of all from archaeology's own self-image, which leads it to assume, for example, that it deals only with material objects, or that it is capable of restoring objects of the past to their former state (like those painting restorers who tell you, triumphantly and naively, that they have "restored the original colors" of a painting). To exhume the objects of the past is to alter both the present and the past itself. In the realm of culture as in that of the psyche, there are no complete destructions and no complete restorations. That is why the historian must be attentive to symptoms, repetitions, and survivals. Impressions are never completely effaced; but neither are they produced again in the identical way. The Darwinian principle of impression, without which there would be no unconscious memory, turns out to be a principle of uncertainty as much as it is one of tenacity.

Just as tenacious is the principle of *antithesis*, although it is more difficult to establish on a firm foundation. We have seen it at work in Goethe's description of the *Laocoön*, in Darwin's theory of the emotions, in the destiny Warburg attributed to the *Pathosformeln*, and in the "contradictory simultaneity" agitating the hysterical bodies observed by Freud. We are still left with the task of investigating the principle in its psychological dimension as this is expressed in various temporal stirrings. Now, Freud's whole clinical teaching and metapsychology could be summarized in the paradox of a remarkable "contradictory simultaneity": *it is in the contretemps that time appears*. The time that Mnemosyne weaves is always a contretemps in the time that Clio spins. In other words, time, which underlies history, always appears in it as its "point de capiton" [anchoring point / quilting point]—as a depression in the cloth of becoming but also as the necessary "bearer" of its structure.

The technical construction of this paradox ends up, in Freud's work, as the dialectic of repression (*Verdrängung*) and of the return of the repressed

(*Wiederkehr* or *Rückkehr des Verdrängten*). In this dialectic—the model of which, it may be noted, Freud varied to some extent¹³⁸—it is essential to understand that the return of the repressed, that “compromise formation” that Warburg encountered everywhere in the cultural domain, is the only path we have which leads to our knowing anything about the repressive process as such. It is, of course, the path of the symptom:

Naturally, it is failed repression which will attract our attention, rather than that which has succeeded, which, most of the time, escapes our notice. . . . The process of repression is not to be regarded as something which takes place once and for all, the results of which are permanent, as when some living thing has been killed and from that time onward is dead. . . . We may imagine that what is repressed exercises a continuous straining in the direction of consciousness, so that the balancing has to be kept by the means of a steady counter-pressure. A constant expenditure of energy, therefore, is entailed in maintaining a repression.¹³⁹

Force and counterforce, time and contretemps: everything confronts and embraces everything else, everything becomes intertwined again like a nest of wriggling snakes. Each rupture of the equilibrium between the pressure of the repressed that is seeking to express itself and the counterpressure of the repressive mechanism [instance refulante] results in an *unconscious formation*, that is to say, in the return—be it only partial and momentary—of the unredeemed psychic “phantom.” The *dialectic of the survivals* designates exactly this kind of process: configurations which remain *potential, latent*, held in check by repression but never ceasing to exercise the force of something which seeks to create a path for itself; then, in the next stage, one observes sudden fractures taking advantage of a “slippage” [“dérapiage”] of the forces in tension, i.e., instances of the return of the repressed which reveal the *presently existing power* of the unconscious force. In fact, this sums up the entire dynamic of the symptom. Lacan will later tighten this knot, asserting flatly that “repression and the return of the repressed [are] one and the same thing.”¹⁴⁰

By now it should be clear that between “fixation” (*Fixierung*) and “deformation” (*Entstellung*), tenacity and mobility, disappearance and appearance, the dialectic of repression—the repressed along with its return, and repetition along with its difference—is capable of profoundly altering the meaning of *history*. This, we may note, is the meaning of Freud’s last work, that “historical novel” constructed around an originary figure, Moses, but which, at the same time, deconstructs all the certainties and phantasms of the historicist *credo*. In it Freud speaks of a memory that ebbs and flows, an anadyomenic memory [un *mémoire anadyomene*]; there is an interplay here between “latency [and] the emergence of unintelligible manifestations”—all of which is impossible to situate within the confines of a simple chronology, and all of which involves a process that Freud specifically calls a “survival” (*ein Überbleibsel*—and he is precise on this point, putting the term in parentheses and in English: *survival*).¹⁴¹

Clearly, in the eyes of the "psycho-historian," the *Nachleben* plays a central role. History, Freud writes, ten years after Warburg's death, finds its "historical truth" (*ibr Gehalt an historischer Wahrheit*) only in the "return of long since-forgotten important events in the primeval history (*in der Urgeschichte*) of the human family."¹⁴² A whole section of the book on Moses, therefore, is dedicated to the problem of *tradition* [understood as] a phenomenon marked by forgetting and by the process of latency. But how should one conceive this "latency in . . . history" (*Latenz in der . . . Religionsgeschichte*)? How does one interpret the fact that it "continue[s] to operate from the background" (*aus dem Hintergrund*) of the openly avowed transmissions? "That a tradition thus sunken into oblivion should exercise such a powerful effect on the mental life of a people is an unfamiliar idea to us."¹⁴³

Here, in any case, is a strange aspect of time that Warburg had already decided to confront, and he continued to do so throughout his life, for example in discovering the survivals of an old Arab conception of astrology on the frescoed walls of a Renaissance palace in Ferrara. And it is not by chance, moreover, that Freud referred to the example of the Mithraic cult, the survivals of which, let us note, were being discovered by Fritz Saxl in these same years, and in the same city, London, where the Warburg Institute had by then taken up its new home.¹⁴⁴ Just as the Freudian notion of unconscious memory—elaborated in the 1890s to account for the symptom—illuminates a large portion of the cultural phenomena studied by Warburg, so Warburg's notion of *Nachleben* is here taken up and confirmed by Freud through his hypothesis that, in the historical domain, "the impression of the past is retained in unconscious memory traces [in such a way that] the awakening of the forgotten memory-trace . . . is certainly of decisive importance."¹⁴⁵

The important thing here is not to debate the plausibility of the story as set forth by Freud in his *Moses*,¹⁴⁶ but to understand the profound revolution that the Freudian model of the symptom caused in the field of historical studies. All of history embraces inhibitions as much as acts, disappearances as much as events, latent things as much as obvious ones. It is thus concerned with *influential forgettings* as much as with accessible memories. Sometimes history rushes forth in *decisive crises*. It may thus be said to consist of rhythms of repressions and returns of the repressed.

Freud, it should be noted, expressly states, in the page cited above, that one should not think of the process of repression as a unique event. What does he mean by that? That it is "exceedingly *mobile*."¹⁴⁷ That it assumes all the possible forms and deformations between the immemorial character of the latencies and the anachronism of the crises. Freud remarked as early as 1895 that the hysterical symptom is characterized by a real temporal "disproportion," displaying a concerted interplay between long periods of time ("many years duration") and critical moments ("single occurrences").¹⁴⁸ In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he also stressed the ability of the unconscious processes to modify any given chronological succession.¹⁴⁹ *Mnemosyne* thus reveals itself to

be essentially polychronic: it forms a skein of multiple times all of which are undergoing perpetual displacements. It is here that the third Darwinian principle (association) finds its most radical expression, inasmuch as it enables us to understand unconscious memory, with its game of repetitions (impressions) and of contretemps (antitheses), as a *generalized displacement of temporal periods*.

* * *

Can one represent such a displacement? Looking carefully at Freud's schemas in the *Project*, one sees that their paths will always be sinuous, full of obstacles, requiring detours or short circuits, sideways jumps or delays—fleeting immobilizations—at the intersections (figs. 63, 64). All psychological temporality is constructed in accord with a model that Freud described, with respect to “fantasy”—i.e., to the image in the broad sense of the term—as a *braid of time* which comes and goes, floating like a jellyfish or a mass of tentacles, ceaselessly forming and deforming.

The relation of fantasies to time is altogether of great importance. One may say that a fantasy at one and the same moment hovers between three periods of time—the three periods of our ideation. The activity of fantasy in the mind is linked up with some current impression, occasioned by some event in the present, which has the power to rouse an intense desire. From there it wanders back to the memory of early experience, generally belonging to infancy, in which this wish was fulfilled. Then it creates for itself a situation which is to emerge in the future, representing the fulfillment of the wish—this is the daydream or fantasy, which now carries in it traces both of the occasion which engendered it and of some past memory. So past, present and future are threaded, as it were, on the string of the wish that runs through them all.¹⁵⁰

But this is not yet the whole story. It will require an additional, and decisive, strangeness in order for the chronological models of causality, the stability of the links between antecedent and consequence, to reveal their limits and to end up by bursting asunder. This happens around 1895, the year when Freud comes to understand that the origin is not to be thought of as a fixed point, however far back it might lie in the course of becoming. The *origin never ceases to peel off* toward the past, of course,¹⁵¹ but also toward the future, if one may put it that way. Freud's great hypothesis about psychological time assumes its full significance here. It is incorporated in the crucial and paradoxical notion of “delayed action” [“l'après-coup”] (*Nachträglichkeit*). It assumes the existence, in every unconscious formation—particularly in the hysterical symptom—of an interval, of an *intermediate process* [*processus intervallaire*] that Freud discovered in the dialectic of repression itself: “We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma after the event” (*Überall findet sich dass eine Erinnerung verdrängt wird, die nur nachträglich zum Trauma geworden ist*).¹⁵²

This simple discovery brings all the rest along with it. Henceforth, the origin can no longer be reduced to a factual source, however great its chronological "antiquity" might be (since it is an image of a memory which assumes a traumatic value *after the fact*). And history, as a result, can no longer be reduced to the simple gathering up of past things. From this insight Lacan derived, for psychoanalysis, a complete vision of "reverse time," of "the retroaction of the signifier," and of the "future past" ["future antérieur"],¹⁵³ while many other commentators have attempted to understand the overwhelming impact of the Freudian notion of "delayed action" in terms of a theory of psychological time.¹⁵⁴ But how can one fail to notice here that the principle of the interval discovered by Freud in 1895 reveals a *dynamography of time* similar in all points to the one that Warburg, in the course of these same years, brought to light in his studies of the cultural field?

The Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* would thus bear the same relationship to the memory of the "traumatism" affecting the history of the symptoms as the Warburgian *Nachleben* bears to the memory of the "sources" affecting the history of images. In both cases, the *origin* is constituted only through the *delay* of its manifestation. In the story of Emma, which Freud recounted in 1895, the "repressed memory is *only afterwards* transformed into a traumatism." In the story of *Ninfa*, recounted by Warburg in 1893, pretty much the same thing happens: the gesturing figure of the nymph is *only later* transformed into the "primitive formula." It is enough to note, moreover, that the two "antique sources" reproduced in his thesis on Botticelli refer, respectively, to the Hellenistic period and to the even later period of the "Roman copies after Greek originals," as they are usually referred to.¹⁵⁵

Why, then, did Warburg seek the "antique formulas" of emotion in periods which were always too late, never archaic enough? Because his epistemological concerns were directed toward the phenomenon of survivals (symptoms, delays, agitated origins [origines tourbillons]) and not toward that of births, or even renaissances (absolute beginnings, miracles of resurrection, original sources). Like Burckhardt and like Reigl—who both had already understood the considerable interest of a period such as late Antiquity¹⁵⁶—Warburg investigated the *origin* only from the point of view of *repetition* and *its differences*, that is to say, of the complex play of late displays of interest in it. The "truth of the classics" is better revealed in the later periods—in Donatello, in Rembrandt, even in Manet¹⁵⁷—than in a state of archaic "purity" that, in any case, turns out to be nonexistent.

Studying the art of the Florentine Quattrocento from the perspective of the *Renaissance* has almost always resulted in conceiving this art as a grouping of *recollections* of *Antiquity*. But, for Warburg, studying it from the perspective of *survivals* meant investigating another dimension, one underlying them, as if it were, so to speak, their own lining: namely, that of the *delayed actions of primitiveness* [*après-coup de la primitivité*]. Now, these delayed actions have a difficult life: tenuous but tenacious, they extend their power right up to the

present time of the historian. This is the reason that Warburg often related the objects of his historical studies—the long-term persistence of images, and antique survivals—to his own epoch. Thus, the year 1895 is precisely the time when he reconfigures Ghirlandaio's *Ninfa*, with her basket of fruits (fig. 67), before his camera in the form of a young Native American girl bearing a jar on her head.¹⁵⁸ And precisely the time when he reconfigures the *Laocoön*, grappling with his mythological serpents (fig. 36), in the guise of a Hopi priest grappling with serpents that are very much alive (fig. 37).

This way of scrutinizing the most ancient memory in the most recent period of its delayed actions and, reciprocally, of considering the most recent present in the untimeliness of its old survivals—all that tightens the link that Warburg was able to establish between the survivals of Tyler's anthropology and the *Symptombildungen* of Freudian psychoanalysis. The statement that every significant historian, from Burckhardt to Nietzsche, is a "prophet" (*Seher*) no longer has a "romantic" or fantastic ring to it.¹⁵⁹ For it is indeed in the mnemonic material itself that the later period [l'après-coup] is constituted: by generalized displacement, that is to say, by a dialectical play of temporal detours and signifying detours. Delays, migrations, figures.

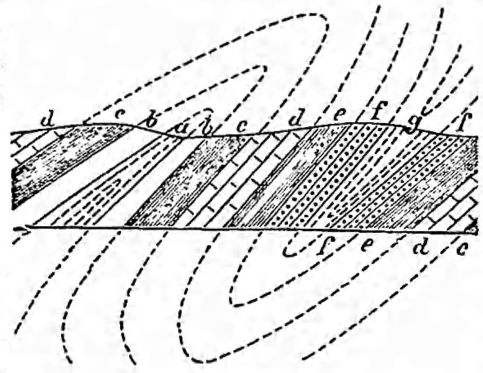
There are, in fact, no *delays* in time without *figures* in the space of meaning. The affinity of Warburgian survivals with Freudian delayed action informs every aspect of the analysis. I see nothing fortuitous in the fact that Freud, in 1895, arrived at the notion of *Nachträglichkeit* following a path identical to the one that Warburg had embarked on in 1893 in order to arrive at the *Nachleben*: namely, through the intermediary step—the detour, the figure—of "accessories in motion." What put Freud on the path of the mnemonic material is, in fact, the displacement of the "sexual discharge"—the *pathos* of Emma in the repressed scene—on to the *different states of her clothes, jewels* [parure] that seduce the eye or the cloth of her dress, which the seducer explores tactilely, sexually, in the "attack" scene¹⁶⁰ (fig. 64).

Likewise, Warburg showed that the emotional intensity in the work of Botticelli is manifested as *Nachleben der Antike* at the very spot where it is displaced onto the cloths of the dresses and onto the undulations of the hair.¹⁶¹ An ancient nymph is *only afterwards* transformed into a "primitive formula." But when she appears—in a painting by Botticelli or in a fresco by Ghirlandaio—the cloth of her dress, thanks to its movement, endows the passage with what it simultaneously hides, between folds and gaps: survivals of Antiquity, dynamograms of a long fossilized desire.

THE GUIDE FOSSIL, OR THE DANCE OF THE BURIED PERIODS OF TIME

"The being which has a form dominates the millennia. Every form conserves a life. The fossil is no longer simply a being which has lived; it is a being which is still living, asleep in its form."¹⁶² It is easy to understand that the notion of the fossil could run through all of Warburg's thought. It is a paradigm, unobtrusive

FIG. 65 Diagram of geological strata. Reprinted from Ferdinand von Richthofen, *Führer für Forschungsreisende: Anleitung zu Beobachtungen über Gegenstände der physischen Geographie und Geologie* (Berlin, 1886), fig. 85.



but insistent, of the *Nachleben*—one of its major leitmotifs. Its paradox—its ambition—derives from the fact that while such a paradigm moves, transversally, and is almost musical, it is never established at any given point, refuses to “harden,” and never completely crystallizes. One could say that even in dealing with the notion of the fossil, Warburg tried to do what he tried to do everywhere else, namely, not to petrify anything, but rather to conceive everything from the perspective of its movement. But how can one conceive of a fossil as being set in motion?

First of all, by choosing the beautiful expression of the *Leitfossil* [“guide or index fossil”—Trans.]¹⁶³ The *Leitfossil* bears the same relationship to the depths of geological time as the *Leitmotiv* bears to the continuity of melodic development: it returns, here and there, erratically but insistently, in such a way that at each return it is recognizable, even if transformed, as a sovereign power of the *Nachleben*. In geology, the “guide fossils”—or “characteristic fossils,” as they are also called—are formations belonging to the same epoch, to the same “layer,” even though they might be found in places completely separated from each other.¹⁶⁴ The *Leitfossil* thus assumes a tenacity of form over time, but one traversed by the discontinuity of fractures, earthquakes, and the movements of tectonic plates.

Once again, Goethe’s morphology must have been the source of Warburg’s interest in fossils as the witnesses of a survival, of a “life asleep in its form.”¹⁶⁵ But the notion of a “characteristic fossil” actually goes back to Georges Cuvier and his attempt, as early as 1806, to tighten the links between the life sciences and the earth sciences, namely paleontology and geology. His research program, focused entirely on the study of fossils, is considered to be the inaugural manifesto of stratigraphic paleontology, and the latter is what makes the technical notion of the *Leitfossil* fully coherent.¹⁶⁶

It is already strange—and significant—that a library devoted to the “sciences of culture” should be endowed with a certain number of books on geology and paleontology. And it is even stranger to find, right in the middle of the section

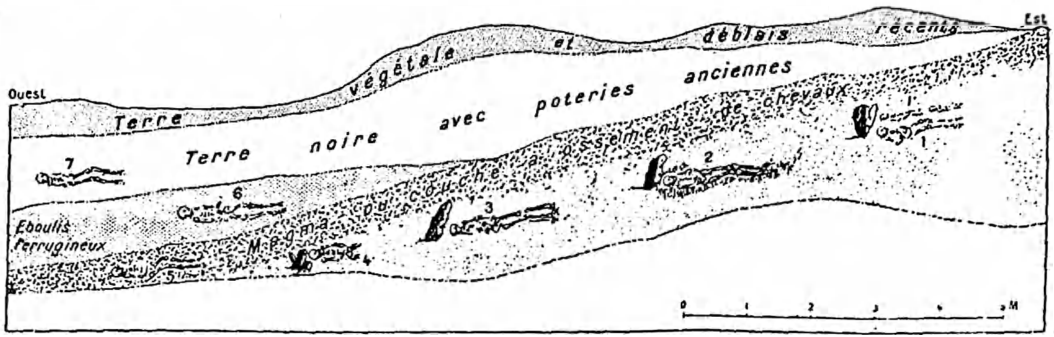


FIG. 66 Paleolithic burial places of Solutre [France]. Reprinted from G. H. Luquet, *L'art et la religion des hommes fossiles* (Paris: Masson, 1926), fig. 103.

on "Anthropology," Ferdinand von Richthofen's classic work on "physical geography" and geology.¹⁶⁷ In it one discovers the dynamic of the phenomena of erosion, the "folding of [geological] layers" (*Schichtenfaltungen*), the dialectic of long-lasting epochs and catastrophic alterations of the earth's crust—all things that Warburg's "seismography" was ready to welcome as a genuine epistemological model of the *Nachleben* (figs. 9, 13, 65). One thus sees why Richthofen's book is located on the shelves of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg somewhere between the section devoted to the unconscious—dreams, symbols, psychopathology—and that devoted to the memory of gestures, that is to say, to the *Pathosformeln*.¹⁶⁸

The emotive formulas, according to Warburg, are nothing else than *fossil movements*. Anthropology and paleontology were already employing this notion; for as early as 1884 Armand de Quatrefages had spoken of "fossil men" and "wild men" at the same time.¹⁶⁹ The expressions *fossil men* and *living fossils* were not long in becoming a commonplace in the vocabulary of biologists and prehistorians.¹⁷⁰ Our ancestors, it seemed, did not precede us in continuous lines or even in tree-like genealogies that one could trace back via simple bifurcations, but rather via broken layers, discontinuous strata, and erratic blocks (fig. 66). Genealogies, like geological formations, have always been subject to the contrary actions of quakes, eruptions, floods, and other catastrophic destructions.

But Warburg, as was his custom, did not cease to put his own theoretical models in motion, to displace them: he had scarcely introduced the geological paradigm into genealogy—or anthropology—when next he employed it in the psychological domain. Warburg spoke of the *Leitfossil* above all to evoke survival in terms of a psychological memory capable of *Verkörperung*, of "taking bodily form," or of gestural "crystallization." In his view, it could also account for the stratified time at work in the expressive movements of the present.¹⁷¹

Fossil movements or fossils in motion. Here again we are doing no more than speaking of the symptom in the Freudian sense of the term. When a

symptom emerges, it does so as a fossil—a “life asleep in its form”—which awakens completely unexpectedly, and which moves, becomes agitated, tosses about, and disrupts the normal course of things. It is a chunk of prehistory suddenly rendered present; it is a “vital residue” suddenly become robust [*vivace*]. It is a fossil which begins to dance, even to shout.

As early as 1892, Freud—with Breuer and against Charcot—had based his new theory of the hysterical symptom on the two concomitant principles of the *return of what has lain buried* (an element of unconscious memory, tenacious and petrified like a fossil, which resurfaces in connection with some occasional cause) and of *dissociation* (notably that which separates the traumatic “impression” from its symptomatic “discharge”).¹⁷² He later adds that this *disassociated return of the repressed*—dissociated both thematically and chronologically, because the current emergence of the fossil “inverts all chronology,” as he put it—is anchored primarily in the “motor activity” of bodily gestures [translation modified—Trans.].¹⁷³

Warburg, for his part, summarized the problem of the *Pathosformeln* in a lapidary formula: “disconnected dynamograms” (*abgeschnürte Dynamogramme*).¹⁷⁴ Here the word “dynamograms” denotes the existence, the survival, of the fossil impressions of ancient energies; while the adjective “disconnected” specifies the anachronistic and symptomatic status of the *Letifossil*, inasmuch as it is an element cut off from its customary surroundings, from its original symbolic value [symbolicité d'origine]. The times which have survived are not times which have slipped away; they are times which are buried just under our feet and which, as they reemerge, cause us to stumble in the course of our history. In this stumbling there still resonates—etymologically—the word “symptom” [one of the roots of the word “symptom” is *piptein*, “to fall”—Trans.].

“[Unconscious] fantasies translated into the motor sphere, projected on to motility and portrayed in pantomime” (*ins Motorische übersetzte, auf die Motilität projizierte, pantomimisch dargestellte*)¹⁷⁵—these hysterical symptoms described by Freud are a display of behavior that, according to him, is not that of fossils in the trivial sense, but rather that of *fossils in motion*,¹⁷⁶ and are thus similar to the *Pathosformeln* as Warburg conceived them. This movement joins the present energy of the gesture with the ancient energy of its memory, or, expressed in other terms, it joins the *occurrence* [*survenance*] of a crisis with the *survival* [*survivance*] of an eternal return. It is therefore something like a tragic dance.

At this point in the discussion one could envision something like a Dionysian choreography of the image and, beyond that, a metapsychology of the gesture in which the latter would be seen as the “raw material of the mnemonic traces.”¹⁷⁷ Consequently, the paradox arises that the gesture, however intense it might be, reveals its nature as a phantom; it is a *movement which has returned* which causes the present to dance, yielding a movement in the present that has been molded in immemorial times. In short, it is a *fleeting fossil* [*fossile fugace*]. Going against all physiognomic and iconographic “grammar,” Warburg’s theory of the *Pathosformeln* clearly opens up the question of the corporal image, and

of its expressiveness, to one that can be discussed in terms of an obscure dance of the strata of time.

* * *

This is how we must now view *Ninfa's* grace, that Warburgian leitmotif of the body in motion—as a paradigmatic incarnation of the *Leitfossil*, that quasimusical, melodic and rhythmic concept of petrification. Are not the most beautiful, most moving fossils those in which we recognize, through a separation of millions of years, life's most fragile and fleeting forms: the uncertain step of a prehistoric fledgling bird, the trace of a mollusk's body, the drops of rain on the ground, unknown leaves looking as if shaken by the wind, and even the "undulations left by the waters"?¹⁷⁸

Ninfa indeed evokes all that. On the one hand, Warburg was constantly losing her, like a butterfly which is always escaping the naturalist's net—whence the impossibility of his finishing the manuscript he began in Florence in collaboration with André Jolles¹⁷⁹ (fig. 67). On the other hand, he never ceased to find her again, everywhere he went. Leitmotif of surviving time [temps survivant] and *Leitfossil* of historical time, Warburg's nymph always joins two contradictory temporal dimensions. She is as tenacious as an *idée fixe* and as fragile as a "fleeting idea" ("fuite des idées"); oriented within Warburg's obsessive search for a taxonomy, and disorienting like all fairies, like all fictitious creatures; ancient through her formal rooting in Hellenic statuary and modern through her direct relationships with fin de siècle aesthetics.¹⁸⁰ Joseph Koerner is quite right in saying that *Ninfa* was "both an object of and a symbol for Warburg's scholarship."¹⁸¹ "The most beautiful butterfly I ever pinned down suddenly bursts through the glass and dances mockingly upwards into the blue air. . . . Now I should catch it again, but I am not equipped for this kind of locomotion. Or, to be exact, I should like to, but my intellectual training does not permit me to do so. . . . I should like, at the approach of our lightfooted girl, joyfully to whirl away with her. But such soaring movements are not for me."¹⁸²

Why is it that Ghirlandaio's "nymph" (fig. 67) offers something more, and more troubling, than a simple Renaissance use of the formal vocabulary of Antiquity? In order to understand this, one must look more closely at what fascinated Warburg in this figure (and which would have fascinated Freud just as much). First of all, it is a memory of forms "translated into motor language, projected on to a movement [projetée sur la motricité], [and] represented in the manner of a pantomime." Ghirlandaio's figure, obviously, is *in motion*; what Warburg discovers is that it is also, as it were, *in fossil form* [*en fossile*]. Two texts no doubt helped Warburg reach this insight.

The first one is Heinrich Heine's "The Gods in Exile," which is clearly a crucial text for establishing any notion of the *Nachleben der Antike*.¹⁸³ In it one encounters women who bear a strange resemblance to statues, as if they were phantoms *en grisaille*, still agitated by the energy of ancient Bacchanalias:

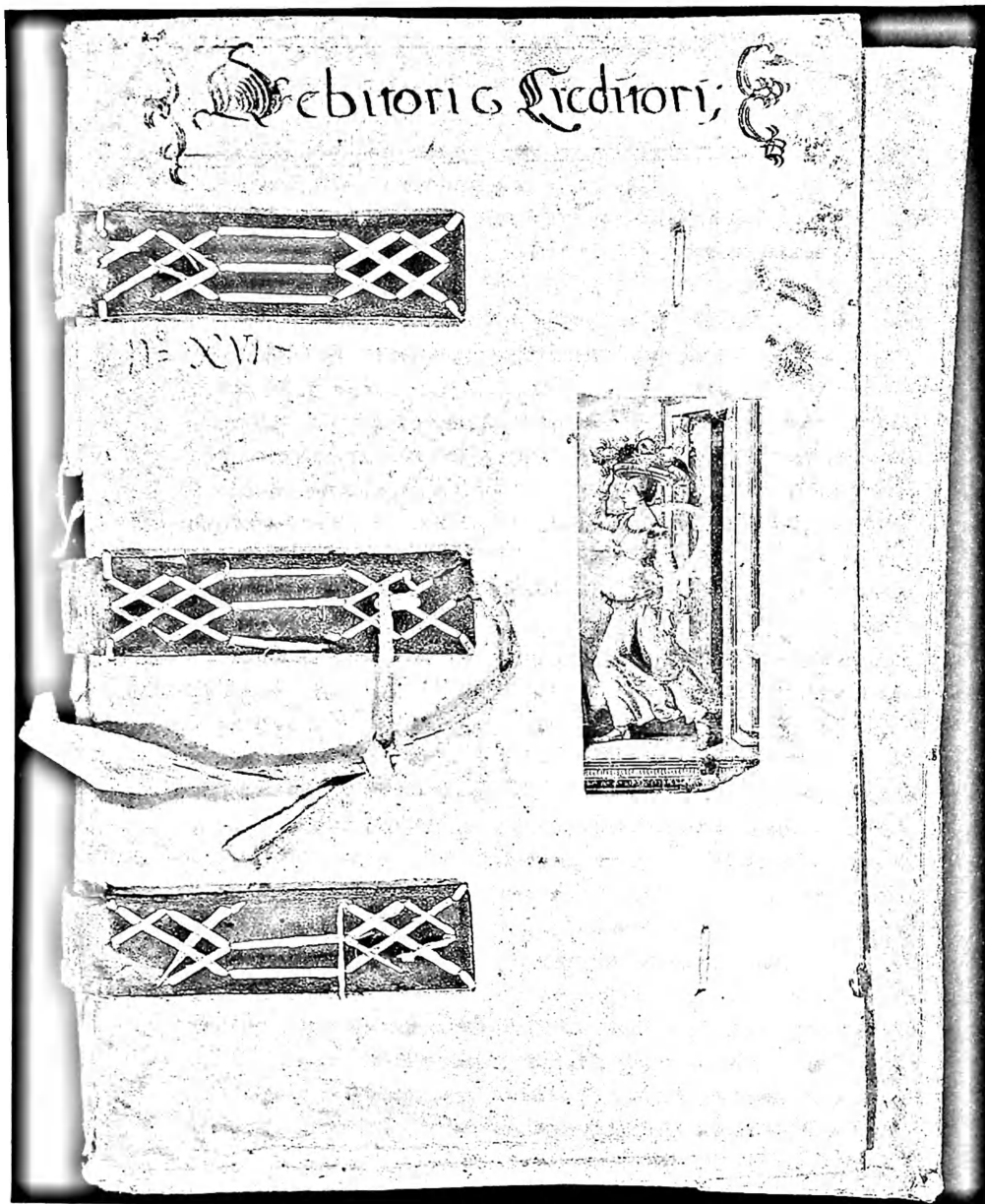


FIG. 67 Aby Warburg and André Jolles, *Ninfa fiorentina*, 1900. Manuscript cover. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

a "tipsy throng of ghosts," a "pale assembly" of maenads whose movements, emerging from centuries-old sarcophagi, still create "a kind of voluptuous thrill" for the contemporary eye.¹⁸⁴

Warburg's other source, as Gombrich has already pointed out, is Hippolyte Taine's description of this same figure of the serving girl who, in Ghirlandaio's fresco in Florence, bears her basket of fruits with such a particular grace, and one which is scarcely Christian (fig. 67): "In the *Nativity of St. John*. . . the servant bringing in fruits, in statuesque drapery, has the impulse, vivacity and force of an antique nymph, the two ages and the two orders of beauty thus meeting and uniting in the simplicity of the same true sentiment. A fresh smile rests on their lips; underneath their semi-immobility, under these remains of rigidity which imperfect painting still leaves, one can divine the latent passion of an intact spirit and a healthy body."¹⁸⁵

This text offers us an exemplary description of the *Leitfossil*: the dress, the spirit, the passion, and the force are indeed *in motion*. But all that remains "latent," as if arrested in a "semi-immobility," frozen, as it were, in the stone of the ancient bas-reliefs. In short, all of that moves only *en fossile*. Looking at the essential figural element of the emotion produced by Ghirlandaio, namely the "accessory in motion" of the drapery, one sees just how right Taine's expression "in a statue's dress" ["en robe de statue"] was. The dress is agitated by a *gesture* and by a *breeze*. But the fact that it is monochrome already draws everything toward *stone* and the antiquity of the sarcophagi. (In a nearby fresco in the same chapel, moreover, Ghirlandaio painted his "nymph" entirely *en grisaille*: flesh, clothing, and even the basket of fruits have taken on the calcified pallor of the marble.)¹⁸⁶

Such indeed is the twofold power, the twofold tenacity of the surviving things: the tenacity of what remains, even if it is buried through the action of petrification; and the tenacity of what returns, even if it is forgotten, through the action of breezes or by phantom movements. It is no accident that Warburg's spoke of his *Ninfa* as if he was haunted by her: a "charming nightmare" (*ein anmutiger Alpdruck*), as he liked to say of her.¹⁸⁷ He confessed that he saw her everywhere, never knew who she was, never could figure out exactly where she came from, and consequently, was driven crazy by her (*ich verlor mein Verstand*). He admitted to being fascinated by her powers of metamorphosis—a phenomenon he would later address in the plates of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*—and, most particularly, by the recurring detail of her dancing gait, which was almost "winged."¹⁸⁸

* * *

At this point, the analogy between Warburg's *Ninfa* and Freud's *Gradiva* could not be more obvious.¹⁸⁹ The iconographic repertoires used by Warburg—notably the works of Maurice Emmanuel and of Fritz Weege on dance in Antiquity—do in fact give a prominent place to the figure which was to

passionately interest Jensen, and then Freud.¹⁹⁰ If Warburg said that he saw his *Ninfa* everywhere, Freud, for his part, was able to permanently contemplate a cast of *Gradiva* attached to a prominent place on the wall of his study, just above the couch (fig. 68).

From our point of view, *Ninfa* and *Gradiva* appear to be two possible proper names—names of fairies or demigoddesses—suitable for constructing any notion one might want of the “surviving image.” Both provide a certain gesture, the special charm of a bodily motion; both carry along with them a certain *time*, one which is comprehensible only through the psychological hypothesis of the unconscious. Both, finally, demand a *style of knowledge*, a new practice of interpretation in which the severe and restricted activity of the analysis must deal with the intrication of images, the overdetermination of signifiers, the dissemination of dreams, and the association of ideas.

Given all this, it is not surprising that Freud’s commentary on the figure of *Gradiva* allows us to clarify certain basic aspects of Warburg’s *Pathosformel*. When Freud evokes *Gradiva*’s famous “unusual and particularly seductive gait,” he immediately stresses the temporal paradox which underlies both the strangeness and the charm of such a gesture: although appearing to be “caught in the midst of a living action” [fixé sur le vif], it nevertheless remains divorced from any experience “in reality” [translation modified—Trans.].¹⁹¹ One could say that it unites the fleeting constitution of the *symptom* (a sudden moment in which time “frees itself”) and the fossil constitution of the *fetish* (the eternalized moment in which time becomes “stuck”). To this twofold constitution there corresponds the paradoxical figure of the gait itself, as Jensen described it when he underscored the “anchored,” “down-to-earth” aspects of a gait which at the same time was so “floating” [trans. modified—Trans.].¹⁹²

What does one see in this “twofold nature” (*Doppelnatur*), as Freud puts it, if not the fundamental anachronism of the events which produce a survival? And it is the signifying games of Jensen’s tale—*Zoé*, “life,” *Hartleben*, “survivre,” *rediviva*, “re-vivante,” etc.—which disseminate the indications of these events. When Norbert Hanold encounters *Gradiva*, the “fleeting” present of the encounter is entirely displayed in the “fossil” element of a buried memory and of an eternal return. One could even say that the *younger* the nymph encountered, the more distant, the more *ancient* will be the (psychological) place from which she returns. This is the paradoxical nature of the phantoms. In their apparition the two parts are joined, the two constitutive rhythms of the *Leitfossil*.

All of this is not without consequences for the *visual* status of the returning image. Wladimir Granoff detected a kind of screening work—he speaks of a “cover” or “lid”—in certain characteristic scenes of Freud’s scenario of *Gradiva*.¹⁹³ Then Jean-Michel Rey defined the epistemology of this scenario from the vantage point of the *übersehen*, a verb that denotes both the “encompassing gaze” and the fact of “not seeing something.” What a positivist would see here as an observational error yields, in fact, no more and no less than the “essential



FIG. 68 Cast of *Gradiua* on the wall of Freud's consulting room in Vienna, 1938. Photo: Edmund Engelman (DR), © Thomas Engelman.

condition for the advent of psychoanalysis" in its *critical* relationship with the visible.¹⁹⁴

At the end of his own analyses of surviving motifs—in the images capable of manifesting a power of *Nachleben* or of *Überleben*—Aby Warburg, too, sought to construct a type of knowledge using the notion of *übersehen*. It must be said that, in this regard, he went further than Freud: his commentaries on *Ninfa* allow one to illuminate—through a reciprocal movement—certain basic aspects of the Freudian *épistémè* in its confrontation with visual material. We can begin to see this in two significant examples.

The first concerns the essential *materiality* of the survivals. When Warburg pondered the status of the grisaille in the images of *Ninfa*—whether drawn by Botticelli, painted by Ghirlandaio or by Mantegna, or sculpted in bas-relief by Donatello—he gained an ever more phenomenological understanding of the visual material.¹⁹⁵ He asked himself, at this time, how it happens that a certain chromatic, or even “atmospheric,” choice has the ability, in a given image, to capture everything—even if it is moving—in the distance, including the kind of material vagueness characteristic of fog (if one speaks of the air) or of fossils (if one speaks of stones). A positivist art historian might well think that grisaille reveals only an insufficiency of color, or better, its economic use. Warburg, however, understood that this very loss gives us access to something like a privileged *übersehen* of the survivals.

The second example concerns the essential *polarity* of the figures. Where Freud, following Jensen, isolates the figure of Gradiva and is satisfied to make a tour of her charms, Warburg casts *Ninfa* into an immense network of tensions, antitheses, ambivalences, and “dynamic inversions.” Freud, it is true, put forth a psycho-biographical hypothesis about the “charming foot” as a possible inversion of some malformation—he imagines a club foot—afflicting a “dead sister” of Jensen’s.¹⁹⁶ But he departs in two ways from his analysis: first by detaching this hypothesis from his own interpretative exposition; second, and above all, by being satisfied with looking at a single image.

Warburg was well aware that Gradiva, like *Ninfa*, never walked alone. The figure which decorated the psychoanalyst’s study (fig. 68) is only the avatar of a long series. It is significant that in his atlas of images Warburg preferred a version in which the young girl, however eroticized she might be, displayed above her head a menacing cutlass (fig. 69). Below her are various images of the nymph in a state of trance (Greek) or of suffering (Christian). We are already far from the purely “charming” figure evoked by Ernst Jones or from the laughing “young girl” with the pure “knowledge of love” admired by J.-B. Pontalis.¹⁹⁷

Several plates of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* allow *Ninfa* to appear in a full series—that is to say, in the ensemble of her possible transformations.¹⁹⁸ In plate 6, for example, the maenad with the cutlass is surrounded by scenes of sacrifice (that of Polyxena, represented twice at the top of the plate) or by scenes of violence (Cassandra pursued by Ajax and, once again, Laocoön choked along with his sons by the snakes)¹⁹⁹ (fig. 70). In plate 45 there is a whole group of “nymphs

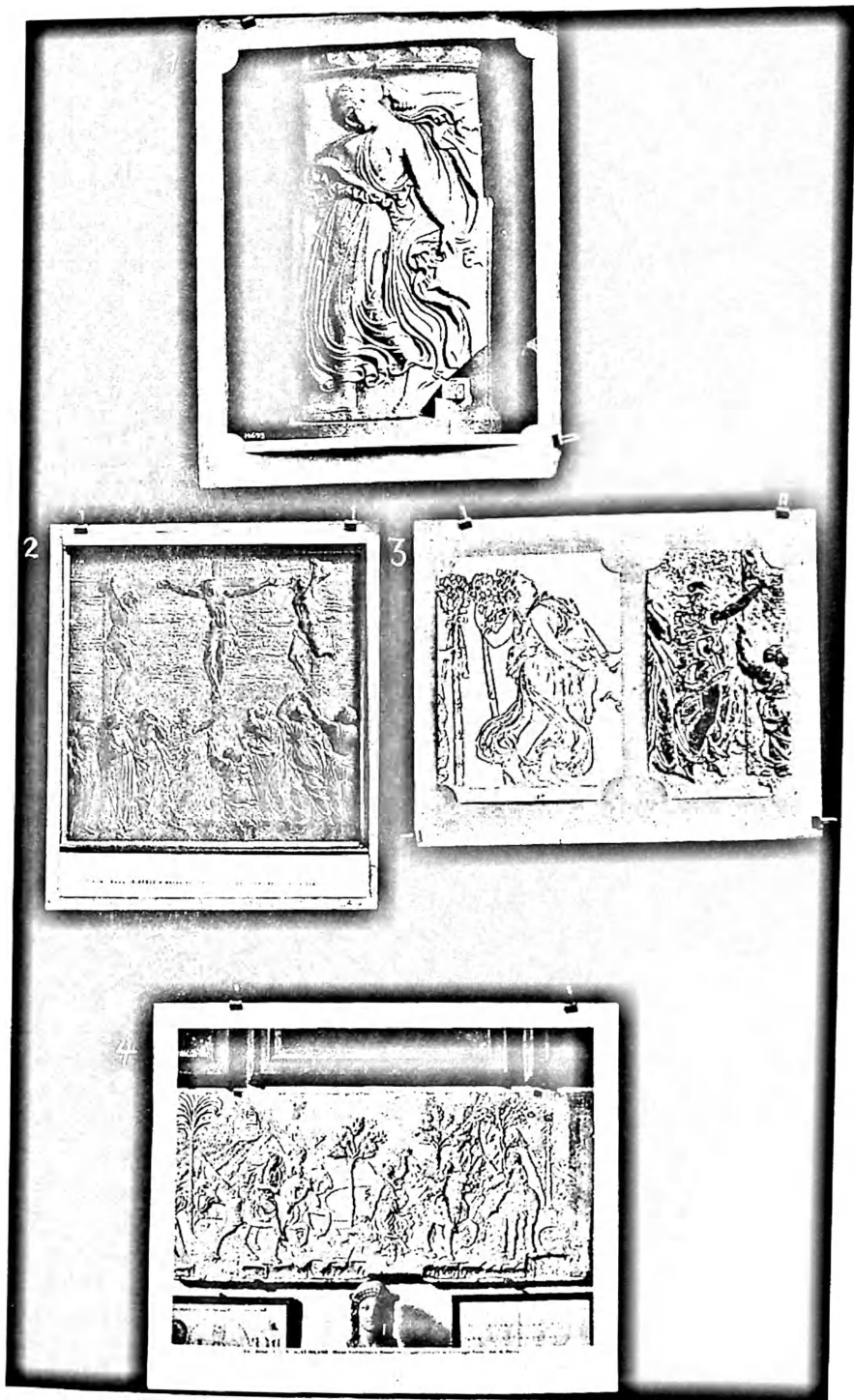


FIG. 69 Aby Warburg, provisional arrangement of section on "The Maenad," *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927-29. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

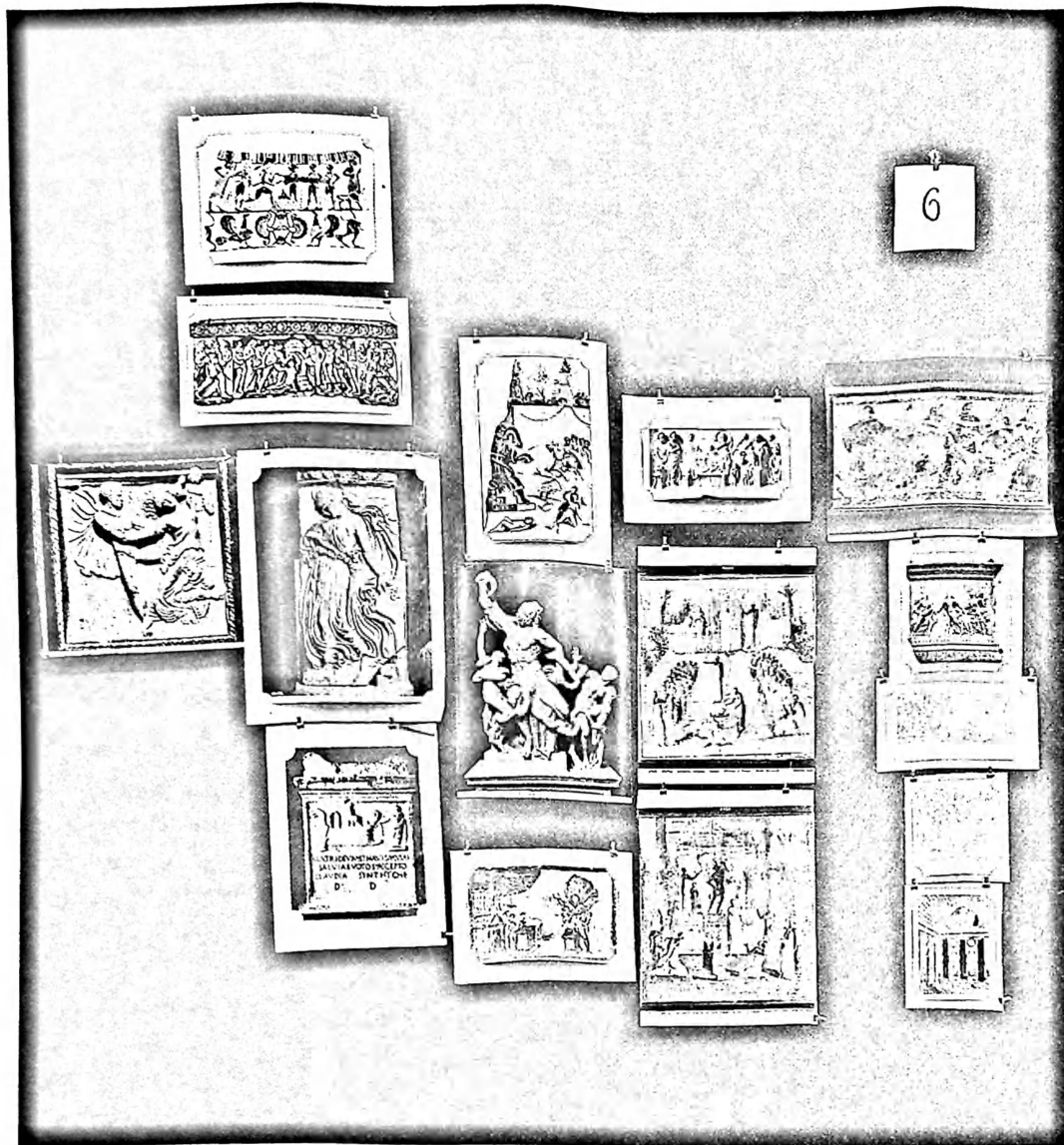


FIG. 70 Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927-29, pl. 6. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

in motion"; they appear to be pursued and killed by a band of Roman soldiers, who have dismembered their children alive. This is a scene from Ghirlandaio's famous cycle at Santa Maria Novella (it is, in fact, the *Massacre of the Innocents*).²⁰⁰ In plate 47 other cruelties appear: the maenad's cutlass becomes a saber in the hands of the *Judith* sculpted by Donatello; the basket of fruits so gracefully carried on her head by Ghirlandaio's servant girl (fig. 67) becomes a severed head borne by Judith . . . or by her serving girl, in two examples due to Botticelli and to Ghirlandaio himself²⁰¹ (fig. 71).

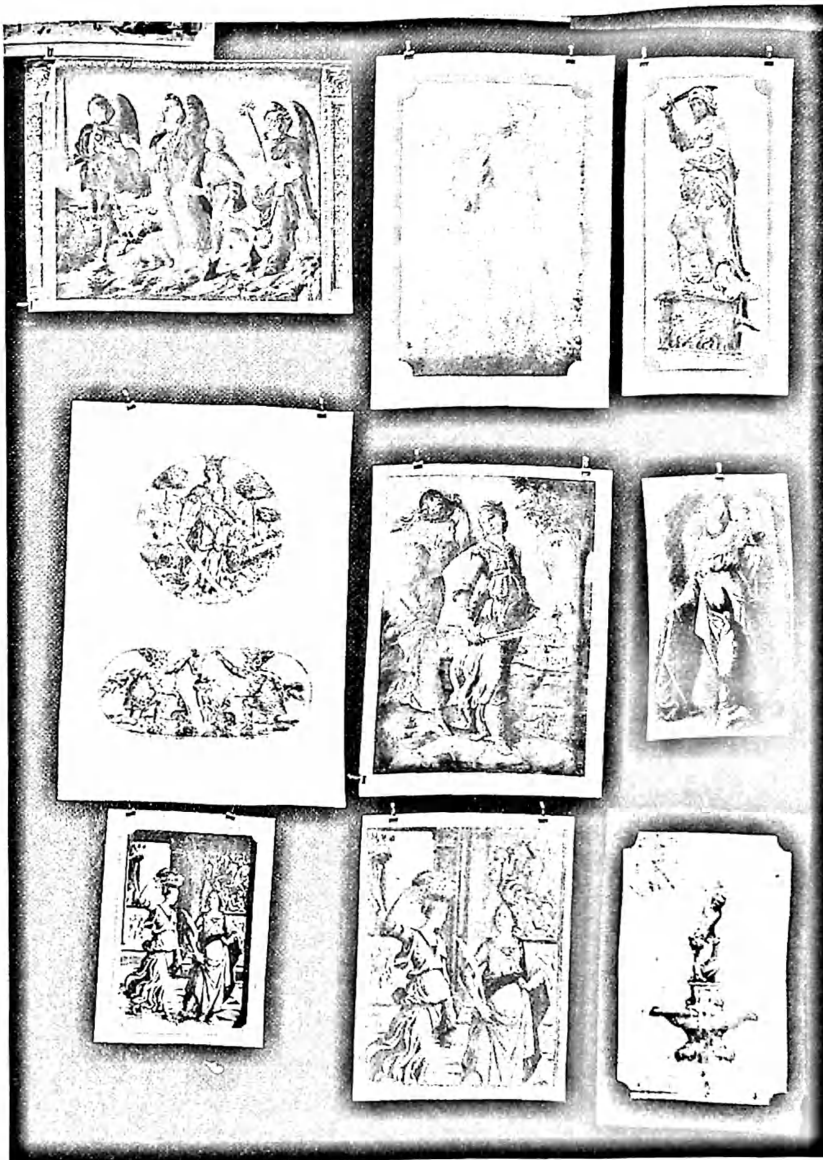


FIG. 71 Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927–29, pl. 47 (detail). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

The image, because it is subject to the powers of the unconscious, plays with logical contradictions. It appears that Warburg did not need Freudian theory to observe every day that disquieting labile quality of the material that the art historian works with. It was enough for him to take an “encompassing look” at the literary traditions and the iconographic displacements of the “nymph.” Even just to constitute his archive, he found himself fully involved in what, at a later date, Georges Dumézil was to call “the scope and imprecision” of the *nymphai*.²⁰² Mortal *and* immortal, asleep *and* dancing, possessed *and* possessing,

secret *and* open, chaste *and* provocative, violated *and* nymphomaniac, helpful *and* fatal, protectress of heroes *and* ravisher of men, a being full of tenderness *and* a being who haunts her victim²⁰³—*Ninfa* carries out very well the structural function of a pivot of conversion [opérateur de conversion] between antithetical values that she alternately “polarizes” and “depolarizes,” according to the singular nature of each incarnation. Warburg traced her destiny as far as her appearance in the humanist texts that he collected—those of Boccaccio, in particular—and right up to the modernity of the paintings of Delacroix and of Manet.²⁰⁴

When leafing through the manuscript of *Ninfa fiorentina*, one discovers a sketch—one could almost say a *graph*—that Warburg drew facing the two Latin words *tempus* (time) and *amissio* (the act of sending back, of putting off, of allowing to flee, or of renouncing), and right away one is confronted with something like a *paradoxical formulation* (fig. 72). The way the two feet are turned evokes a contortion—unless the gray-colored portion of the drawing is a shadow; unless it is not an impression. Here we are between a wind (in the clothing) and a fossil (an ancient outline crystallized in the present); between a movement and a paralysis; between a graceful gesture and a gesture of fear. The attraction is certainly there: the “nymph’s” charm. But the threat is not very far away.

If Warburg confessed that when confronted with *Ninfa* he “lost his reason,” it is undoubtedly because with her he experienced an image *capable of everything*: her beauty was able to turn into horror; her offering of fruits able to be transformed into a severed head; her beautiful hair blown by the wind able to be torn out in despair (fig. 54); her erotic trophy able to become a living serpent (fig. 55). In short, Medusa was never very far away. And we know that Warburg felt himself “paralyz[ed]” before this figure who, literally, obsessed him.²⁰⁵ He knew, beyond any doubt, that the classical tradition itself accorded the nymphs the power to make any mortals who *looked* at them *lose* the use of their reason.²⁰⁶ Is this then the price one had to pay for any *übersehen* of the surviving image? Must one lose one’s mind in order to understand the powers of the *Nachleben*?

In strictly Warburgian terms, one could say that this capacity of “dynamic inversion” reveals how close the *Ninfa* is to the “dialectic of the monster.” If the fascination evoked by this figure is twofold—involving movement and paralysis, the spark of life and mortal danger—is this not because her very *aura* is woven of a *demonic* force to which Warburg continually returned, even though he wished to exorcise it?²⁰⁷ *Ninfa* dances, certainly. But she whirls around a black hole. She fascinates us as the *visually attractive* part of a process that could be called the outcropping of buried times. The latter brood, they run, here and there, like the veining in a fossil, between every fold in *Ninfa’s* dress, between every curl of her hair blowing in the wind.

This process speaks to us, of course, of a worrying strangeness. The Freudian *Unheimliche* is directly related to the Warburgian *Leitfossil*. In both cases the

III.



1. 4/ Plu

m. Aufsehen
auf dem Stand, durch
Kleinheit

FIG. 72 Aby Warburg, *Ninfa*, 1900. Pencil drawing. Taken from "Ninfa fiorentina," fol. 6. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

"once *heimisch*, home-like, familiar"—which was something secret, or buried—suddenly breaks through to the light of day.²⁰⁸ *Ninfa* worries us at the very movement which leads us to "recognize" her as a familiar phantom, because she allows the emergence in herself of a "strange resemblance" which links things or beings belonging to disjoint temporalities. Freud's spontaneous reference to Heinrich Heine's "The Gods in Exile"²⁰⁹ tells us that the crucial problem of the worrying strangeness undoubtedly derives from the relationships themselves of the *resemblance* to the *survival*.

This "visual attraction," which gives us vertigo and makes us plunge into the crater of time, also speaks to us of *regression* and of *desire*. In the very year that Warburg was giving up on publishing his *Ninfa fiorentina*, Freud was writing, in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, that "the transformation of thoughts into visual images may be in part the result of the attraction which memories couched in visual form and eager for revival bring to bear upon thoughts cut off from consciousness and struggling to find expression."²¹⁰ Later Freud set forth more precisely the metapsychological terms of this process: the "reinforcement of the residues"—the typical intensification found in the *Pathosformeln* of the Renaissance artists Warburg studied—is accompanied by the "dream wish,"²¹¹ in such a way that a buried fragment, a *fossil*, takes on the tensions proper to the *future*.

The images of dreams—Warburg would have said: surviving images in general—have the extraordinary capacity of turning the process of "going backwards" in time, as Freud writes on the same page, into a vector of protension; and of turning the "indestructibility" of the repressed materials into a vector of immediacy, of fleetingness. In every surviving image, therefore, the *fossils dance*. And it fell to Freud to make it clear that the key to this paradox lies in the process referred to in the famous phrase "taking figurability into consideration" (*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*), that capacity of exchange between words and images that Warburg was seeking explicitly to archive,²¹² and of which our rhetorical use of "tropes" offers but a feeble approximation. Here the signifiers circulate in a milieu in which regression has drawn everything toward its visual material, toward its "suitability for plastic representation."²¹³

Here, "plastic figuration" does not mean that an abstract idea has found a good visual metaphor or a "literary image." It means, rather, that a certain quantity of energy has become embodied through the sedimentations of time, has become *fossilized*, and yet has preserved all its power of movement, of *transforming itself*. Freud speaks elsewhere of the "scotophilic instinct" (*Schautrieb*) as an exemplary phenomenon capable of allowing the persistence, "side by side," of all the layers of the "successive eruptions of lava" which have hardened in the course of a person's psychological life.²¹⁴ The consequence of all this is that looking at an image—understood as a *Leitfossil*—would amount to *seeing all the times dance together*.

* * *

Now, this is precisely what Warburg went to New Mexico to do in 1895: to personally witness a "dance of the fossils." Actually, two different rituals were involved, but Warburg wanted to study both of them at the same time. One was a dance of *masks* (humans disguised as spirits), and the other was a dance of *organs* (reptiles manipulated by the dancers). The former is the ritual of the effigies known as *kachinas*, which Warburg himself photographed;²¹⁵ the latter is the famous snake ritual, which he himself was not able to witness but which he discussed on the basis of a vast collection of photographs (in particular, those that H. R. Voth had taken in 1893).²¹⁶

Between the classical nymph dancing on the walls of a sarcophagus and the "savage" Native American dancing in the dust of a desert mesa, there appears to be a total contrast: a marble grisaille as opposed to living, bodily paintings; erotic charm as opposed to martial pantomime; an ornamental snake rolled up like a bracelet (fig. 55) as opposed to a repulsive snake held tightly between the jaws (fig. 37), and so forth. And yet, from Pompeii to Oraibi—both of them built, and not by chance, on volcanic terrain—it is the same knot of problems that Warburg expected to confront.²¹⁷ What is a pagan culture, whether it be one surviving in its monuments (as in the Western case) or in the life of an existing society (as in the Native American case)? How, above all, does such a survival manage to manifest itself, whether in a wealthy minority (the elite members of the humanist circles) or in an impoverished minority (the colonized tribes of New Mexico)?²¹⁸ Warburg did not conceal, in a letter he wrote to the anthropologist James Mooney, how much his "method" in general owed to his travels in 1895 among the Native Americans: "I have continually felt indebted to your Indians. Without the study of their primitive culture, I would never have been in a position to find a broader foundation for the psychology of the Renaissance. Sometime I will give you a sample of my methods, which, I may say, are quite new and possibly for that reason not as widely recognized as I might have expected."²¹⁹

The "method" consisted, first of all, in measuring the considerable field that the survivals managed to "contaminate." It was, significantly, from the efforts of a child that Warburg detected his first instance of the "dance of the fossils" (fig. 73). In a drawing inspired by the story of "John with his nose in the air" he observed the efforts of a little Native American boy to conform to the Western rules of representation, which had been inculcated in him at school. He tried, with more or less success, to manipulate the perspective space so as to represent the houses with their cubic chimneys. But where he was supposed to represent a *stroke of lightning*, the child drew two *snakes*; here the ages-old Hopi cosmological symbol broke with the narrative representation of the European tale. A *Leitfossil* had escaped from between the hands of the child. (It should be noted, moreover, that these "celestial fossils" are drawn not in the sky but on the *mountainside*, which associates them with the living snakes which might come down toward the houses, but also with the seismic faults which cover the entire Hopi territory).²²⁰

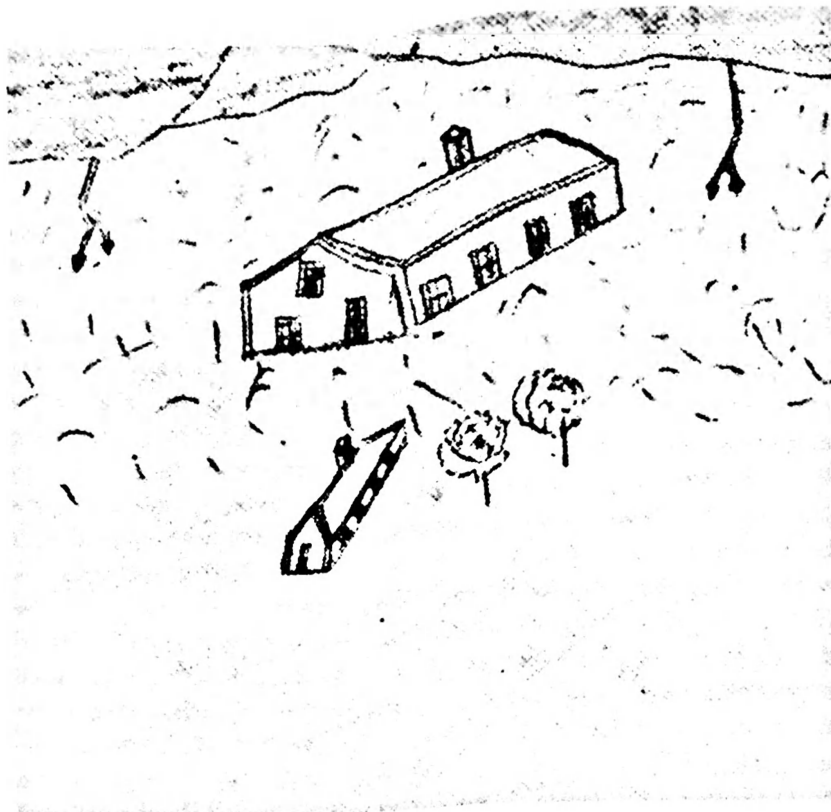


FIG. 73 Drawing by an [American] Indian schoolboy with lightning in the shape of two serpents, 1895. Reprinted from Warburg, *Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer*, fig. 29. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

It was thus within *life* itself—the social life—that Warburg watched the *survival* of the “primitive” symbols at Oraibi. He observed and collected ornamental objects, notably the simple pottery that he had seen the Indians carry on their heads, just as the beautiful serving girl had done with her basket of fruits in Ghirlandaio’s fresco.²²¹ The *survivals became incarnated* right before his eyes, confirming all the intuitions of the young researcher about the close correspondence between objects-as-representations [representations-objets] (the monuments studied by art history) and acts-as-representations [représentations-actes] (the materials studied by anthropology: masks, rituals, festivals, dances, corporal techniques).²²² We are not surprised, then, to learn that the Hopi dancers painted the snake / lightning stroke on their skin.²²³

But the metamorphic power—displacement and incarnation—of the *Leit-fossil* is such that, in the end, Warburg observed it in its direct “translation into motor language,” that is to say, into animality, into gestures, and into organic contortions. The cosmological snake drawn by Warburg’s informant (fig. 35), by the Indian boy (fig. 73), and on the sand of the Walpi ceremonies (fig. 74) also

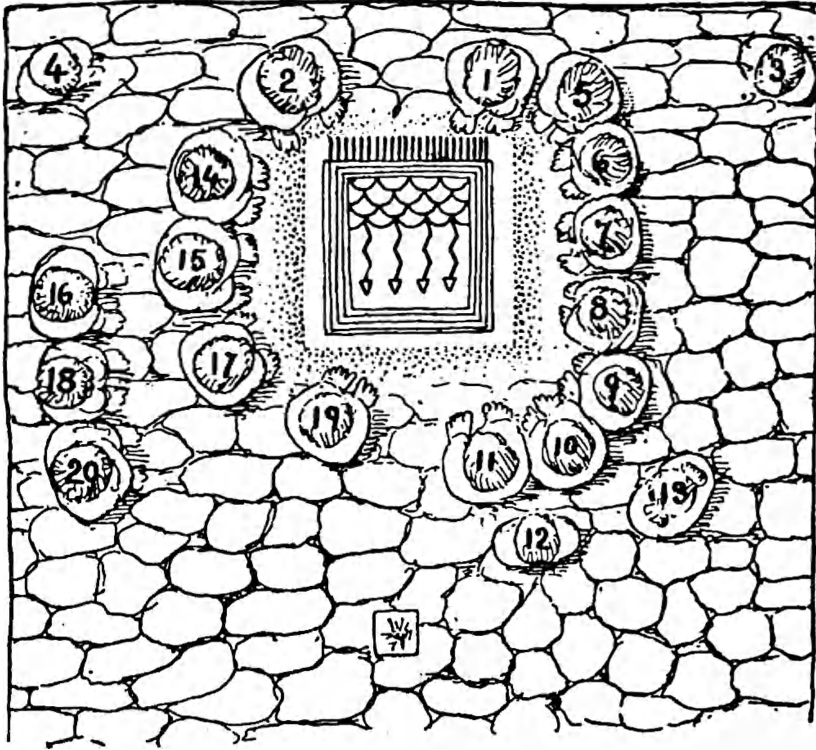
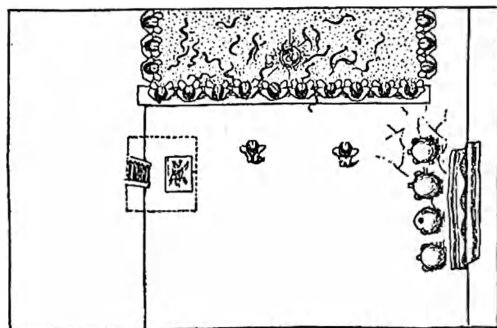


FIG. 74 Snake ceremony at Walpi: position of the sand mosaic and diagram of positions of celebrants. Reprinted from J. Walter Fewkes, "The Snake Ceremonials at Walpi," *Journal of American Ethnology and Archaeology* 4 (1894): 76.

swarms in a living pile in the ceremonies of the Oraibi and of the Mishongnovi (figs. 75, 76). This jumble of intricate, moving reptiles undoubtedly offers the extreme paradigm of everything that Warburg had come to New Mexico to look for: the immediate incarnation of that "pure force" (*ganze Kraft*) on the basis of which, as a good Nietzschean, he wanted to establish the concept of the symbol.²²⁴ Confronted with this jumble of living snakes, man, as it were, *grabs with both hands*—as a way of mastering it, but also of being subjugated by it—that "dialectic of the monster" which haunts his dreams, his symbols, and his beliefs:

A snake-like form, enigmatic movements, which have no clearly determinable beginning or end, and danger: these are what lightning shares with the snake, which presents a maximum of movement and a minimum of graspable surfaces. When one holds a snake in one's hand in its most dangerous form—namely, the rattlesnake—as the Indians in fact do, when one lets oneself be bitten and then, rather than killing it, takes it back out into the desert, in this way a human force (*Menschenkraft*) tries to comprehend through a sheer grasping with the hands (*durch handmässtiges Erfassen*)

FIG. 75 Snake ceremony at Mishongnovi: diagram of positions of snakes and celebrants. Reprinted from J. Walter Fewkes, *Tusayan Flute and Snake Ceremonies*, extract from the *19th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1897-98* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1901), 971.



zu begreifen versucht), something that in reality eludes manipulation. The attempt at magical effects is thus first of all an attempt to appropriate a natural event in the living likeness of its form and contours (*in seinem lebendigen ähnlichen Umfangsgebilde*).²²⁵

And it is by mimicking such a “living agent”—*by dancing this resemblance*, in order to effect its “passage . . . whose efficacy proceeds directly from the body and hand”—that man, in turn, can become capable of movement, of metamorphosis: “in this way the Indian [Native American] confronts the incomprehensibility of natural processes with his will to comprehension, transforming himself personally into a primal causal agent in the order of things (*Ursache der Dinge*). . . . The masked dance is danced causality (*getanzte Kausalität*).”²²⁶ But this dance is also, at a deeper level, a contortion: to the image of the movement of the snakes themselves—or to the hysterical symptom—it joins the *plasticity* of the metamorphoses and a *conflict* of the intricated organs or organisms. The virtuosity of the resemblances never occurs without the schism of the dissimilar.

As for the plasticity of the metamorphoses, whether he discovered it in the Dionysian exuberance of the ancient sarcophagi, or in the “savage” intensity of the American Indian dances, in the votive masks of Florence or in the ceremonial masks of the Oraibi, Warburg was henceforth able to observe the magic force of resemblances, what ought to be called, going beyond Lévi-Strauss, an *imaginary effectiveness* [*efficacité imaginaire*]. This discovery resulted from Warburg’s undertaking, independently of any interest in exoticism²²⁷—or in any form of archetypes—the project, as necessary as it was tricky, of an anthropologically informed, comparative study based on criteria of form as well as of content and context. In this regard, Warburg clearly appears to be an immediate predecessor of Ernesto de Martino.²²⁸

As for the conflict of the organisms and the schism of the dissimilar, Warburg provides a concrete example of them when he recounts how, among the Walpi, *living snakes* were thrown on a pile on the ground of the kiwa, where the Indians had already represented, in sand pictures, the *geometric snakes* of Hopi cosmology (fig. 74): “onto the first sand painting, each snake is hurled with very



FIG. 76 Snake ceremony at Mishongnovi: after the snakes have been pitched into the cornmeal circle. Reprinted from George A. Dorsey and H. R. Voth, *The Mishongnovi Ceremonies of the Snake and Antelope Fraternities* (Chicago: n.p., 1902), pl. 142.

great force, so that the drawing is obliterated and the serpent is absorbed into the sand.²²⁹ It is not sufficient to say that in this case the “presence” destroys the “representation.” It must be said that here the *symbol* is everywhere in action—but that this action is that of a link which never ceases to stretch and to tighten up again, to move away and to move closer again. In short, it is a moving intrication of snakes.

Warburg states this very precisely when, in his preliminary draft of 1923, he begins by noting that the whole problem that needs to be solved is that of the “symbolic connections” (*Problem der symbolischen Verknüpfungen*). But in the words which immediately follow, he notes that this “relationship” itself forms only through a rhythm of “becoming” and of “decline,” of “creation” and of “destruction” (*Schöpfung, Zerstörung*).²³⁰ If the dance of the antelopes and that of the kachinas appears by turns so comic and so tragic, so commonplace and so profound, in Warburg’s eyes, that is chiefly because the only “function” of the symbols is to engender the crisis of a “desperate attempt at order over and against chaos” (*ein verzweifelter Ordnungsversuch dem Chaos gegenüber*).²³¹

This crisis is structural: it forms a *schism* which causes every vital symbol to end up as a symptom. “All humanity is eternally and at all times schizophrenic” (*die ganze Menschheit ist ewig und zu allen Zeiten schizophren*), writes Warburg in these same notes. It should be understood from this that the *Leitfossil*, which gives to culture its very *tenacity*, manifests itself—extricates itself from the earth—only at the cost of a *ripping apart* of the ground, that is to say, of an earthquake. “Seismograph of the soul to be placed along the dividing lines between different cultural atmospheres,” the historian of images will register this schism to a degree sufficient to run the risk of himself opening up, of tearing himself apart upon coming into contact with it.²³²

WARBURG WITH BINSWANGER: CONSTRUCTIONS IN INSANITY

In his journey through Native American territory in 1895, Warburg was able actually to touch what he only had an intuition of several years earlier when

looking at ancient representations of the *Battles of Centaurs*. In the latter he already detected the contorted interactions—consisting simultaneously of confrontations and incorporations—of *logos* and *pathos*, of the human and the animal²³³ (fig. 17). In moving from Greek marble figures to the living rituals of the Oraibi, he was thus transforming his *studies*—with their corresponding *enclosed spaces*: libraries, archives, and museums—into an *experience*. [The French word *expérience* corresponds to the two English words “experience” and (scientific) “experiment”—Trans.] The comparison of archaeological site reports and of photographic documents gave way to active observation. He was afforded an almost tactile look at those “enigmatic organisms,” those masked dancers he personally photographed at close range under a leaden sky, in the *open spaces* of the crevasse-filled desert of New Mexico. Finally he was able literally to touch the “living force”—and the schism as well—of the “primitive symbols” he had so long been seeking.

As we know, Warburg had to wait some thirty years before he could understand what this experience had to tell him. And he was able to do that only from the depths of a vertiginous fall into psychosis, confined within the walls of the psychiatric clinic directed by Ludwig Binswanger in Kreuzlingen, on the banks of Lake Constance. (Binswanger was the nephew of Otto Ludwig Binswanger,²³⁴ the doctor who had been entrusted with the care of Nietzsche when the latter became insane.) This was the paradoxical situation: the patient had to *experience* the destructive powers of a psychological *test* [*épreuve*] [this word can also mean “ordeal” or “trial” in French—Trans.] in order for the close look at his materials to become *knowledge*, an “overall view” (*Übersicht*), in this clinic so aptly named “Bellevue.”

Thus, it was there, between 1921 and 1924, that Warburg grasped the “monster” with his bare hands, or rather that he struggled, like Laocoön, against its deadly reptilian forces. It was precisely within these walls—a few months after the dancer Nijinsky had done the same thing in front of Binswanger²³⁵—that Warburg *danced* his “dialectic of the monster” in an intense translation into motor language, screamed at full volume for hours at a time, or droned on in delirious monologues. Binswanger’s correspondence with Freud reveals a diagnosis that seems to offer no hope at all:

Professor V. displayed anxiety and obsessional symptoms even in childhood, had pronounced delusional ideas in his student days, was never free from obsessional fears, obsessional acts, etc., from which his literary output, too, suffered severely. In 1918, this was the basis of a grave psychosis, no doubt triggered off by his approaching old age, the material, until then elaborated more or less neurotically, now being given psychotic expression. In addition, there was intense psychomotor excitation, which continues to be present, even though subject to strong fluctuations. He is in our closed section here, but is usually calm enough in the afternoon to be allowed to receive visitors, to join us for tea, to go on excursions, etc. He is still so dominated by fears and precautions, which clearly border on compulsion and

delusion, that, though his formal logic is quite unimpaired, there can be no question of his engaging in scholarly activity. True, he takes an interest in everything, still has excellent judgment of men and the world and a remarkable memory; but he can keep his mind fixed on scholarly subjects for short periods only. I believe that, with time, the psychomotor excitation will continue to decrease slowly, but I do not think there will be a restoration of the status quo prior to his acute psychosis, or a resumption of academic work. I would ask you, of course, to be sure to keep me covered when you pass these details. Have you read his Luther? It is a terrible pity that he will probably never again be able to draw on his vast store of knowledge or use his immense library.²³⁶

This despairing diagnosis, however, was belied by the facts—thanks in large part, moreover, to the therapeutic skill of the one who made it. In the month of October 1922, Warburg wrote to his son Max Adolf that he was going to try to reconstruct some elements of his thinking by working on a lecture intended for Binswanger and the other patients at Bellevue, a lecture on his own initiatory experience among the Hopi Indians.²³⁷ Weeks of feverish preparation followed, during which Fritz Saxl played an essential role as assistant, procuring slides from Hamburg and traveling to Kreuzlingen in order that, to the degree it was possible, the mentally ill scholar would have all the material he required.

The lecture took place on 21 April 1923, before an audience consisting of the clinic's personnel and a limited number of invited guests.²³⁸ The commentators are mistaken, it seems to me, when they optimistically assert that this performance was "destined to prove that its author was sane," or that it fully restored his reason on that day, aided by the magic wand of an intellectual "sublimation."²³⁹ It is simply not possible to "resolve" a psychosis in the course of several hours of "sublimation." And even though Warburg himself considered this lecture to be the beginning of a real "renaissance"²⁴⁰ of his thought, he was well aware that in showing the snakes of Walpi between the dancers' jaws—something that can be seen in Voth's photographs²⁴¹—he was presenting a parable of his own situation: the "dialectic of the monster" still had a hold on his body.

It was not until sixteen months later, in August 1924, that Warburg was able to leave Binswanger's clinic. And it required a further lecture in Hamburg, in 1925—during which the members of the audience were struck by the speaker's physical efforts and his state of disarray [destruction]—before Binswanger could finally write to him that "I no longer consider you only 'en permission de normalité,' but as definitively cured."²⁴²

Warburg's notes for his 1923 lecture bear all the marks of genuine suffering, of the *contortion* of a thought process grappling with the symptom of its own malfunction. The first word of the sketch is "Help!" (*Hilfe!*), followed by a pharmacological detail: "written while still on opium."²⁴³ Moreover, even before the title and subject matter had been written—"The survival of primitive humanity in the culture of the Pueblo Indians"—Warburg wanted to make

sure that his text did not reach a public audience, referring to it as “sketches that should never be printed.” Accordingly, he characterized the status of his effort, its literary genre, if I may put it that way, as “the confession (*Bekanntnis*) of an (incurable) schizophrenic, deposited in the archives of the doctors of the soul.”²⁴⁴ And here is how the Native American *experience* of 1895 became integrated into the *test*, into the contortion of 1923:

What I saw and experienced, then, reflects only the outward appearance of things, and I have a right to speak of it only if I begin by saying that this insoluble problem has weighed so heavily on my soul that during the time when I was healthy, I would not have dared to make any scientific statements about it. But now, in March 1923, in Kreuzlingen, in a closed institution, where I have the sensation of being a seismograph assembled from the wooden pieces of a plant that has been transplanted from the East into the fertile northern German plains and onto which an Italian branch was grafted, I let the signs (*die Zeichen*) that I receive come out of me, because in this epoch of chaotic decline even the weakest has a duty to strengthen the will to cosmic order.²⁴⁵

This, then, was the lecture of 1923. Like Nietzsche before him, and like Artaud after him, a thinker was grappling with own thought in a “schizophrenic” test of his dislocated genealogy. But the “broken seismograph” still emitted, if only in a disorderly fashion, some “signs” it had received during a number of decisive experiences from years past, signs that had to be arranged, to be *constructed* into a coherent way of thinking. Nevertheless, Warburg reiterated, in a letter to Saxl, his refusal to have anyone look at his notes.²⁴⁶ Is there any reason to be surprised, then, that the text of the *Schlangenritual* [snake ritual] has been published in so many editions and has had so many commentaries? Or that, until recently, it was the only text of Warburg’s available in English?

Not really. Everyone has sensed that something decisive was at stake in this lecture. Some have seen in it a matter of knowledge (the Italian Renaissance revisited with Native American culture in mind), while others interpreted it as a question of identity (Warburg’s Judaism confronted by, or even associated with, Indian culture).²⁴⁷ Now, it is precisely all of that that the 1923 lecture sets aside. What it says about identity concerns only suffering (“my mother [who] lay deathly ill”; “the anti-Semitism . . . seen” etc.) or paradoxes (“the kinship of Athens-Oraibi”).²⁴⁸ What it contributes in terms of knowledge, whether historical or anthropological, is only fragmentary. And it is not through false modesty that Warburg, that great seeker of “sources,” states the fundamental philological limitation of his study: his ignorance of Native American dialects—which, moreover, “can not understand each other.” This clearly constituted an obstacle to any attempt to understand the “symbols” of a given culture.²⁴⁹

What, then, makes the 1923 lecture a decisive, even a fundamental work? As strange as it may seem, I would say that its main contribution turns out to be epistemological or methodological. In it, Warburg transformed a “regression”

into an "invention." Returning to the bedazzlement of his earlier expedition in Hopi territory, he created, *through the intermediary of his insanity*, the conditions of a renewal and a deepening of all his research. It was upon his return from Kreuzlingen, in fact, that he undertook, despite the difficulties created by his state of mind, a group of projects whose fecundity leaves one stunned. These included the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, of course, but also theoretical writings, the seminars on method, the incursions into contemporary history, and the exhibitions, to mention only the most notable.

At Bellevue, therefore, Warburg successfully met an enormous challenge: to transform his own *contortion* (in a problem which does not concern us) into a *construction* (which every historian today should be able to profit from). Through an extraordinary work of anamnesis, he managed, thanks to Binswanger, to traverse in reverse the path he had traveled, thus going back from the *test* [*épreuve*] to the *experience*, and from the latter to a kind of *knowledge*. This was a new style of knowledge (here is our famous "science without a name"), since the basis of its power was rooted in the perils to which it left itself exposed.²⁵⁰ It was a kind of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) capable of transforming the "confessions (*Bekenntnis*) of a schizophrenic" into a cultural theory of symbolic schisms—in short, one capable of transforming an *emotion* (or a symptom) into a cultural theory of *emotion* (or of the symptom). It is easy to imagine how much Gilles Deleuze would have been fascinated by such a move—no less than Michel Foucault, moreover, since the latter would undoubtedly have observed in it how *a history of insanity* can give rise to the *archaeology of knowledge*. It is this move that we must now reconstruct with more precision.

* * *

When he arrived at Bellevue, the "seismograph" Warburg had fallen apart. What had broken him? A major historic upheaval. Not his own individual story, but rather the encounter of the latter with the whole of Western history. It was when it plunged into the midst of the Great War that the seismograph broke. At first, Warburg tried to record all the shocks; right from the start of the conflict, in 1914, he began to assemble a considerable archive, cut out thousands of articles, established categories, sketched the geographic development of the human eruption by keeping track of the strategic positions, the front lines²⁵¹ (fig. 77). That is to say, by keeping track of the *trench lines*, those "schisms" produced in Europe's soil which engulfed men by the millions.

At this time, Warburg was still a seismograph of the Burckhardtian type: he recorded the symptoms to protect himself from them, and diagnosed the schisms in order to conjure them away. Thus, he participated in a *Rivista illustrata* of the war, which was published in Germany but written in Italian, with the aim of avoiding the split which was threatening to open between the intellectuals of those two countries.²⁵² At the same time, he was studying propaganda pamphlets from Luther's period and, in the course of doing so,

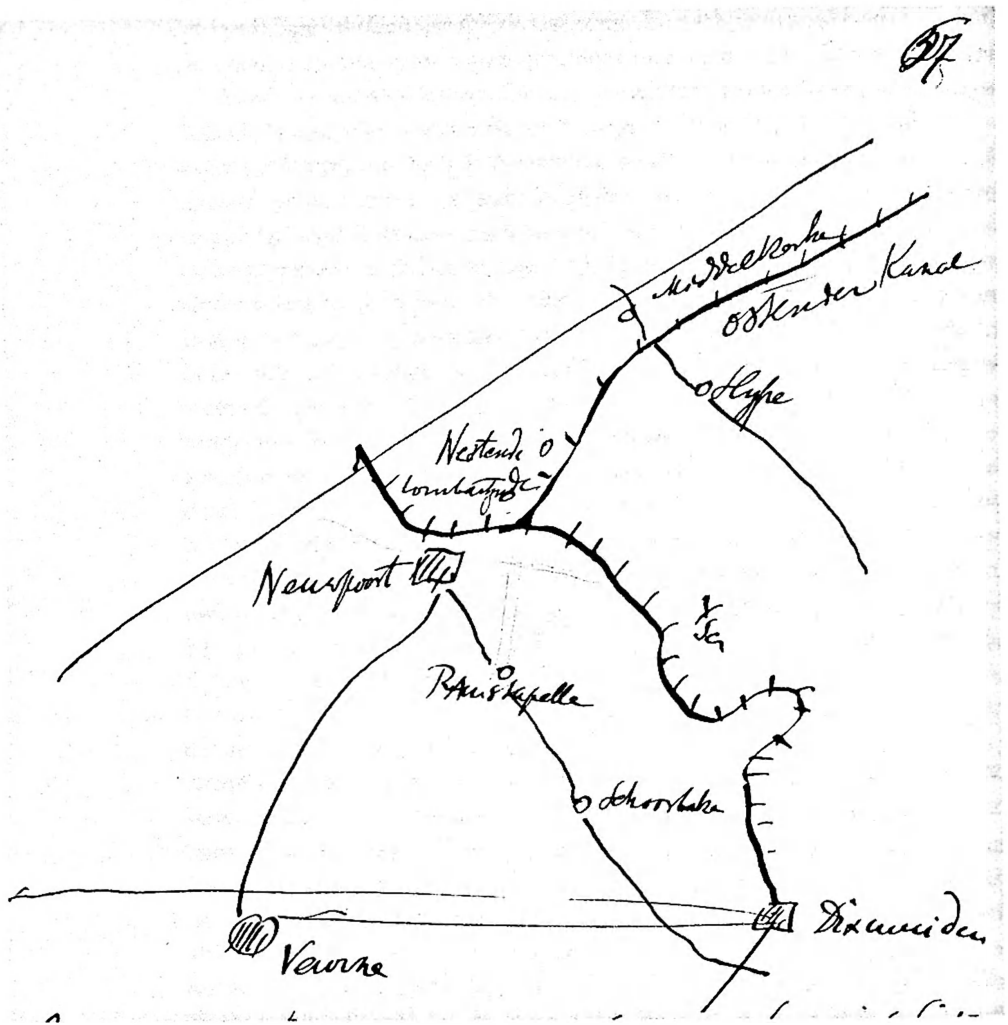


FIG. 77 Aby Warburg, *The French and German Frontline*, 26 October 1914. Ink drawing. Taken from the "Notizbücher," 26 October 1914, 67. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

establishing a new branch of art history, namely political iconology, as has been shown by Martin Warnke.²⁵³

But this critical knowledge, to which were added prophetic lamentations about a Western culture henceforth devoted to violence and to paranoid delirium—all of that contradicted his own militant activity for the *Rivista* and his patriotic stance. (The family bank, meanwhile, was financially supporting the German war effort.) Ultimately, he felt that he himself was being swallowed up in this schism within history. “Now fills the air so many a haunting shape / That no one knows how best he may escape,” Goethe had written in *Faust*.²⁵⁴ In the middle of compiling his twenty-five thousand notes on the war in the trenches, Warburg, distressed by the death of each individual, without ever knowing who was the guilty party and who the innocent, began to join up with the phantoms. He began to believe that, having awakened the pagan demons of obscurantism—the objects of his scholarly study on the astrological *Nachleben* in sixteenth-century Germany—he himself was the cause of the war.²⁵⁵ The front line, the schism, he thought, was in himself. Then, just like the Nietzschean seismograph, he suddenly broke down.

In the weeks following Germany's surrender in 1918, Warburg's despair developed into a delirium with political, mythological, and religious dimensions: the Bolsheviks were persecuting him as a “capitalist intellectual”; the ancient Furies were pursuing him for being an “atheistic Jew”; and the old Germanic demons of anti-Semitism had become an obsession. It got to a point where he threatened his family and his own life with a pistol.²⁵⁶ Following this incident, he was obliged to languish two and a half years in the clinics of Hamburg and then of Jena (where Nietzsche, too, had languished), before finding himself transferred in 1921 to Kreuzlingen.

It was there that he reached his nadir; and it was there that, thanks to Binswanger, he was able to come back from it. It was there that he rediscovered the *Stimmung* of the “chronic fears” of his childhood, as well as the basic link he had established as early as 1874—when confronting the suffering of his ill mother—between *image* and *symptom*. In the living knot of his fantasies he once again encountered, if only in a jumbled fashion, his fascination with the Native American, his refusal to eat only kosher food, the iconography of Christ's Passion, and the grotesque eroticism of Balzac's *Petites misères de la vie conjugale*, the illustrations of which had haunted him from the age of six²⁵⁷ (figs. 84, 85).

At Bellevue, Warburg sank to the deepest point of his delirium, now “translated into motor language”: his terrifying screams were heard throughout the institution.²⁵⁸ A minor book that he happened to see lying on Binswanger's desk—Hans Prinzhorn's book, which was far from being the most minor in his library—seemed to him to be “placed there to torment him, that it had been written for him and about him.”²⁵⁹ He believed that his entire family was imprisoned in the clinic. (It is true that his own son was interned there

for a brief time; and he, too, remembered his father's unbearable bellowing.) He thought that the meat served at dinner was the flesh of his own children, cut up by Binswanger himself.²⁶⁰ He spoke to the butterflies, confiding in them as "friendly" souls: "He practiced a cult with the moths and the little butterflies which flew around his room at night. He spoke with them for hours on end. He called them his 'little living souls' (*Seelentierchen*) and revealed his ailments to them. He told one moth how his sickness had begun."²⁶¹

During this whole period, Warburg never ceased to write. Between 1919 and 1924, the year of his return to Hamburg, the text of his journal spread out over a series of sixty-nine notebooks covered with black cloth, continuously hand-paginated. In them he covered no less than 7,345 pages with a nervous script which sometimes became completely unstructured, like that of a person who is suffering greatly or who is writing in the dark.²⁶² The text is like an indecipherable flood, a storm of words, or a blizzard [*une tourmente*]. It is touching to discover, in the midst of such graphic anxiety, a dried flower slipped in between two pages.²⁶³

All the notebooks from Kreuzlingen are written in pencil. (Warburg was not able to take up the pen again until 1924, once he was back in Hamburg.) There is no free space on these pages. No margins and no paragraphs. But the writing displays a formidable *energy*: numerous words are violently underlined once, twice, or three times. Others leap out with greater readability, such as the word *katastrophal*,²⁶⁴ or are written in capital letters, as emphatic warnings or as pathetic calls for help: *MEINE SATANISCHE FRESSLUST* ("my satanic pleasure in devouring [food]," *FASTEN* ("to fast")²⁶⁵ (fig. 78). The exclamation points are innumerable. Often the writing collapses, rushes forward or becomes enmeshed in such a chaotic fashion that the lines are superimposed on each other in an inextricable web.²⁶⁶

Looking through these notebooks, one feels that Warburg must be seeking a *space he can construct* in a psychological world which has come apart at the seams. He tries, at the beginning and end of each notebook, to summarize the archive of his own madness, turning once again to the tabular arrangement he used in his old working manuscripts. But this attempt to organize his thought continually breaks down and turns frantic.²⁶⁷ Soon many notes begin accumulating between the pages, especially beginning with notebook number 30 (which dates from 1921). The summary tables are so overfilled that it is impossible to discern anything definite in them. A few forms appear spontaneously in the midst of the text, evoking the old theoretical schemas.²⁶⁸ In some places we find a musical staff, which undoubtedly records some musical memory, and in another place we are eyed by some sardonic caricature.²⁶⁹

But what most strikes the reader, who is at once frustrated and tantalized by the quasi-indecipherable nature of these texts, is the recurrence of symptoms, of graphical *schisms* which, as it were, line the surface of the paper. (One very quickly recalls "*les sorts*" of Antonin Artaud.) Here we are on the real breach: here we are on the front lines, in the very trenches of that psychological war in

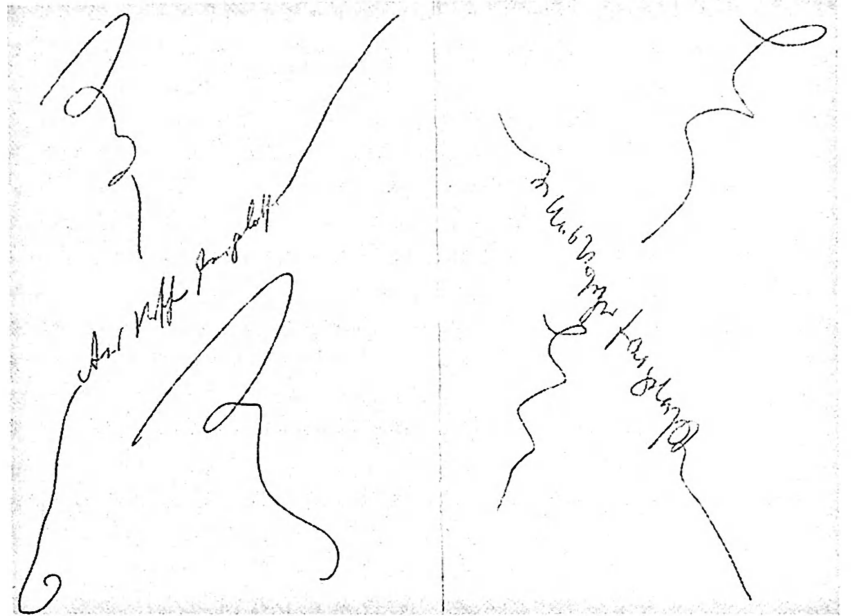


FIG. 79 Aby Warburg, *Tagebuch 1919–1924*, notebook 33, Kreuzlingen, 27 July–18 August 1921, n.p. (between 3167 and 3168). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

which Warburg broke down. On two pages of the notebook that were inadvertently skipped over when the pages were initially being numbered ahead of time—and thus were left blank—the “schizophrenic” of Kreuzlingen drew two types of spiral lines, looking something like a window or mirror broken in a symmetric fashion. Yet, if one looks more carefully, one notices that the mark which blocks the space is once again a word trying to find a path for itself, even if it is written—one thinks here of Leonardo da Vinci, whom Warburg knew so well—as in a mirror (fig. 79).²⁷⁰

This *schizograpy*—as Lacan was to name it scarcely ten years later²⁷¹—seems to operate midway between an effort of destruction and one of construction. At first it appears only as a crisis of writing, suddenly causing the collapse of the story that it “lights up” [“fulgure”] with its nervous or grotesques ornaments, its bewildering spirals, and, with increasingly frequency in the years 1921–22, its lightning-like flashes, which form a zebra-like pattern as they streak across the entire page²⁷² (fig. 80). Electric, violent, straight or contorted, multidirectional and contradictory, these “lightning flashes” destructure the page, of course. One sometimes has the impression that Warburg wants to create a *link* between two separated words or two elements of his story, whereas he is actually creating a break [brisure] in the entire space of the page: the schizograpy is destroying just where it appears to want to construct.

Das Wasser ist sehr hart
am 31.1.22
die Temperatur der Luft ist
5 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Wassers ist 4 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur der Erde ist
10 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Bodensandes ist 15 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur des Gesteins ist
20 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Schnees ist -10 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur des Eises ist -20 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur der Luft ist
5 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Wassers ist 4 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur der Erde ist
10 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Bodensandes ist 15 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur des Gesteins ist
20 Grad Celsius. Die Temperatur
des Schnees ist -10 Grad Celsius.
Die Temperatur des Eises ist -20 Grad Celsius.

FIG. 80 Aby Warburg, Tagebuch 1919-1924, notebook 40, Kreuzlingen, 5-31 January 1922, 3336. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

But a reciprocal action is also at work. For, in barring his own writing (*crisis of writing*), Warburg brought to the fore a particular mark: he caused the *release of a major signifier* in his preoccupations, both scholarly and fantastical. These zebra-like lines are in fact quite recognizable: they liberate the repeated memory, the “disconnected dynamogram” of the *snake-lightning flash* which obsessed Warburg throughout his life, and which he discussed at some length in his “confession” lecture of 1923 (figs. 73, 74, 80). The graphic schism marks a *destruction by insanity*, but it is also an operation of *construction amidst insanity*.

This is a dialectical operation, and it corresponds exactly to the “mixed manic-depressive state” (*manisch-depressiver Mischzustand*), the term Binswanger used in Warburg’s medical record to give greater precision to his diagnosis of schizophrenia.²⁷³ This dual structure corresponds to a quite classic *rhythm of contradictory states*, something observed by all who witnessed Warburg’s state during this period. In the morning he was usually delirious, but by the afternoon he had “recovered his mental faculties” sufficiently to hold an intellectual discussion around at teatime in the company of Binswanger, and even of an invited guest like Ernst Cassirer.²⁷⁴

The diagnosis of a “mixed state” (*Mischzustand*), which Binswanger asked Kraepelin to confirm in 1923 and which the latter did,²⁷⁵ cannot fail to strike any reader of Warburg. A great deal of what had interested him as a historian of culture can in fact be captured by the expression “mixed state”: from the basic impurity of the survivals, with its “mélange of heterogenous elements” (*Mischung heterogener Elemente*), to the “mixed style” (*Mischstil*) he discerned in the art of the Florentine Renaissance.²⁷⁶ There are doubtless hundreds of ways of expressing this dialectic of contraries, ranging from the Warburg’s own astrological sign—how could he have failed to reflect on the fact that his own birth, on June 13, had placed him by immemorial tradition under the *double sign* of the Gemini?—to the more troubling observation that all the known elements of his *delirium*, in 1918, could be viewed, in the aftermath, as premonitions of what history, *in truth*, was reserving for the people dear to him. For example, while Aby was being cared for at Bellevue, extreme right-wing activists were threatening his younger brother Max M., and ultimately did assassinate a close family friend, Walter Rathenau, on 24 June 1922. This helps us to understand better why Warburg spoke of the historian not as a scribe simply recording the past, but as a “seer” (*Seher*) of time in its entirety.²⁷⁷

* * *

It was precisely Binswanger’s work which led his patient to recover, from amidst the subjects that had earlier preoccupied him—whether these were delirious, terrifying, or destructive (the snakes, for example)—a kernel of truth around which his entire thinking was able, indeed, needed to replenish itself. To this end, Binswanger resorted to three means: an “opium cure” (*Opiumkur*), a Freudian psychoanalysis, and what the 1923 lecture was simply the end result of,

namely, the reestablishment of intellectual exchange, an incitement to work despite everything, to *construct amidst insanity*. Inviting Ernst Cassirer to see Warburg or letting the latter know that he had just been named an honorary professor at the University of Hamburg—to the therapist this seemed as important as the benefits of pharmacology or the “removal of [psychological] resistance.”

Binswanger had always refused to become the director of a “mental hospital” for the insane.²⁷⁸ In a story that appeared in 1932, Joseph Roth evoked Bellevue as a “clinic where attentive and costly care was lavished on mentally disturbed patients coming from wealthy backgrounds who were accustomed to being pampered and whom the nurses treated with the gentleness of a midwife.”²⁷⁹ Several famous people from the intellectual world were admitted there, such as the chemist Adolf Werner, the linguist Charles Bally (editor and disciple of Saussure), the poet Leonhard Frank, the feminist Berta Pappenheim (known in the Freudian literature under the name of “Anna O.”), and the painter Kirchner, as well as Nijinsky, already mentioned above. At Bellevue, the therapies were more humane than elsewhere, and its little society lived in an atmosphere of confidence and familiarity; significantly, patients and doctors ate their meals together.

But the most important thing, at least for the process we are trying to describe here, remains the way in which Binswanger succeeded in inverting, in Warburg’s mind, the *symptom of his thinking* to such a degree that it incited, or, more accurately, reincited, a *thinking about the symptom*, something that had long been trying find expression in the work of the great historian. Binswanger’s psychotherapy offers a good description of this anamnesis and of this dialectical reversal: it was necessary that Warburg come to understand his test [épreuve] as something other than a sheer failure or malfunctioning of his way of being. It was necessary that the test be conceived of as an *experience*, and seen in relationship to the “experience” of an entire life—including its scholarly side, from which the 1923 lecture had emerged. Finally, it was necessary that this experience itself be unmasked to show its truth effects [effets de vérité], thereby revealing the full scope of the *knowledge* and thinking it encompassed.

In this sense, Warburg and Binswanger had to acknowledge that the object of their respective investigations was the same: the “dialectic of the monster,” as Warburg would simply have called it. Binswanger, for his part, claimed that it was the Freudian unconscious which ultimately governed the basic actions of a human being or a “being-there” (*Dasein*). Naturally, we have to elucidate this vocabulary, if only briefly. Binswanger had correctly recognized in Freud’s work the first method of *interpretation* that was supported, from beginning to end, by actual *experience*: “I have reached the conclusion that Freud, for the first time, had based the ‘hermeneutic operation’ on experience, inasmuch as what he calls interpreting (*deuten*) encompasses not only drawing psychological conclusions and ways of seeking psychological understanding, but also acts of experience (*Erfahrungsakte*).”²⁸⁰

This simple shift carries all the rest along with it, because, from now on, the symptom is no longer considered to be a simple "sign of illness" but rather a fundamental structure of experience, the "eternal instant of a historically determined being," as Binswanger puts it. As a result, psychoanalysis no longer interrogates the *sickness*, as Charcot was still doing, but the *sick being* in the context of his entire existence and entire destiny. It no longer interrogates the symptom as a deficiency needing correction, but as an "expression of a total functioning of the organism" and as a "global vital fact."²⁸¹ Here Binswanger shares with Freud a radical critique of traditional "medicalized" psychiatry.²⁸² Despite the skeptical, if sympathetic, position of his teacher Eugene Bleuler and of his uncle—the same Ludwig Otto, of Jena, mentioned above in connection with Nietzsche—Binswanger was the very first psychiatrist to introduce Freudian psychoanalysis into an institution for the mentally ill.²⁸³

It is well known that Freud and Binswanger were unfailing friends for more than thirty years (against the background, it may be noted, of a common break with Jung).²⁸⁴ At the time when Warburg was raving deliriously about the Great War within the walls of his clinic, Binswanger exchanged with Freud melancholy reflections arising from his own experience and from his reading of Freud's *Thoughts for Times of War and Death*. In 1920, Freud had confided to him that "neither of us has got over the monstrous fact of children dying before their parents." And later: "But, if one is to live so long, one cannot entirely avoid surviving others."²⁸⁵ We are not surprised to find that Binswanger ended his *Sigmund Freud: Reminiscences of a Friendship* with a reflection on the powers linked to *revenge* and *survival*.²⁸⁶

But Binswanger, as we know, developed his work independently of any orthodox Freudianism. Neither a blind disciple nor a dissident who turned his back on Freud, he extended the Freudian vision in the forms of a philosophical anthropology and of a phenomenology which sought its tools—without entirely finding them, moreover—in the work of Husserl and of Heidegger. He ended up creating what has since then been called "existential analysis" or, better, *Daseinsanalyse*. Rightly or wrongly, Binswanger saw in Freudian epistemology an intrinsic limit—"naturalist," as he called it—to the understanding of its own object, the unconscious. Moreover, he held that Freud "accords a great deal more importance to the *decomposition* of the person [in the symptom] than to *building up* the person again." He no doubt thought that the idea of *analysis* in Freudian "psychoanalysis" was still too closely related to what an ordinary scientist of the positivist school would have understood by the term.²⁸⁷

That is why he had to turn at a later date to the foundational concepts of phenomenology, and first of all toward that untranslatable *Dasein* which appears obsessively in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*.²⁸⁸ Binswanger continued to practice psychoanalysis all the same, and he even thought that his critique of Freud owed everything to Freud's discovery itself.²⁸⁹ But, whatever complex relationships psychoanalysis and phenomenology were to sustain over the course of time, the only thing that interests us here is the change *in statu*

nascendi in Binswanger's thinking, of which Warburg was, literally, the beneficiary on both the theoretical and therapeutic levels; for it offered the art historian new insights into the notions themselves of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformel* when he took them up again upon his return to Hamburg.

* * *

If our hypothesis of the existence of an intellectual dialogue between Warburg and Binswanger is confirmed—a dialogue no less intense for being part and parcel of the psychological salvage operation of one of the interlocutors—then we will be in a position to establish the benchmarks of the *epistemic* relationship of their very different bodies of work. All true dialogue must be reciprocal. Thus, Binswanger encouraged Warburg to pursue his inquiry into the “historical psychology of expression”; he compared the latter's studies about astrology to his own clinical studies of the certainty expressed by delirious patients; and he said he felt particularly close to the work done on Sassetti, in which the historian sought to establish nothing less than “the hermeneutic of an individual personality” (*die auf die individuelle Persönlichkeit zielende Hermeneutik*). And, after the old historian left the clinic, Binswanger was constantly receiving books from him, including Carlyle's fascinating *Sartor Resartus*, which he had not know of, along with the volumes of the *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*. In August 1924 he wrote to Warburg, “I haven't been able to get used to not talking things over with you.”²⁹⁰

One would surely be able to find a “Warburgian” component in Binswanger's work, even if it were confined to his historical and cultural efforts to understand the dream, which appeared in print in 1928.²⁹¹ But, of course, it is the reciprocal direction which interests us: in what way did Binswanger's understanding of the psychological realm modify, or make more precise, Warburg's understanding of the image? That is the question.

Let us note, first of all, that Warburg, upon returning home, found it just as hard as Binswanger to get used to not having their daily exchanges; in 1925 he was still complaining of this absence. Back in his cherished library, he described it as a place for “his patients” or “his fellow sufferers” (*meine Mitleidenden*). In 1926, he ironically evoked his “very honored Psyche” (*meine hochverehrte Psyche*), which was slowly repairing. Elsewhere he says that he is working on the “vital history” (*Lebensgeschichte*)—a concept developed by Binswanger—of . . . the postage stamps he has collected. In 1927, on Binswanger's advice, or, more likely, on his orders, he gave up his plan to make a second trip to America. And he spoke to the latter about his *Mnemosyne Atlas* in the midst of talking about various problems with his health.²⁹²

The evidence of their common intellectual interests is still visible at the Warburg Institute, which possesses the majority of Binswanger's publications, at least from the period which interests us, in the form of dedicated copies, some of which are annotated. But these publications are so conceptual and so

specialized, so philosophically difficult and so clinically oriented, that at first one finds it hard to see what use an art historian could make of them. Yet a more careful look reveals the great degree to which Warburg, from 1921 until his death, shared his own psychiatrist's conception of psychopathology.

What matters here, of course, is the symptom. Binswanger often approached it in terms of an *image which affects and transforms the time* of the subject. The main paradigm is deduced from the dream, considered in three of its aspects: the way in which it appears, its "manifest content," and, above all, its intrinsic dynamic:

By steeping oneself in the manifest content of the dream—which, since Freud's epoch-making postulate concerning the reconstruction of latent dream thoughts, has in modern times receded all too far into the background—one learns the proper evaluation of the primal and strict interdependence of feeling and image (*die ursprüngliche enge Zusammengehörigkeit von Gefühl und Bild*), of being attuned . . . and pictorial realization. And what is true of the brief cycles whose thematic reflection we can observe in the image and mood of the dreamer, is, of course, also true of the larger and deeper rhythms of normal and pathologically manic and depressive "disattunement."²⁹³

This return to the *phenomenological* immediacy of the dream—beyond "Freud's memorable postulate" of its *semiotic* nature as a rebus—finds an exact parallel in Warburg's work of 1893, when he "goes back," beyond his own decipherment of Botticelli's humanist sources, as far back as the much more emphatic, "existential" observation that the figures painted by Botticelli appear to be characters *absorbed in a dream*, with the result that the entire *temporality of the image[s]* is disturbed from top to bottom.²⁹⁴

It may be noted in passing that both Warburg and Binswanger agreed, not surprisingly, with an observation Nietzsche had made in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "What we experience in dreams . . . pertains at last . . . to the general belongings of our soul." And the example that Nietzsche gives, namely the dream of flying or falling, is precisely the one around which Binswanger was to construct his own reflections in *Dream and Existence*.²⁹⁵

Because they inaugurated a genuine "anthropology of the imagination," as Foucault termed it,²⁹⁶ Binswanger's analyses pertain as much to the state of wakefulness as to that of sleep, as much to the "cultural space" of the Greeks as to the mental pathology of a patient at Kreuzlingen. The *Dasein* of the oneiric image and that of the subject himself/herself are one and the same; the only difference stems from the fact that the former immediately reveals, as an immanent "act of experience," what the latter—obligated by censorship—always occludes. It is by observing the "thymic space" (*gestimmter Raum*) of the manic-depressive patient that Binswanger posed the more general questions concerning the relationships between what he calls (including in the work of art) *aïsthêsis*, *mnêmè*, and *phantasia*.²⁹⁷

Warburg was also attempting to analyze these combined powers of the aesthetic, the mnemonic, and the imagination in his works on astrology in the time of Luther and on Francesco del Cossa.²⁹⁸ By including in his history of images the psychopathological themes of schizophrenia and of manic-depressive psychosis—of which Binswanger was, and still is, considered one of the great theorists—Warburg wound up situating his cultural *Mnemosyne* squarely in the realm of metapsychology.²⁹⁹ He wanted to take note of the “emotional” powers of the image, such as those that his own therapist had observed in him and continued to investigate for many years afterwards.³⁰⁰

If the image, as an “emotional” power, affects and transforms all the temporal dimensions of the subject, then, it goes without saying, one can no longer speak of psychological “history” in the trivial sense. In the dream, as in the symptom, the past is no longer situated “behind” the present time of a given state. It returns, it survives, and it gives to each experience its own style, even its future. But one would be wrong to assume any rejection of history on Binswanger’s part, just as it would be in the case of Nietzsche or Burckhardt, for that matter. He was fond of saying that “psychoanalysis has no more right than any other science to remove itself from the course of the history of the human spirit (*vom Gang der Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes*).” And, citing Dilthey, “What man is, we learn only from his history.”³⁰¹ The difference is that, for him, this history reveals itself to be even more complex, given the degree that it can become intricated with *Pathos* and *Nachleben*.

It was by starting, like Freud, from the hysterical symptom, which he began to study as early as 1909, that Binswanger came to understand the fundamental link between the “history of suffering” (*Leidensgeschichte*) and “vital history” (*Lebensgeschichte*). Every experience of the subject (every “decisive crisis,” as Warburg used to say with respect to artistic experience) must lead the analysis back to that “original phenomenon, that is to say, to the unique historical order of the contents of the lived experience of the individual spiritual person, inasmuch as it is the original kernel of all experience, in short: to the interior history of the life and of the person.”³⁰² Binswanger concluded from this that each fecund moment of *Lebensgeschichte* is itself oriented by this “kernel of experience,” which ceaselessly acts in continual waves of *Nachleben*: “Everything which is new, great, and beautiful,” he writes, drawing on Fichte, “has belonged to the world since the beginning, has come into the world, and everything which will appear in the world up to its end has come to it and will come to it,” according to an anadyomenic rhythm of latencies and crises, of repetitions and contretemps.³⁰³

Warburg, for his part, knew very well that he was getting at the truth—irony aside—in confiding to Binswanger that he wanted to reconstruct the *Lebensgeschichte* of his postage stamps (and of his cultural archives in general). As we know, it was more precisely a matter of a *Nachlebensgeschichte*: a “history of survivals” in which Warburg was investigating a paradoxical “vital function” at work in the memory of forms, via those “emotive formulas” in which there

lay crystallized a whole *Leidenschaftsgeschichte*, a "history of the emotions" in their manifestation as materials of visual figuration. That is why, in 1893, in the prefatory note to his first published text, he was already calling for a "psychological aesthetics" (*psychologische Ästhetik*), which alone could help us understand the sources of the "the force which determines style" (*stilbildende Macht*).³⁰⁴

* * *

It would be a mistake see a split here along "disciplinary" lines between Warburg and Binswanger. One cannot say that one of them was simply looking for the sources of style (that is to say, in art) and the other, the sources of the symptom (that is to say, in mental illness). Their common ground lay in the fact that where the former brought to light *the symptomatic tenor of artistic styles*, the latter brought to light *the stylistic tenor of psychological symptoms*.

Binswanger, for his part, was much too attentive, like any good Warburgian iconologist, to the contents of a delirium to sacrifice any of it to the traditional psychological conception of its "incoherence" (which was a way, he used to say, of subjecting the world of the *psyche* to an inadequate naturalist and positivist model). In his view, the psychological symptom did not reveal a lack of meaning, any more than it revealed a deficiency in the functioning (intellectual, for example) of the patient. One must understand what the symptom *is*, not what *it is not*. In this sense, one ought to investigate it in the same way, and with the same concern for its dignity, as any major *anthropological structure*, a lesson which appears with particular clarity in a magisterial book that Binswanger published four years after Warburg's death, *On the flight of ideas* [*Über Ideenflucht*].³⁰⁵

Why this concern for its anthropological dignity? Because, Binswanger says, "in a certain sense the patient is closer to *Dasein* than we are—even if this *Dasein* ensnares him in a real *vertigo*."³⁰⁶ Although this anthropological structure may be vertiginous, there is nothing abstract about it: it manifests itself in a *form*. This is what led Michel Foucault to say that Binswanger's writings, far from promoting some vague existentialist philosophy, sought to find the "place where the *forms* and conditions of *existence* articulate."³⁰⁷ It is pointless to describe a delirium as being inadequate to reality. What one must do, as Binswanger writes in *On the flight of ideas*, is "to arrive at an understanding of [it as an] aesthetic form of lived experience" (*ästhetische Erlebnisform*).³⁰⁸

That is what is called a *style*.³⁰⁹ From then on, every study Binswanger made of the symptom took the form of an investigation of style. The best example of this comes from his investigation of "mannerism," which starts with a problematic closely associated with the psychiatrist Bleuler, namely the recurrent "mannerism" of the behaviors displayed by schizophrenics, and ends up in an aesthetic inquiry in which the author invokes the paintings of Pontormo, Bronzino, and El Greco, and the poems of Marino, Gongora, and Gracian, as well as specialized studies by Max Dvořák, Hans Sedlmayr, and

E. R. Curtius.³¹⁰ Once again, he is not far from Warburg, who as early as 1899 was linking artistic mannerism with the phenomena of formal intensification (for example, in ornamentation), but also with certain types of psychological behavior (for example, superstition).³¹¹

At the conclusion of all these analogies and of all this blurring of the lines between "disciplinary domains," we appear to confront one major problem, namely that of establishing a relationship between the *being of art* [*l'aitre de l'art*] and *existential anxieties* [*malheur de l'être*]. Warburg and Binswanger ponder questions concerning style and symptom simultaneously, because, in their opinion, every case of unease [*malheur*] and every schism of being takes on a definite form; and because every form must bring into play, at one time or another, the aesthetic domain as such, the construction of a style. Reciprocally, they thought that all art is an "art of curing"—a transfiguration of the symptom—to the degree that it dares to plunge into our deepest psychological anguish. Warburg saw in this a dialectic of *pathos* and *ethos*. Binswanger spoke of a "path of self-realization through art."³¹²

It is interesting to note that one of the first to learn from this dialectic of symptom and style was none other than Jacques Lacan. Struck by the convergence of what he had just read in *On the flight of ideas* with his own studies of paranoid psychosis, Lacan published, at the early date of 1933, in the art journal *Minotaure*, a superb article on "The Problem of Style."³¹³ There, drawing explicitly on the writings of Binswanger and of phenomenological psychiatry, he asserted that the symptom cannot be reduced to a localized deficiency of psychological functions but instead involves the "totality of the patient's lived experience," noting that "the direction taken nowadays by psychiatric research offers some new data to these problems [of style, problems which are at once anthropological and aesthetic]."³¹⁴

The symptom, Lacan asserts, resists the objectification of the positivist psychologist because it draws on "primary forms of lived experience" which are linked with *expression* more than with meaning, and with overall *style* more than with a simple "local reaction."³¹⁵ But how does one recognize a style? By paying careful attention simultaneously to two aspects of the observed phenomena. The first is *dynamic*, it liberates the phenomena of "cyclical repetition, of ubiquitous multiplication, of endless periodic returns of the same events, which sometimes take the form of a doubling or tripling of the same person, and sometimes in a hallucination of a splitting of the subject's personality," all of which Lacan considers to be characteristic of the "conditions of typification, which creates style."³¹⁶ How can one fail to think here of the multiple avatars of *Ninfa* or of the snake as "periodic" or "dynamographic" figures of *Nachleben*? How can one fail to think of Warburg himself and of his "mixed states?"

The second aspect is *symbolic*, it renders the symptom, even if it is dressed up with "delirious themes," comparable to the "mythic creations of folklore," but, equally so, to the "meaningful acts [of] plastic and poetic productions." Accordingly, in principle, psychopathological analysis may no longer function

without a cultural anthropology (a Warburgian position if ever there was one), without a stylistics of forms (a history of art), or even without a political history of the depths of social reality, since, as Lacan notes in conclusion, the symptoms of psychosis "occur quite frequently in a nerve-center of historically real social tensions."³¹⁷ This is another way of referring to Warburgian "seismography."³¹⁸

It is also another way of referring to Warburg's methodological lesson; for he made his own "existential anxieties" ["malheurs de l'être"] the occasion of a renewal, even a foundation, of his research on the "âitres de l'art." And it was by pondering the intrication of symptom and style that he wound up by reinventing the history of art as a discipline which is not so much "humanist" (here one recognizes Panofsky's dictum) as it is *pathological*, in the most fertile sense one can give to this word.³¹⁹ Five days after his lecture in Kreuzlingen, Warburg penned a brief manuscript entitled "Katharsis," in which he presented just this problem: how does one make *logos* (free, universal) master over *pathos* (alienated, solipsistic)?³²⁰ How, above all, does one ensure that this *logos* forgets nothing about *pathos* but, to the contrary, manages to ponder it—anthropologically, phenomenologically—from the very depths of the testing [*épreuve*] it is subjected to?

The challenge of this "pathological" knowledge enables us to understand a paradox essential to Warburg's *epistemic style*. On the one hand, he keeps all assertion of his "self" in the background, hidden behind the presentation of the historical material, the "sources." That is the reason why Warburg appears so modest, virtually effaced, in his public writings, where one never finds an attitude expressed in phrases like "As for myself, I think that." On the other hand, his own psychoanalytic experience helps keep him very much aware of the fundamental link between "knowledge" (*Erkenntnis*) and "confession" (*Bekennntnis*).

In short, he is conscious of the autobiographical dimension involved in every attempt to construct a body of knowledge. Thus, the fantasy "Indianness" of his youth becomes material for constructing the hypothesis of the "indestructibility . . . of primitive man" (*die Unzerstörbarkeit des primitiven Menschen*).³²¹ His own delirious "compulsions" become the experiential basis for understanding the "compulsion to be connected through . . . incorporation" (*Verknüpfungszwang durch Verleibung*), which is characteristic, he states, of the figural and magical activities that he studied in the Native American and Italian rituals.³²² And knowledge of the *Nachleben* in general could not have emerged except on the basis of an experience already peopled by phantoms. "Up to now everyone has managed to find in the ancients what he needed or wished for: especially himself."³²³ Warburg reversed the perspective: in each "self" there lives and survives the phantoms of our entire culture, including Antiquity.

That is why a *construction created amidst insanity* was able to give rise to the *foundation of a rigorous knowledge* of culture and of the forms of its historicity. At the end of his life, Freud recognized that, like the hysteric, every delirious person "suffer[s] from his own recollections," because it is humanity in general

which suffers from the same illness,³²⁴ an illness that one could perhaps name, with Warburg, *Mnemosyne*. In the same text—"Constructions in Analysis"—Freud presented a clinical observation he had made on many occasions: when an interpretative construction "is right" or "gives an approximation to the truth, [the patient] reacts to it with an unmistakable aggravation of his symptoms and of his general condition."³²⁵

Should not all this lead us to conclude that in his empathetic plunge into the "pile of living snakes," into the "dialectic of the monster," Warburg, at Kreuzlingen, came as close as he could to the ultimate knowledge he was seeking?

NACHFÜHLUNG, OR KNOWLEDGE BY INCORPORATION

For Warburg, the lecture at Kreuzlingen was the occasion for a concrete test and a theoretical deepening of what he had long understood by "incorporation" or "incarnation." He had often spoken of the image in terms of *Verkörperung*. At the time of his encounter with Binswanger, however, he privileged the notion of *Verleibung*, which he had already used in the *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie*, but which he now understood in a more directly phenomenological sense, namely as a manner of expressing the "taking on of flesh" ["prise de chair"] at work in the "symbols" of all cultures.

What was his initial problem? It was a matter of understanding the efficacy of images—their *Lebensgeschichte*, their power of *Nachleben*—in basic anthropological terms. As his starting point, Warburg observes that man is an "animal who manipulates things": he touches, he utilizes, and he transforms the nonorganic nature of objects with a view toward his own vital subsistence. He joins the inorganic to his own organism to the point of incorporating it into himself. It is therefore in terms of "empathy" (*Einfühlung*) that the problem will be formulated. But the "dialectic of the monster" is already there: having incorporated the inorganic, the human animal no longer knows exactly how far his own limits reach. This operation, which gives birth to *culture*, including language, religion, art, and knowledge, also gives birth to a basic *tragedy*, a basic schizophrenia.

Whence come all these questions and enigmas of empathy with respect to inanimate nature (*diese Fragen und Rätsel der Einfühlung*)? Because for man there is in fact a situation that can unify him with something that belongs to him—precisely in the act of manipulating and carrying—but that does not flow through his veins. . . . / *Tragedy of incorporation / phenomenology / fluctuating limits of personality / Appropriation by incorporation; / The point of departure is this: I see man as an animal that handles and manipulates and whose activity consists in putting together and taking apart (Verknüpfen und Trennen). That is how he loses his organic ego feeling (sein Ich-Organengefühl), specifically because the hand allows him to take hold of material things that have no nerve apparatus, since they are inorganic, but that, despite this, extend his ego inorganically (die sein Ich unorganisch erweitern). That is the tragic*

(*die Tragik*) aspect of man, who, in handling and manipulating things, steps beyond his organic bounds. . . . All humanity is eternally and at all times schizophrenic (*schizophren*).³²⁶

Here we have, in Warburg's view, a general condition for what should be called the "objective biomorphism" (*struktureller Biomorphismus*) of symbols in general, even though, or because, they confront human life with the inorganic nature of things.³²⁷ Empathy is so important in this context only because it designates a process in which *inorganic forms* are incorporated into *organic forms*, in which "life" is projected onto the "thing."

This makes clear the need to erect an *anthropology of resemblance* capable of situating the efficacy—imaginary and symbolic—of these forms in the material figures produced by a given culture, but also in its ritual acts, and even its language. The notion of incorporation turns out to be omnipresent in these areas. It is inherent in the technical appropriation of nature; it is dominant, and even alienating, in the phenomena of "mimetic metamorphosis," such as sacrifice, dance, and the use of masks and of images in general; and it even sustains, to a certain extent, the syntax and logic of a culture's language:

[1.] Incorporation is a process that occurs between a human being and a foreign being, animate and inanimate (*die Verleibung als logischer Akt der primitiven Kultur*). . . . We have the simple sentence *in statu nascendi* in which subject and object merge into each other if the copula is missing, or annul each other if the accent is different. This situation—an unstable simple sentence made up of three parts—is reflected in the religious artistic practice of primitive peoples to the extent that they tend to incorporate an object as a process parallel to that of syntax. . . .

2. Appropriation through incorporation (*Zustand der Anverleibung*). Parts of the object remain as associated foreign bodies, thus inorganically extending the ego-feeling (*Ich-Gefühl*). Manipulating and carrying (*Hantieren und Tragen*).

3. The subject is lost in the object (*das Subjekt geht an das Objekt verloren*) in an intermediary state between manipulating and carrying, loss and affirmation. The human being is there kinetically (*kinetisch*) but is completely subsumed by all inorganic extension of his ego. The most perfect form of the loss of the subject in the object (*Verlust des Subjekts an das Objekt*) is manifest in sacrifice, which incorporates some parts into the object. Mimetic and imitative transformation: example: the mask dance cult.³²⁸

In Warburg's thinking, incorporation surely appeared to be some kind of "total psychological fact"—by which I mean a process so powerful that it is capable, by "appropriating" a thing, of constructing an identity, that "ego-feeling" [*sentiment du moi*] (*Ich-gefühl*), but also of destroying it by causing "the loss of the subject in the object" (*Verlust des Subjekts an das Objekt*). In this situation, therefore, finding oneself does not exclude going astray. Construction goes together with madness, knowledge with tragedy, *logos* with *pathos*,

wisdom with schizophrenia. One cannot escape from the pile of snakes nor from the "dialectic of the monster." At most, one can sometimes orient oneself in relation to it, and move in the direction of some guide mark. But *intrication* reigns supreme in this anthropological and metapsychological model, in this non-Kantian model of the relationships between subject and object.

Until the end of his life, Warburg never ceased to penetrate more deeply or, at the very least, to reformulate this nexus of problems. In his final manuscripts, in particular the *Grundbegriffe* of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, he returned to this "energetic empathy," understood as an essential function of the *Nachleben* itself, its way of giving meaning (or giving meaning once again) to the motifs of classical Antiquity.³²⁹ Elsewhere, he employed a distinction at once aesthetic and psychopathological between the "ex-pressive," the "de-pressive," and the "sym-pressive" (*sympressiv*).³³⁰

In short, the notions of empathy and of incorporation ended up occupying such a necessary place in Warburg's understanding of images that, at the time of the scholar's death, several commentators saw in this approach an essential element of his entire work; and they were right. In a very lively account of the lecture Warburg gave at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome on 19 June 1929, Kenneth Clark, who was twenty-six years old at the time, conveyed his impression of the old orator's impressive empathetic capacities: "He himself said that if he had been five inches taller (he was even shorter than Berenson) he would have become an actor, and I can believe it, for he had, to an uncanny degree, the gift of mimesis. He could 'get inside' a character, so that when he quoted from Savonarola, one seemed to hear the Frate's compelling voice; and when he read from Poliziano there was all the daintiness and the slight artificiality of the Medicean circle."³³¹

In his magnificent funeral oration for Warburg, Ernst Cassirer naturally sought to discover the deepest causes of the empathetic tenor of a body of work devoted entirely to the "emotive formulas" and to their "survivals." He speaks first of all of the immediate—and mysterious—understanding which united them, the day of their first meeting, while Warburg was still at Kreuzlingen and struggling with the "monster." He then evokes the life of the scholar, completely "consumed" by the "tragic grandeur" of the questions he studied; and, comparing Warburg to no less a figure than Shakespeare—as read by Goethe—he ends by establishing the empathetic equation of the *acuity of his gaze* and the *acuity of his suffering*:

And when we finally had our first meeting, during my visit to Kreuzlingen five years ago, there was already a close bond between us. After speaking for only a short time we had got to know each other and to understand each other in a way that usually is possible only after years of working together. I now grasped more fully than before, as he stood before me, the meaning of his tireless quest, of his efforts, and of his research. I now saw appearing right before me, in its full gravity, its force and its tragic grandeur, the problem that had gripped his life and that had

consumed it. . . . Where others saw definite, circumscribed forms, where they saw forms in repose, he saw moving forces; he saw there what he termed the great "emotive formulas" that Antiquity had created as an enduring legacy for mankind. . . . Here he drew upon his deepest, most personal life experiences (*aus tiefster, eigenster Lebenserfahrung*). He had experienced within himself and learned firsthand what he saw before him—and he was really capable of seeing only what he could grasp and interpret from the core of his own being and his own life. Early on he had read that severe phrase—"he was familiar with suffering and with death." But from amidst this very suffering (*Leiden*) there emerged the incomparable force (*Kraft*) and the particularity of his look (*Schauen*). Rarely has a researcher more fully and more profoundly dissolved his most profound sufferings in his look and thereby liberated it. . . . He always stood in the middle of the storm and turmoil of life itself; he sought to grasp its ultimate and most profoundly tragic problems. And there was one problem above all to which he returned again and again, and with which he unceasingly wrestled until the end. In his address on Shakespeare, the young Goethe says that, speaking in the ordinary way, Shakespeare's plots are not really plots, and that, instead, his plays all turn upon that secret point that no philosopher has yet seen and defined, where the particular nature of our ego, the supposed freedom of our will, collides with the necessary course of the world. Warburg's research was constantly oriented toward that "secret point" (*geheimer Punkt*), and his gaze (*Blick*) was riveted to it as if he were under a spell.³³²

Reading these lines, one understands better why Warburg was able to confide to his journal, a few months before his death, that he felt himself to be, above all, a "psycho-historian" (*Psychohistoriker*), by which we may understand a historian suffering from a psychosis, but capable, for that very reason—and thanks in part to his analysis with Binswanger—of better "diagnosing the schizophrenia of Western culture from its images in an autobiographical reflex."³³³ One can no longer doubt that Aby Warburg's "science without a name" was a tragic science, an emotional [pathique] science, a *pathology*. Destined to explore what he called a "realm of perpetual unrest" (*Region der ewigen Unruhe*),³³⁴ this science corresponded exactly to the formulation of Aeschylus: *pathei mathos*, which suggests "knowledge [gained] through testing" [l'épreuve]. In other words, this was an immanent knowledge capable of bringing forth, on the basis of the emotion or *pathos* experienced, forms and formulas, if not *mathemes*.³³⁵

* * *

*Such an "emotional way of knowing" obviously defies our common sense. How can one know [savoir] and suffer [pâtir]. How does one find the proper rhythm of knowing (which requires distance) and suffering (which implies the erasure of difference)? The answer can already be glimpsed in the diagnosis Binswanger formulated concerning the "mixed state" (*Mischzustand*) of his *learned patient*.*

But, more fundamentally, it can be found in the *epistemic displacement* displayed throughout Warburg's experience at Kreuzlingen, which was one of psychoanalytic anamnesis. I want to speak now of the very precise, and very original, way in which, starting at this period, the inventor of *Daseinsanalyse* sought to carry out this type of anamnesis.³³⁶

Binswanger best formulated it in an article that he sent, surely not by chance, to Warburg, and that figures in their correspondence as early as the end of 1925. The article was a contribution to the journal *Imago* on the occasion of Freud's seventieth birthday. The question it confronts head on is that of the singular knowledge that the psyche obliges us to accept when it is not only the means used to establish knowledge but is itself the very object of that knowledge. In order to account for this process, Binswanger creates a singular dialectic in which three verbs play a key role: "to experience" (*Erfahren*), "to understand" (*Verstehen*), and "to interpret" (*Deuten*).³³⁷

Binswanger first turns to what he considers to be one of Freud's basic contributions: the fact that his acts of interpretation (*Deutung*) are entirely determined by acts of experience (*Erfahrung*, a word which presupposes three elements: a test one has undergone [épreuve subie], the experience acquired, and an experiment occurring at the present time). But how does one go from the experience to its interpretation? Warburg, as we know, had long been obsessed by this question: how does one transform a *mania* into *sophia* (to speak in Plato's terms), a *pathos* into *logos* (to use Aristotle's vocabulary), a Dionysian madness into Apollonian knowledge (in Nietzschean terminology)? Binswanger responds that only phenomenology allows one to understand this process, which is at once so subtle and so necessary.

He calls it "understanding" (*Verstehen*), expanding in this regard on several remarks already made by, among others, Karl Jaspers in his *General Psychopathology*.³³⁸ "To understand" someone is not to accumulate, nor to synthesize, the maximum amount of information about him or her, even though this "historical" archive is obviously necessary.³³⁹ It is to accede unexpectedly, by "a sudden flash" (*aufblitzt*), Binswanger writes, to a "motivational context" (*Motivationszusammenhang*) in which the subject suddenly *opens him or herself up* and thereby liberates the inimitable dimension of his/her *Dasein*.³⁴⁰ Henri Maldiney assumes that this is the moment when a paradoxical act of "getting outside oneself" occurs, an act whose stakes are very well expressed in the common formulation "to get to the bottom" ["aller au fond"]: "Here, *to get to the bottom* has the double meaning of to sink and to descend toward the ultimate and primordial depths on which everything *reposes*. It is to be at once swallowed up and to base oneself on something [se fonder] (i.e., on something far down, but solid)—and [to do] both, at the same time."³⁴¹

Warburg undoubtedly found this psychopathological "understanding" of great interest. First of all, because Binswanger situated it on a very general *anthropological* level where psychiatry as such enjoys no special privilege, but instead remains attuned to all the other forms of culture, from mystical

discourse to poetry, philosophy, and the visual arts.³⁴² And next, because the *stylistic* question remains central to the act itself of comprehension; for the latter only arises as a "form of existence" in which it is not a meaning that is deduced from an expression, but, to the contrary, one in which an expression arises and is grasped or attained in the material of the meaning. And the latter occurs "to the degree in which [the subject] offers itself to us as its sphere of expression (*Ausdrucksphäre*), in its form and its mimicry, in its gestures and its attitudes (*an ihrer Gestalt und Mimik*), as well as in its spoken "expressions."³⁴³ Here Binswanger is clearly coming very close to a discussion of the nature of the work of art.³⁴⁴ Warburg clearly saw that his notion of the *Pathosformel* received a remarkable phenomenological illumination from this approach and, as a consequence, a confirmation of its anthropological pertinence.

Thus, another benefit for Warburg of his stay at Kreuzlingen was the opportunity to carry on a dialogue as an equal partner with a scientist who, like himself, acquired his *knowledge by means of intrication*. By this I mean he carried out his investigations in such a way that his *knowledge was implicated*; in other words, working without authoritarianism and without academicism, he simultaneously employed both knowledge and nonknowledge [le savoir et le non-savoir], meaning and lack of meaning [sens et non-sens], construction and destruction. This kind of knowledge was totally opposed to the positivism of the medical *semiologies*, in which the notion of the symptom had always been tightly aligned with the *séméion*, the "sign" of the illness. It was also a knowledge capable of seeking a conception of *style* ranging beyond its own *semiotic* dimension, in a zone where the iconological "rebus" of the dream and of the work of art—which presuppose analytical discernment, the act of *interpreting*—are jumbled together, becoming incorporated into the "pile of living snakes," so that, in the end, all one can do is *to understand* them.

Two stylistic traits, moreover, characterize both Warburg and Binswanger: their writings are complex and repetitive, meandering like "eel soups" (which, we recall, is how Warburg characterized his own prose). Above all, their respect for overdeterminations and for intrications renders their approach to the phenomena they study a kind of "infinite analysis," which dares *to not reach conclusions*: "Our guide here at all times . . . should be to give up what Flaubert calls the 'raging desire to conclude,' to give up—which is not an easy thing to do if one considers our one-sidedly naturalist intellectual training—the passionate need to draw conclusions, to form an opinion or a judgment; in brief, to give up the need to reflect on a given thing instead of letting the thing itself speak or, to cite Flaubert again, 'of expressing a thing as it is.'"³⁴⁵

"To express a thing as it is"—this is indeed a task for the phenomenologist that Binswanger had become at the very beginning of the 1920s (thus, more or less, at the same period as his encounter with Warburg).³⁴⁶ He was discovering Husserl while reading Dostoyevsky; and he was looking at Franz Marc and Van Gogh while investigating psychosis.³⁴⁷ He cited, once again, Flaubert: "By dint of looking at a stone, an animal, a painting, I felt myself entering into

it.³⁴⁸ He thus was conceiving of *knowledge through understanding* as an incorporation: an *empathetic* process.

"To express a thing as it is"—this is not a matter of stating its truth from a great conceptual height, convinced of the correctness of one's judgment. It is, rather, to merge empathetically into the mode of expression proper to the thing in question, its *style of being*. It is to make oneself the "phasm" ["phasme"] of that thing. It is to penetrate the thing in order to "be penetrated" by it, as Flaubert so well puts it. It means taking the risk of not being able to get out of it (of not being able to come out all right in the end). Knowledge by intrication is knowledge gained through chasms, an endless voyage into the world of things, an acute consciousness of being implicated in it, a deep desire for a life within its folds. That is why it was so difficult for Warburg and Binswanger, those two explorers of psychological matters, to reach definitive conclusions about anything at all within the circle of interpretation.

* * *

But what, more precisely, is encompassed by this *Einfühlung*, a term which Warburg and Binswanger both used in their respective works and which they might easily have discussed around 1923, in Kreuzlingen? In the first place, empathy designated a primordial mode of communication based on the movements of the body and their expressive value. In this connection, Warburg was still thinking (as he did throughout his life) of the Darwin of *The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals*, which he had discovered in 1888; whereas Binswanger was already aware of the very recent studies in ethology and psychology conducted by Buytendijk, Plessner, von Uexküll, and Erwin Straus.³⁴⁹

Binswanger must also have known of the more specifically phenomenological significance of *Einfühlung* in Husserl. The key passage here is, in *Ideen II*, where the "constitution of animal nature" goes beyond itself and becomes nothing less than the "constitution of the mind." *Einfühlung*, according to Husserl, thus designates the transformation thanks to which the pure "sensible impressions" of the (physical) body proper give way to an "intersubjective objectivity of the thing"—as if, in lending to the other an interiority, a soul, man constitutes himself as a psychological being.³⁵⁰ Edith Stein, who had been able to consult the manuscript of *Ideen II* before its publication, attempted, in 1917, to create a "transcendental" radicalization of this concept of empathy; and Max Scheler was then elaborating an entire ethics and a metaphysics of "sympathy."³⁵¹

Warburg, for his part, was able to speak to Binswanger about a certain conception of *Einfühlung* that he had adopted while still very young. Indeed, it constituted the substance of his very earliest published sentences, namely the "Prefatory Remark" (*Vorbemerkung*) to his thesis on Botticelli, in 1893. If the question of the *Nachleben* is so focused on the *Pathosformeln* and the "representation of the animated details" (*Darstellung . . . bewegten Beiwerks*), and if the image survives only by incorporating, in the present time of a given culture,

the *fossilized life* of the ancient sarcophagi, that is because a phenomenon of empathy governs this entire transmission of "life" in the image and in time. Warburg thus inaugurated his work by declaring that he wished to "observe an emerging sense within a milieu of . . . artists of the aesthetic act of "empathy" as a force which determines style (*den Sinn für den ästhetischen Akt der "Einfühlung" in seinem Werden als stilbildende Macht beobachten*)."³⁵²

What, then, was the main thing that he observed? What did he immediately discover? It was a *split* structure that he would end up calling, in 1923, "schizophrenic." On the one hand, he saw the *elementary gestures* which were so fertile in the classicizing painting of the fifteenth century (it is sufficient to consider a single painting which seems to contain them all, Pollaiuolo's *Hercules and Deianira* at the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven), gestures elicited by immediate organic reactions, such as seizing/fleeing, desiring/rebuffing, caressing/killing, etc.³⁵³ On the other hand, Warburg discovered (first in Botticelli, and then in Ghirlandaio and many other artists) *displacement formulas* [*formules de déplacement*], through which "emotional life" shows its capacity to find a home even in the semi-organic or inorganic folds of the coiffures and flowing cloths agitated by the wind. This is the other face of empathy, which could be called "animation of the inanimate."

Warburg never gave up his efforts to construct—or at least to cobble together—the theoretical tools capable of clarifying, as much as possible, these effects generated by *Einfühlung*. Although he refrained, in his published articles, from elaborating doctrines of any kind, modestly keeping his theoretical "self" in the background behind his erudition and the highlighting of his sources, in the solitude of his manuscripts he did not hesitate to fill thousands of pages in which he was obviously seeking to create a theory of the incorporation of images [*incorporation imaginaire*]. The *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie*, written between 1888 and 1905, offer a good example of this effort, as ambitious as it was precocious.³⁵⁴

In some notes dated from January to March 1896, and thus written during his travels among the Native Americans, Warburg introduces, for example, a typology of magico-religious "incorporation" (*Verleibung*) and "absorption" (*Absorption*). He tries out a schema with three variations in which the "object" is represented by an oriented field (a square traversed by an axis) and the "subject" by a strange little spiral which has the look of a mechanical spring or an electrical filament, or perhaps a coiled-up snake³⁵⁵ (fig. 81). In the first figure, it is the subject which "carries" the object—the verb Warburg uses, *tragen*, also has the connotation of supporting, and thus of undergoing or suffering; in the second case, the situation is inverted; and in the third, the subject itself constitutes, *within the interior of the object*, the axis of orientation of the field. Warburg calls this last figure an example of "imitation by identification" (*nachahmen . . . identifizieren*), and he completes its annotation with the verb *einhüllen* (to cover, envelop, or perhaps bury), which accords particularly well with the verb *einfühlen* (a topic which, moreover, is discussed elsewhere in the manuscript).

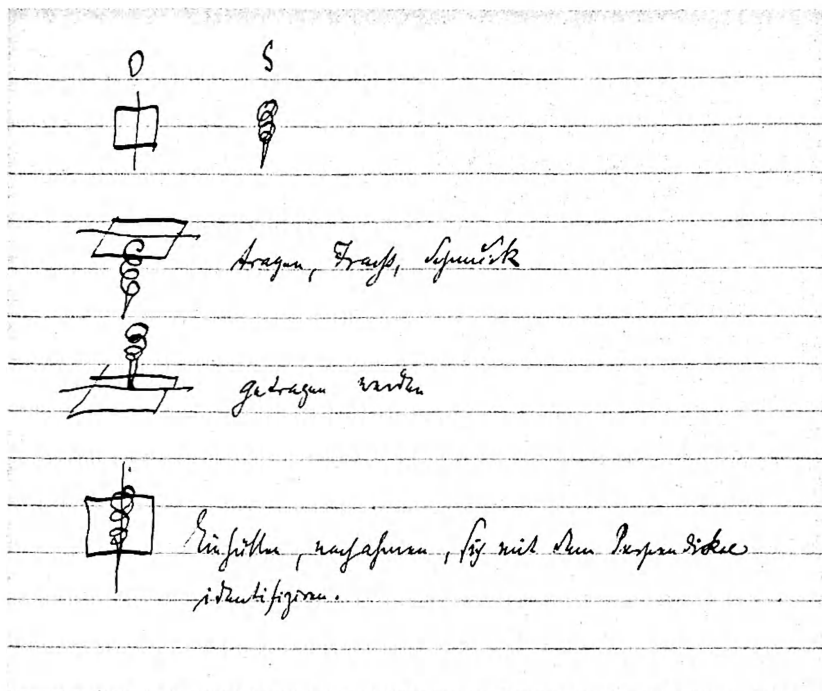


FIG. 81 Aby Warburg, *To Bear, to Be Borne, to Identify With*, 1896. Ink drawing. Taken from the "Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie," 2:3. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

This schema is immediately followed by a second in which the "subject" and the "object" seem to be represented in an even more arbitrary fashion, and a more sexualized one: something like an open lampshade (the object) waiting for a lightbulb with its protruding stem (the subject). Here Warburg is again speaking of imitation in terms of empathy, that is to say, in terms of "identification" (*Identification*) and of the "dwelling" (*Einkehr*) of the subject in the object³⁵⁶ (fig. 82). One can already gather from this everything that the texts of 1923 will say so forcefully, namely that the relationship of the image must be conceived, henceforth, in terms of projection, of incorporation, and, even more so, of *co-penetration* [*compénétration*]. What people set before their eyes (frescoes, paintings, sculptures), and what they cover their bodies with in order to make a spectacle of themselves (decoration, jewelry, clothing)—all that, according to Warburg, aims at a co-penetration of the physical image and the psychological image, to the point where it is no longer possible to distinguish "material culture" (*stoffliche Kultur*) from its "psychological culture." "The appropriation by touch (*die abtastende Aneignung*) . . . which demands an accumulation (*Häufung*) (agglomeration and decoration) . . . is being replaced by a bodily empathy with the gesture (*mimische Einfühlung*)."³⁵⁷



Wahrnehmung durch Funktion und durch
Objekte (Identifikation als Ganzes)



FIG. 82 Aby Warburg, 1896.
*Imitation by Dwelling Within the
Object (Identification).* Ink draw-
ing. Taken from the "Grund-
legende Bruchstücke zu einer
monistischen Kunstpsychologie,"
2:3. London, Warburg Institute
Archive. Photo: The Warburg
Institute.

FIG. 83 Anonymous, *Zodiac
Body* [bloodletting chart], 1503.
Woodcut. Reprinted from from
Aby Warburg, "Wanderungen
der antiken Götterwelt vor
ihrem Eintritt in die italienische
Frührenaissance," 1913, III.84-
85.1. London, Warburg Institute
Archive. Photo: The Warburg
Institute.



Every image leaves the body and returns to the body. In fifteenth-century Florence, the liturgical positions of Fra Angelico or those evident in the Porcinari altarpiece, the emotional crowds of Ghiberti or of Donatello, and the choreographed nudes of Botticelli or of Pollaiuolo all induced this “mimetic empathy” and its accompanying *elementary gestures*. But the decoration itself—garlands, draped cloths, family arms, hairstyles, calligraphies, jewels, false marbles—was also, by virtue of its *displacement formulas*, a part of this empathetic process. Julius von Schlosser started from exactly the same premise when he placed the question of collections and of “cabinets of curios” in the anthropological perspective of the *magical accumulation* of bodily trophies and relics.³⁵⁸

Every image leaves the body—that is to say, separates itself from it—and returns to it. Warburg offers another striking example of this in a lecture given in Göttingen in 1913. Discussing a sixteenth-century wood engraving, he evokes the “sympathetic magic” (*Sympathie-Zaubermittel*) displayed in the co-penetration of astrological imagery (sidereal bodies) and of organic imagery (anatomical bodies): in this engraving, the signs of the zodiac provided the person using it, specifically a barber-surgeon, with a guide to the practice of bleeding his patients³⁵⁹ (fig. 83). The “foreign bodies” of the celestial and fantastic bestiary that were assigned to various parts of the human figure were thus also indicators of an organic geography of the depths, marking the points where it was necessary to draw off the bad blood in order to purge the body of its impurities.

The image thus conveys a dialectic of (auratic) distance and of its (empathetic) erasure. In addition to that, it joins together the psychological-temporal process of the *Nachleben* (pagan gods of the zodiacal pantheon appearing in a Christian calendar of the sixteenth century) and the psychological-bodily process of *Einfühlung* (sidereal bodies endowed with proximity to, and even the intimacy of, organic bodies). Accordingly, from now on it would be possible to speak of a *Nachfühlung*: a complicated bodily empathy of time, a temporal empathy that could be put to work in the body. The result, by virtue of the inclusion of time, is an intrication of the sensorial present and symbolic memory.

* * *

Warburg was far from being the inventor of all this vocabulary. August Schmarsow, his teacher in Florence, had initiated him into the problems of gesture and expression. Beyond that, he defended a *Kunstwissenschaft* based on psychology, in which the role of *Einfühlung* was central: there could be no “spatial form” (*Raumgestalt*), Schmarsow said, without an “image of the body” (*Körperbild*). In 1893, the same year that Warburg defended his thesis, Schmarsow published an entire treatise on the empathetic power of architectural forms.³⁶⁰ Warburg was also a careful reader of Hermann Siebeck.³⁶¹ But, above all, how can one fail to be struck by the unexpected convergence of his thinking, in this area, with

that of his most immediate contemporaries, or, one might say, of his closest rivals, namely the "formalist" art historians?

It is indeed surprising to read, in a work published by Heinrich Wölfflin in 1886, several theoretical propositions in which the work of art is approached in terms of a "bodily world," of "drive[s]," and of "mythological imagination," rather than in terms of aesthetic judgment and of purely visual categories:

The forms of bodies can have character only through the fact that we ourselves possess bodies. If we were merely optically receptive essences, then aesthetic judgment of the world of physical forms would be forever beyond our grasp. . . . involuntarily, we submit all objects to soulification. That is a primeval compulsion of mankind which has motivated mythological fantasy even up to our own day. . . . And indeed, will this compulsion ever die out? I think not. It would be the death of art.³⁶²

Ten years later, Berenson, whom Warburg knew at this period and whom, it appears, he detested,³⁶³ published, in the introduction to his famous *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, an analysis of the work of Giotto in which he combined "symbolism" and "tactile values." The aesthetic of *Einfühlung*, without being explicitly mentioned, nevertheless constituted the intellectual framework of this aesthetic approach to Florentine art.³⁶⁴

What is the meaning of these strange similarities among approaches that everything, or almost everything, seems to have separated? It is tempting to see in this something like a "spirit of the age." At this period was not any new thought in the aesthetic realm unavoidably influenced by the *unifying concept* [*concept fédérateur*] of empathy? It is true that the notion of *Einfühlung* can be found at the heart of virtually every attempt made in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century to establish a *Kunstwissenschaft* capable of resolving the problems of artistic *meaning* and of artistic expression in terms of *form*. The aesthetic of empathy appears, from this point of view, as an attempt to give "life"—animation, sensation, corporality, expression, intentionality, or drives—to a "form" that is now conceived of in terms of its psychological efficacy and psychological immanence.

Yet one could equally claim that *Einfühlung* was a *plastic concept* rather than a unifying one, considering how easy it is to turn it, or to utilize it in many different directions [sens—which in French means both "direction" and "meaning"—Trans.] (which is to say, in any direction one wants). Its philosophical roots are multiple and, on occasion, contradictory: for example, when Aristotle (catharsis) is joined with Hume (the contagion of the passions), Vico (the "transports" of the human body) with Burke (sublime sympathy), or Kant (the primacy of form) with Herder (the primacy of the body), without counting the great Romantics, Novalis, Schiller, Schelling, and Karl Philipp Moritz. Not to mention the key author, perhaps, of this whole genealogy, namely Schopenhauer.³⁶⁵

As usual, Warburg took from the notion of *Einfühlung* only what could serve the immediate needs of his own "psycho-history" of images. He was convinced that the problems of aesthetics, which up to this time had been formulated strictly within the field of academic philosophy—that creator of canons, of ideal entities, and of transcendent notions—could benefit from an understanding that had been renewed by the immanent and nonprescriptive point of view of a phenomenology of the psyche. He therefore stood apart from all those attempts that sought to reestablish the notion of *Einfühlung* within the confines of the great closed systems of philosophy. This accounts for his relative indifference to the theoretical ambitions of Theodor Lipps, Johannes Volkelt, and several others.

In the face of the numerous attempts to refashion a *Critique of Judgment* with the addition of *Einfühlung* as a new faculty, Warburg, radical anti-Kantian that he was, steadfastly refused to accept any criteriological "moralization" of empathetic experience. The "aesthetic sentiment" (*ästhetisches Gefühl*), in Kant, "is a uniquely intellectual sentiment, a sentiment of reflection, a sentiment of judgment," wrote Victor Basch in his remarkable *Essai critique sur l'esthétique de Kant*, published in 1896.³⁶⁶ For him, it is a betrayal of experience itself to want to purify *sentiment*, to cut it off from the activity of *feeling* [*sentir*], which is always characterized by a mixed state (*Mischzustand*) that is agitated by perceptions and sensations, fantasies and actions, desires and drives, in short, by all kinds of motions that are impossible to reduce to a single "disinterested" judgment. "The contemplative aesthete is not a normal being," as Victor Basch puts it. And a little further along he notes: "The crowd of feelings which accompanies all the manifestations of our normal life but which are stifled by our intellectual and volitional activity are liberated in the aesthetic state and display all their infinite riches there, because during [the] contemplation [of a work of art] they escape both from the dreary and desolate jail of the concepts and from the vice of the categorical imperative."³⁶⁷

From what we have seen above, it is easier to understand why Warburg did not pay any special attention to Wilhelm Worringer's famous essay *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, which appeared in 1907. Several topics of interest to Warburg, it is true, do appear throughout that essay: the Italian Renaissance and the question of naturalism, and primitive art and the question of ornament. But Worringer's grand polarity was aimed only at hypostatizing two great atemporal styles: the naturalistic and cultivated *Einfühlung*, sustained by the "sweet harmony of organic being," on the one hand, and, on the other, primitive geometric *abstraction*, penetrated by a "spiritual anxiety in the face of space."³⁶⁸

All of Warburg's experience contradicted this schema. Empathy, he had found, is not a "form of style" but a "force which determines style"; it is as powerful in the geometric snakes of the Walpi as in the naturalistic snakes of the *Laocoön*; it engenders "harmonies of organic being" as much as "anxieties in the face of space," as many spatial harmonies as organic anxieties. It is not by

chance that Worringer's sole conceptual reference for his concept of empathy is the late and overly rigid definition given to it by Theodor Lipps.³⁶⁹ Warburg himself had already gone beyond that. He started from the native and inventive moment of the phenomenon of *Einfühlung*: a moment which was still heuristic (not yet axiomatized) and still open (not yet fixed as an academic concept). It was still as free from any neo-Kantian presuppositions as it was from any neo-Schopenhauerian obscurantism.

* * *

At this point, we need to turn to a brief work, fifty pages at the most, published by Robert Vischer in 1873 and entitled *Über das optische Formgefühl* [On the Optical Sense of Form]. It is to this work that Warburg referred, as early as 1893, in the "Prefatory Note" to his thesis on Botticelli; and it is to it that he will again make reference in 1923, at the moment when he sets forth the synthesis of his notion of anthropological incorporation.³⁷⁰ Why this loyalty? First of all, because Robert Vischer—the son of Friedrich Theodor Vischer, a fascinating nineteenth-century personality and author of, among other works, a monumental *Aesthetics*³⁷¹—provided an approach which, theoretical though it might be, remained the work of a man of experience. He was an art historian who, like Warburg, sought to understand the Renaissance through Giotto and Signorelli, Raphael and Dürer.³⁷²

Second, Robert Vischer drew upon the same sources as Warburg. The arid abstractions of Kantian theory bored him profoundly. He preferred, instead, the writings of artists—those of Hogarth in particular—the audacious remarks of Herder, the fulgurations of Nietzsche, and, above all, the brilliant intuitions of Goethe.³⁷³ Like Warburg, he was allergic to every kind of idealism and every kind of formalism (if, by formalism, one means that other purism of form defended, for example, by Johann Friedrich Herbart or Robert Zimmermann). Long before Binswanger recognized in Freudian psychoanalysis an act of interpretation (*Deutung*) based on acts of experience (*Erfahrung*), Robert Vischer had sought to base an interpretation of form on the experience of his own psychological and bodily capacities.

To accomplish that, he had to take the risk of *opening up the act of seeing* [*ouvrir le voir*]. That is to say, he had to recognize the existence, in every visual event worthy of the name, of something like a twofold schema: a "mixed state" (*Mischzustand*) traversed by a schism. The "unity" (*Einheit*) with which an image ultimately offers itself to our gaze—Vischer called it *Gesamtbild*, or "phenomenon of the whole"—this unity is only a complex amalgam traversed by the schism of passive "seeing" (*Sehen*) and active "scanning" (*Schauen*).³⁷⁴ Moreover, this process is to be understood as a global activation of the concomitant sensations, in which, Vischer makes it clear, the "whole of the body is involved": confronted with an image, the "entire physical being (*der ganz Leibmensch*) is moved." That is why, under the crushing heat of a Mediterranean landscape,

putting on a pair of sunglasses can give one the sensation of reducing the heat a little.³⁷⁵

This recognition of an “omnisensoriality” of experience—in which seeing becomes looking, in which looking becomes feeling, in which feeling becomes physically moving, and in which physically moving becomes emotionally moving—led Vischer to conceive of form as a force of co-penetration. The next step is to understand how the gaze manages to incorporate the object. If what the image gives us to experience is a “hybrid” (*Mischerin*), a fluid medium in which the world’s contradictions—rest and motion, self and nonself—are joined in a “mysterious whole” (*in einem rätselhaften Ganzen*)³⁷⁶—how then should one describe this force of “reunion”? This is the role of *Einfühlung*.

Vischer recognized in it a basic anthropological element that he called “similarity” (*Ähnlichkeit*). The latter, however, has nothing to do with the “naturalism” of the image, any more than it does with any sort of criterion of style or of internal “harmony.” It is, rather, a matter of the immediate response that “visual sensation” (*Gesichtsempfindung*) offers to every kind of form. We look, inescapably, at every form from the vantage point of our own—human—form; we grasp it only through the intermediary of our own bodily and psychological “forms of motion” (*Bewegungsformen*).³⁷⁷ In short, the only way any form, whether it be organic or geometric, figurative or abstract, is engaged by our gaze is through a process of “response,” which Vischer calls *Nachföhlung*, or of empathetic “responsive feeling,” which, for him, defines *Einföhlung* as such.³⁷⁸ It is a question, in every case, of endowing form with a “content of human significance” (*menschliche . . . Gehaltsbedeutung*); it is a question, in every case, of “incorporating” the inorganic into the organic and of “projecting” the self into the nonself. “We thus have the wonderful ability to project and incorporate our own physical form into an objective form. . . . Thus I project my own life into the lifeless form, just as I quite justifiably do with another living person. Only ostensibly do I keep my own identity although the object remains distinct. I seem merely to adapt and attach myself to it as one hand clasps another, and yet I am mysteriously transplanted and magically transformed into this Other.”³⁷⁹

The image does more than just extend us a hand. It takes ours, then draws us in bodily—inhalés us, devours us—into the “magic,” “mysterious” movement of empathetic attraction and of incorporation. Fifty years later, Warburg was to write that the power of images is a power of co-penetration of the object into the subject and, worse, of the subject into the object. We recall that he deduced from this a “schizophrenic” structure: mingled with the nonself, the self no longer knows where its own limits lie.³⁸⁰

In 1873, Vischer had already reasoned in an analogous manner. When the “feeling” (*Geföhl*) engages the form, the self, in reaction, undergoes a change of state, specifically a dissociation, which can be one of either “furtherance or disturbance” (*Förderung oder Störung*).³⁸¹ Under the sway of empathy and of the imagination, the subject of the gaze therefore experiences a situation in

which, Vischer writes, it becomes difficult to distinguish "between purely aesthetic and pathological behavior" (*zwischen rein ästhetischem und pathologischem Verhalten*).³⁸² To recognize that images have the power of empathy is not only *to open up the act of seeing* and *to incorporate the object*; it is also—and this is its ultimate theoretical consequence—to *open up the subject*.³⁸³

Accordingly, one can better understand the paradigmatic role which the dream occupied throughout Vischer's account. Nowhere more than in the dream—and in the symptom, Freud and Binswanger will later add—does the image's power of co-penetration attain greater intensity. It creates, Vischer says, a "second self" dominated by acts the will is unable to master. Here, the forms are not only significant; they are also "resonant" (*Klangformen*). Here, the "unity of image and content" is total: it is impossible not to be moved by a curved line, and impossible not to feel either elevated or crushed by a vertical line.³⁸⁴ [English translation modified—Trans.]

Vischer's entire argumentation is based here on a work published in 1861 by Karl Albert Scherner, *Das Leben des Traums*.³⁸⁵ Freud, in his own *Traumdeutung*, constantly pays homage to the work, with the exception of a few critical remarks. He recognizes that it is to Scherner that we owe the idea that a desire is at the origin of a dream. It is also in his work that we discover the constant relationships between the oneiric image and organic movement. And, finally, it is he who created the first modern notion—freed from the ancient keys to dreams—of a "symbolics of the dream."³⁸⁶ This is what allowed Vischer to establish, in psychological terms, his notion of empathy on the basis of the co-penetration, in the dream, of the "representation of the object" (*Objektvorstellung*) and the "representation of the self" (*Selbstvorstellung*). This is what allowed him to recognize the "driving force" (*die treibende Kraft*) of images, using the model of the dream [English translation modified—Trans.].³⁸⁷

Above all, this is what permitted him to conceive forms, forces, and meanings conjointly—something Warburg had attempted to do throughout his life. One of the most beautiful lessons of Vischer's account of *Einfühlung* in this inaugural text is that *form*, apprehended in its empathetic movements and in its *force* of incorporation, gives rise, ultimately, to a way of conceiving the symbol, which Vischer conveys very well in the expression "emotional symbolism of form" (*Formsymbolik des Gefühls*).³⁸⁸ It will come as no surprise, then, that he was able to draw on beliefs and myths, as well as on dreams, in presenting examples of his notion of empathy, which here found its generic expression, its anthropological expression par excellence.³⁸⁹

There is no doubt that Warburg recognized in Robert Vischer's essay a structural tool as much as an aesthetic principle or a psychological description. In this moment of its infancy, the notion of empathy remained open to every possibility. It was hoped at the time that, thanks to it, it would be possible to join, in a single notion of the image, *pathos* and *logos*, the affective and the

cognitive dimensions, the physical and the semiotic, and feeling and meaning.³⁹⁰ But just what is a *meaning* [*sens*] attained through *feeling* [*sentir*]? What theoretical modifications does the symbol—and with it the notion of culture in general—receive from the empathetic principle?

FROM EMPATHY TO SYMBOL: VISCHER, CARLYLE, VIGNOLI

It is easy to understand why Warburg had such a strong need for a theory or an anthropology of the symbol; for, whether he was faced with the Oraibi Indians and their piles of living snakes, with the *Laocoön* and its marmoreal intrications, or with the “nymph” and her clothing in motion, he rejected the idea that art history deals with “pure forms.” “Pure forms” do not exist for anyone who considers the image to be a *vital* question. Forms exist only in an *impure* state, that is to say, *intricated* in the network of everything that academic philosophy sought to oppose them to: “materials,” “contents,” “meanings,” “expressions,” “functions,” and so on. All of these penetrate forms to the point of becoming jumbled up with them, like the snakes in the mouth of the Native American or around the body of *Laocoön*, and like the wind in each fold of *Ninfa*’s garments.

Here, Warburg shared the presuppositions of Robert Vischer, who, going against Herbart’s view, rejected the Kantian notion of “pure form” (*reine Form*). For Vischer, there are no forms without contents (and empathy teaches us, moreover, that there are no forms without anthropomorphic contents). The unity of these two things, which are abstractly opposed but concretely intricated, is what Vischer called a “formal symbolics” (*Formsymbolik*).³⁹¹

Thus, as early as 1893, Warburg understood that the theory of *Einfühlung* made it possible to rethink entirely the notion of the symbol and thus to go beyond what had previously been postulated by Kant and then by Hegel. In other words, the symbol is something quite different from the impoverished “indirect presentation of a concept,” and also quite different from the “primitive” and “ambiguous” stage of the sign, in which “the idea is still seeking its artistic expression.”³⁹² Yet Robert Vischer provides no explicit definition of this “symbol”; we know simply that he reconceived it in terms of the processes of psychological incorporation, where it is constituted by speaking and imagining beings. Instead, he refers implicitly to the works of his father, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, whose most synthetic account of this question appeared in an 1887 work soberly titled “The Symbol.”³⁹³

According to Edgar Wind, this text was a kind of breviary for Warburg, who frequently “read [it] again and again”; at the start of his work it was no less than his “conceptual framework.”³⁹⁴ It is easy to see why it immediately caught Warburg’s attention; for it did not “frame” anything, nor did it “schematize” anything at all. To the contrary, it took as its point of departure the very *intrication* that every symbolic formation presents. Symbols, Vischer writes, are a “multiform Proteus” (*ein gestaltwechselnder Proteus*). The question they pose appears simple at first; it concerns the “connection (*Verknüpfung*) between an

image (*Bild*) and a content (*Inhalt*) through the intermediary of a point of comparison (*Vergleichungspunkt*"); but the answers they offer are of a complexity that challenges our usual conceptual frameworks.³⁹⁵

The entire problem resides in the constitutive inadequacy of the symbol. But, where Hegel saw in this a deficiency or privative condition, Vischer sees a heuristic advantage: a condition of multiplicity, of exuberance, of invention, in short, one of *style* and of historicity. The intrication and the inadequacy defy the concept, but they are to be conceived of as constituting the *force* itself of symbols.³⁹⁶ It is sufficient that they no longer be subordinated to the common standard of truth, i.e., *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Vischer therefore advocates a "thinking of the One-in-the-Other" (*Ineinanderdenken*). He attempts to clarify the intrications and polarities this creates by distinguishing, as Warburg will later do, different outcomes for the "connection between image and meaning" (*Verbindung zwischen Bild und Sinn*): assimilative-associative, or comparative-dissociative, for example.³⁹⁷

This simple polarity already allows Vischer to transform the "inadequacy," the essential ambiguity of symbols, into the recognition of a genuine "energetic capacity to produce images" (*Energie des Bildvermögens*), whether in language, in myth, in the rite, or in art.³⁹⁸ The examples Vischer gives—notably those of pagan sacrifice and of the Christian Eucharist—would continue to fascinate Warburg until the end of his life.³⁹⁹ All these examples have in common the fact that they directly implicate, *empathetically*, the human body in the formation of symbols. Even when we employ the abstract language of "spirituality," we are manipulating, Vischer asserts, a symbol which refers to the Latin word *spiritus* and, beyond that, to a notion of breath based on the intimate experience of our own breathing: "This act [which occurs] in semi-obscurity (*dunkelhell*)[, which is] free and not-free (*unfreifrei*), that is what the symbolic is."⁴⁰⁰

In this "semi-obscurity" ["clair-obscur"] and this status of the symbol as being "free and not-free" we can recognize the essence of Warburg's anxieties concerning the image and culture in general. Vischer had understood why the most "free" symbols of classical art remain irremediably "attached" to the obscure depths of magic incorporation or mythic projection.⁴⁰¹ Expressed in temporal and psychological terms, this interpretation amounts to the assertion that *survival and empathy are constitutive of symbols as such*: their "inadequacy," their ambiguity—but also their variety and their exuberance—are simply the mark of the "vital residues" they incorporate, which, in every case, turn them into impure [entachés] signs, into signs existing in a "clair-obscur" state.

What *captivates* us empathetically in every image—whether it be "free," "artistic," or "modern"—is actually a force of attraction emanating from its very *obscurity*, that is to say, from the long persistence of the symbols at work in them. It is not by chance that Vischer devoted the whole last section of his essay on the symbol to the concept of empathy.⁴⁰² The *Formsymbolik* really emerges only in an experience of *Einfühlung*, in which, at first, the symbols, as in the dream,

aim only at "bestowing a soul" on inorganic things. What is Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, after all, but a large piece of lifeless canvas? The "vital" character of its symbolic efficacy emerges in the conjunction of an act of *Einfühlung*, or an aesthetic experience occurring in the present, and a *Nachleben*, say in a return of the immemorial: the "divine mother" or the "eternal feminine," as Vischer expresses it here.⁴⁰³ We are not surprised to find that the word *Nachfühlung*, once again, is an integral part of this whole vocabulary (transmitted from father to son—though admittedly one time does not make a rule).⁴⁰⁴

However that may be, henceforth it became necessary to understand the empathetic experience—that symptomatic moment—as a "contact" with symbols apprehended in their temporal density [épaisseur], their power to obsess us and to return in a ghostly fashion [revengeance]. What Victor Basch was already affirming on a strictly individual level—"the feeling [of empathy] is, in the final analysis, the *revival* [*reviviscence*] of an affective state through the intermediary of a *presentation*"⁴⁰⁵—was at this point to be conceived in historical and anthropological terms. Now, this is just what Warburg counted on achieving, right from the start. To present empathy as the *formative force of style* amounted to conceiving it, in the same intellectual operation, as the *surviving force of symbols*.

* * *

Thus, already as a young man Warburg had adopted the approach advocated by Friedrich Theodor Vischer in his 1887 essay, where the author, rejecting the Kantian notion of "pure form," restored to the *Romantic* concept of the symbol the status of an analytical tool, of a *scientific* tool attuned to the disciplines of psychology and anthropology, which at the end of the nineteenth century were undergoing a profound renewal.⁴⁰⁶

Among the Romantics relevant here, there was, of course, Goethe. But there was also Thomas Carlyle, whose extravagant work, published in 1833–34, entitled *Sartor Resartus* ("The Tailor Re-tailored") fascinated Warburg throughout his life.⁴⁰⁷ It is a book which takes its place in the line which runs from Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne to Warburg's contemporary James Joyce. Its hero, Professor Teufelsdröckh, regularly immerses himself in the reading of the *Weissnichtwo'sche Anzeiger*, i.e., "The Indicator of I-don't-know-where."⁴⁰⁸ It is likely that Warburg, a mad scholar and a great expert on witticisms (which those close to him called "Warburgisms"),⁴⁰⁹ easily recognized himself in the figure described by Carlyle:

On the whole, Professor Teufelsdröckh is not a cultivated writer. Of his sentences perhaps not more than nine-tenths stand straight on their legs; the remainder are in quite angular attitudes, buttressed up by props (of parentheses and dashes), and ever, with this or the other tagrag hanging from them; a few even sprawl out helplessly on all sides quite broken-backed and dismembered. Nevertheless, in almost

his very worst moods, there lies in him a singular attraction. A wild tone pervades the whole utterance of the man . . . now screwing itself aloft as into the Song of Spirits, or else the shrill mockery of Fiends.⁴¹⁰

In this *dialectic of tatters and rags*—one could almost consider the phrase an apt description of the physical state of Warburg's manuscripts—there nevertheless took shape a genuine project for a new way of thinking, namely, just that, *a dialectic of tatters and rags*. Professor Teufelsdröckh was, first of all, the hero of a philosophy of accessories in motion, a hero in (an allegorical) quest of the "fabric" of beings and of things.⁴¹¹ For Carlyle, the fact that man is a "clothed animal" as much as a talking animal leads to the inanity of everything in itself, and of all talk of ontological purity; for the texture of beings is nothing but the endless fraying of a vast polymorphous fabric. There is no core. There are only overlappings, endless folds (on the model of the onion) opposed to each other and intricated in each other. There will therefore always be "a black spot in our [ontological] sunshine," an "everlasting No" in the "everlasting Yea," a constant assertion of chaos in every form.⁴¹² Having looked at "the fair tapestry of human life," Professor Teufelsdröckh clearly understood that the only way of reaching the "superlative" level of thinking is through a "descendentalism," which the author advocates in a melancholic and ironic way.⁴¹³

In his own way, Warburg was also a dialectician of tatters and rags. The only way he wanted to grasp his "superlative nymph" was through the humbleness, virtually the base materialism, of the folds of a serving girl's garment painted by a maker of garlands for a bourgeois of the Quattrocento (fig. 67). He understood, before Walter Benjamin, that the historian's only chance of gaining access to the *longues durées* of the survival of things lay in the indelicate [déplacé] gaze of the "rag-picker," who is daring enough to make a history out of the *rags of history*.⁴¹⁴ He is the one who will confront the "putrefying" ex-voto of a church in Florence with a masterpiece from the Uffizi Museum, a banker's *ricordanze* with the *Divine Comedy*, the American chapbooks with the whole corpus of great literature,⁴¹⁵ and propaganda broadsides, horoscopes, advertisements, postage stamps, and suchlike with the engravings of Rembrandt.

Carlyle had outlined this problematic in very precise terms. His critique of history, elaborated at the same time as he was writing *Sartor Resartus*,⁴¹⁶ culminated in a philosophy of symbols—which he considered to be "clothes" susceptible of alternating between the splendor of brocades and the degradation of rags. Or, looked at in another way, as constituting a proliferating obsidional "milieu." For, about thirty years before Baudelaire, Carlyle asserted that man walks through the world as through a forest of symbols: "By Symbols, accordingly, is man guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched. He every where [*sic*] finds himself encompassed with Symbols, recognised as such or not recognised."⁴¹⁷

Just as articles of clothing are always more or less inadequate to the body—either fitting too loosely or too tightly—so symbols are only logical ambiguities,

lying somewhere between a revelation and a mystery, between a word and silence.⁴¹⁸ And yet, opposing both Kant and Hegel, Carlyle asserts that this inadequacy is the very thing which gives the symbol its *bold* on being. And, of course, this occurs by virtue of a typically Romantic preeminence of the imagination over the other faculties:

[It is] not our Logical, Mensurative faculty, but our Imaginative one [that] is King over us; I might say, Priest and Prophet to lead us heavenward; or Magician and Wizard to lead us hellward. . . . The Understanding is indeed thy window, too clear thou canst not make it; but Fantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased. . . . It is in and through *Symbols* that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being: those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can the best recognise symbolical worth, and prize it for the highest. For is not [everything] a Symbol ever, to him who has eyes for it?⁴¹⁹

Man is a being destined to use *symbols* because the *image* in him governs—and ceaselessly displaces and stirs up—the exuberance of *signs*. The theoretical framework could only attain completion when Carlyle recognized that our entire relationship *to time* is affected by the way these symbols work. He thus wound up by naming the symbol—as the German language required, in this outstanding parody of serious philosophy—“Image-of-Time” (*Zeitbild*) or, in English, *Time-Figure*.⁴²⁰ From this point on he acknowledges the historicity of symbols, that is to say, their capacity to transform themselves, but also to age and to be used up, as when a rich cloth winds up becoming a tattered garment in the dust of forgetting:

But, on the whole, as Time adds much to the sacredness of Symbols, so likewise in his progress he at length defaces, or even desecrates them; and Symbols, like all terrestrial Garments, wax old. Homer's Epos has not ceased to be true; yet it is no longer *our* Epos, but shines in the distance, if clearer and clearer, yet also smaller and smaller, like a receding Star. It needs a scientific telescope, it needs to be reinterpreted and artificially brought near us, before we can so much as know that it *was* a Sun. . . . Alas, move whithersoever you may, are not the tatters and rags of superannuated worn-out Symbols (in this Ragfair of a World) dropping off every where [*sic*], to hoodwink, to halter, to tether you; nay, if you shake them not aside, threatening to accumulate, and perhaps produce suffocation!⁴²¹

In this text one glimpses a twofold call for the *reinterpretation of ancient symbols*, whether outmoded or surviving. On the one hand, the modern artist must “sweep away” or, rather, as Carlyle more precisely puts it, “shake aside the dust” they have accumulated. This is the way that art becomes capable of reinterpreting the symbols of myth and religion. We may observe here that James Joyce will famously take Carlyle's suggestion literally in reinterpreting the entire epic of Ulysses. On the other hand, it is the “telescope of science”

that Carlyle calls upon to help us recognize, in the dust of the present, the survivals of ancient splendors. Warburg, the erudite "seer," was later to follow this program to the letter.

* * *

In order to do this, one had to give a "scientific" or "positive" content to the notions of *image* and of *symbol* that Romanticism had championed against Kant's *logic* and *schema*. It was not enough that Baudelaire had sketched a brilliant program for establishing knowledge on the basis of the image: "The Imagination," Baudelaire wrote in 1857, "is not [the faculty of] fantasy; nor is it sensitivity, although it is difficult to conceive of an imaginative man who was not also sensitive. The Imagination is a quasi-divine faculty which perceives straight away, independently of any philosophical methods, the intimate relationships and secrets of things, the correspondences and analogies. The honors and functions that he confers upon this faculty give it such value. . . . that a scholar [savant] without imagination no longer seems anything but a false scholar, or at the very least an incomplete scholar."⁴²²

A scholar full of imagination—and one, moreover, who was seeking to establish a historical science of the imagination—Warburg used every means at his disposal to reach the "intimate relationships and secrets of things, the correspondences and analogies" inherent in the long-term survival of images and symbols. Gombrich revealed the suggestive role played here by an obscure Italian positivist named Tito Vignoli, whose book entitled *Mito e scienza* does contain several elements capable of strengthening the link already established by the Vischers, father and son, between empathetic forces and symbolic forms.⁴²³ (Gombrich, it may be noted, considerably overemphasized Vignoli's importance in this regard, and the reason is obvious: once again he wished to keep Warburg's thinking at a safe distance from psychoanalysis.)

Hermann Usener had reviewed this book in 1881 and welcomed its crucially important treatment of myth as the "original form of thought," while at the same time rejecting the notion of myth as "personification," which, in his view, was too vague.⁴²⁴ What attracted Warburg in Vignoli's efforts was, first of all, his use of a kind of psychologized Darwinism to provide a model for the emergence of symbols. In an earlier work, Vignoli had formulated a "genesis of the psychological faculty in relationship to the general economy of the organic kingdom."⁴²⁵ Like many other scientists of the period, he explained the formation of psychological images on the basis of sensations, associations, synesthesias, and an "objectivation of the self" that in Germany was already being called *Einfühlung*.⁴²⁶

Now, Vignoli had a conception of empathy—and of what he called the "psychological force" in general—that would naturally have interested Warburg in at least two respects. In the first place, he did not hesitate to stress the *immanence of symbols*, to the point of seeing in them an organic or even animal

condition of human societies.⁴²⁷ His references to Tylor's views of *animism* led him to set forth what was virtually a theory of psychological *animality* in which the Kantian *a priori* was vigorously thrust aside by a point of view he termed "psycho-organic."⁴²⁸ Later on, he proposed an "evolutionist aesthetics"—which abounded in analyses of animal morphology—to counter any kind of "transcendental aesthetics" rooted in philosophical idealism.⁴²⁹

Vignoli thus sought to push to its extreme biological limits the Darwinian principle of the impression. But he also developed the principle of antithesis, and this second aspect was to find a much more powerful echo in Warburg's thinking. For Vignoli superimposed on the immanence of symbols a capacity for inversion: the empathetic force, according to him, was not simply a "projection of the self" into the object, but the *inversion of a basic fear* in the face of the object, the transformation into an *attraction* of an earlier movement of *flight*. This is one of the reasons why, according to Vignoli, the same force governs the *symbols* of culture (myths, religions, art) and the *symptoms* of psychological illness.⁴³⁰ In 1923, Warburg confided, or "confessed," to his working sketches the decisive role of fright in the intrication of the image and of the symptom, a role which in his view was autobiographically and philosophically primordial:

(I would like to remark here that no book had such a tumultuous romanticizing effect on my youthful imagination as Balzac's *Petty Annoyances of Married Life*, with French illustrations by . . . [Bertall—Trans.]. Among these illustrations were images of satanism *oddities for example in* [illegible], which I saw again before failing ill from typhus in 1870 and which played a curious demoniac role in my feverish dreams.) In mythical thinking (see Tito Vignoli, *Myth and Science*), a stimulus evokes / e.g. / as a defensive measure, the / *always imaginary* / exciting cause in a maximally intensified / *biomorphic* / creaturely form, that is, when / e.g. / a door groans on its hinges, one believes one hears—or rather unconsciously wants to hear—the growling of a wolf.⁴³¹

The images, therefore, transform the fright into attraction. But, because they have the power of memory, because they "suffer from recollections," they allow the *fright to survive in the attraction*. Their entire force—the "vitality" of the *Nachleben*—derives from that. Their entire force consists in producing this survival as empathy, or this *Nachleben* as *Einfühlung*. It occurs when the "sounds of the ages," which are so distant from us and so far in the past, rise up within us like a new bodily and psychological sensation, as near to us as the present time. Warburg briefly describes here the heuristics of this process. It is verified even in the case of his autobiographical reminiscences of the phantasms—the "bizarre happenings" and "Satanisms"—in which he was plunged as a child by the illustrations of the *Petites misères de la vie conjugale* (figs. 84, 85).⁴³²

On the basis of these images, which are virulent and almost surreal—rebuses, in particular, abound in them—Warburg showed in detail an example of the process of empathy at work. At first, one sees in them the "enlarged



FIG. 84 Bertall, *La dernière querelle*. Reprinted from Honoré de Balzac, *Petites misères de la vie conjugale* (Paris, 1846), 335.

biomorphic form” of the eternal conflict elicited by marriage. Here and there Bertall has depicted the same couple—who look at each other, dance, embrace, and who sleep in the same bed but whom destiny, allegorically, maintains on a sort of “eternal seesaw” (cf. fig. 25). Then, all of a sudden, the image of the couple becomes that of two puppets who fight and thrash about hysterically, between the hands of a giant Mephistophelian figure⁴³³ (fig. 84). This is just what Vignoli termed a “personification,” and Warburg doubtless would have recognized what he calls the “curiously demonic role [it played in his] febrile deliriums.”

But the inverse process also exists and forms a system with the preceding one. Thus, the chapter of the *Petites misères* entitled “Brutal Revelations” opens with a very large close-up view of an eye being held open by two tiny demonic creatures⁴³⁴ (fig. 85). Here, therefore, instead of “growing larger,” the fright withdraws into the biomorphism of an organ looked at so closely that it appears to be enormous. No longer does a great religious symbol of wickedness toy with human puppets; rather, a nasty little bodily symptom makes us see and cry at the same time. The heuristic analysis of the symbol thus utilizes all the scales

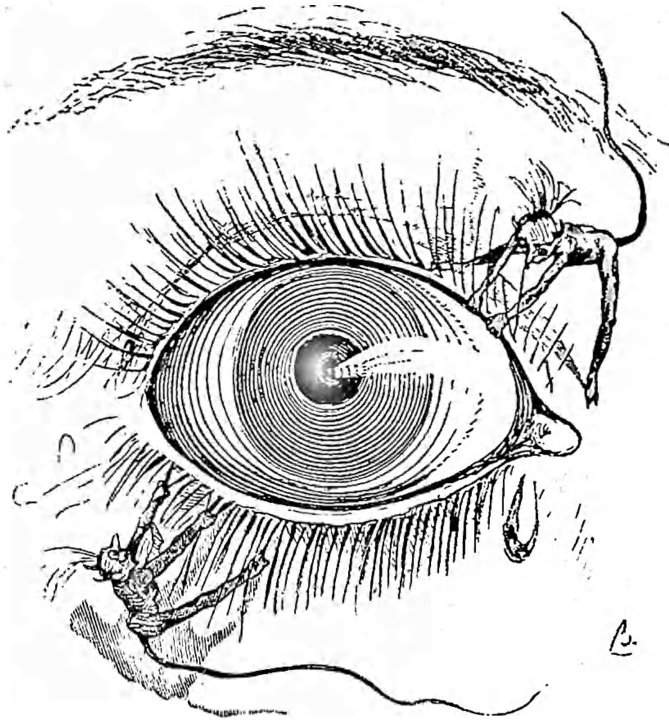


FIG. 85 Bertall, *Les révélations brutales*. Wood engraving. Reprinted from Balzac, *Petites misères de la vie conjugale*, 273.

of empathy, just as the heuristic analysis of empathy operates on all the levels of the symbol.

* * *

Beyond the polarities discussed above, we glimpse the emergence of a third way, the only one which allows us to escape the alienation of both the religious symbol and of the hysterical symptom. This is the process of thinking. We must make creative work out of the non-knowledge [à faire oeuvre du non-savoir] that is borne by the symbols and the fright that gives rise to them or revives them. This amounts, then, to forging—as a counterpoint to the Enlightenment and the necessary “progress of reason”—a theory of the *demonic*, a notion dear to Warburg until the end of his life, all the more so as Binswanger, working on parallel lines, made a renewed metapsychological use of it.⁴³⁵

Following the positivism of Vignoli and preceding the advent of the psychoanalytic approach, Warburg found another conceptual tool capable of aiding

him in this difficult task of clarifying the relationships between symbol and empathy. It was the *law of participation*, which Lucien Lévy-Bruhl had formulated in order to account for certain practices that Warburg, in another context, had been equally involved in studying. These included the effigy, the cult of the dead and the belief in their "survival," mythical genealogies, attitudes toward illness, divination, the symbolic manipulation of numbers, and the magical interpretation of the organs of the human body.⁴³⁶

For Lévy-Bruhl, the most important thing was to describe as precisely as possible the models of causality employed in magical and mythical thinking—what Warburg, we may recall, termed the *Urkausalitätform*⁴³⁷—and to analyze the consequences of these regarding the status of "collective representations."⁴³⁸ Reinterpreting Tylor's notion of animism, Lévy-Bruhl sought to account for the disconcerting way in which each thing, in the kind of thinking that was still called "primitive," is capable of being *other* than itself, *elsewhere* than where one finds it, and *older* than the time in which it appears:

In varying forms and degrees they all involve a "participation" between persons and objects which form part of a collective representation. For this reason I shall, in default of a better term, call the principle which is peculiar to the "primitive" mentality, which governs the connections and the preconnections of such representations, *the law of participation*. . . . I should be inclined to say that the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena can be, though in a way incomprehensible to us, both themselves and other than themselves. In a fashion which is no less incomprehensible, they give forth and they receive mystic power, virtues, qualities, influences, which make themselves felt outside, without ceasing to remain where they are.⁴³⁹

The core of this argument is that wherever the objective world presents *differences*, the magical world generates *connections* between these differences. As soon as nature displays heterogeneities, culture assembles them into some sort of system. What Lévy-Bruhl at first called the "primitive mentality's indifference to secondary causes"⁴⁴⁰ he later referred to using the more interesting and more morphological terminology of *fluidity* and of *transformation*:

The mythic world recognizes no law at all in nature, not even of this flexible kind. The "fluidity" of the mythic world consists simply in the fact that the shapes and forms of the very species themselves, the plants and animals, appear to be as variable as are the "laws" governing their existence. Hence anything can happen at any moment. Similarly, any one being may change into the form of any other. . . . The fluid versatility associated with the mythic world [affects its temporality as well]: the so-remote past of the myths is at once past and present. . . . The mythic work, which has never ceased to operate, still at every instance brings its influence to bear upon the world of present fact.⁴⁴¹

It is easy to understand that the *survival* of forms, their tenacity over time, could not exist without an essential *plasticity* of the symbolic material, thanks to which linkages and rhizome-like assemblages can be established between the present, historical time ("a long time ago") and mythic time ("a very long time ago").⁴⁴² When, in 1896, Warburg started a large notebook of two hundred pages—of which only twenty-four pages were ultimately written in—with the intention of clarifying his own "theory of symbolism," he showed from the beginning that he was aware of this *dialectical* aspect of the problem (*dialektische Vorfrage*).⁴⁴³

Warburg understood that in investigating symbols one always winds up on the dividing line between two contradictory movements: one of them "static" in its tenacity with the other being "dynamic" in its plasticity; one "absorbing" (*absorbierend*), as in an empathetic experience, and the other "differentiated" (*differenziert*), as in a logically constructed form of knowledge; one "assimilating" (*angleichend*), as in a dream image, and the other "comparative" (*vergleichend*), as in a sign used in making distinctions.⁴⁴⁴

Warburg's whole theory of "dynamic polarities" stems from this basic reflection on the "oscillatory" or pulsating status of symbols. At the time of his studies on Botticelli, around 1893, this status was expressed in terms of Apollonian stasis and Dionysian movements. By the time of his studies on the Florentine portrait, around 1902, Warburg saw an oscillation between the Christian present (solemn, realistic, Northern) and pagan survivals (emotional, classical, Southern). The same dialectic would later underlie all his research on astrology: the classical gods of Olympus oscillating with Oriental demons (around 1912), and the rational conquest of the *astra* paralleled by the demonic survival of the *monstra* (around 1920).⁴⁴⁵

Are symbols to be considered proofs of the conquest of culture over nature, of reason over instinct? Undoubtedly. But survival is at work within them. Because they remember, despite themselves, what they sought to conjure away, and because they "suffer from recollections," Warburg will be unable to view them in any other terms than those of the dialectic and the symptom. They bring to bear what he calls a "strangely contradictory twofold force" (*unheimlich entgegengesetzte Doppelmacht*) of the image (*Bild*) and of the sign (*Zeichen*).⁴⁴⁶ In short, the *symbol* reveals its own force and its genealogy—its temporal complexity, its layers of survivals, its bodily anchoring—only inasmuch as it survives, in history, as a *symptom*.

Even before he considered characterizing all of culture in terms of the psychopathological paradigm of schizophrenia, of manic-depressive psychosis, or of melancholy,⁴⁴⁷ Warburg, while he was at Kreuzlingen, had already imagined the human condition in its entirety as a kind of dance: *a dance with the monster* in which man alternately "takes" the animal in his hands, literally (as a way of joining his body to it, empathetically, pathologically), and "understands" it (by maintaining a distance, by representing it conceptually). This dance is

vital, and inherent in every culture. One could even say it resembles the beating of its heart: "Conscious and reflective man is situated between systole and diastole. Prehension and comprehension [*Greifen und Begreifen*]. He moves, as it were, in a semicircular arc up from the earth and back down to the earth. And when he stands upright, at the vertex of this arc—an advantage he has over the animals—the transitional states between instinctive self-loss and conscious self-affirmation become clear to him."⁴⁴⁸

Between bodily "prehension" and "comprehension" at a distance—that is how the symbol works and "oscillates." That is how the collision between the empathetic and the semiotic in all *Formsymbolik* arises, as the two aspects come into contact with each other and oppose each other. Warburg concluded this line of reasoning with the assertion that the "artistic process" itself is situated "between mimicry and knowledge" (*zwischen Mimik und Wissenschaft*), that is to say, between the *pathos* that one experiences and the *logos* one elaborates. A few pages earlier, Warburg complained that he did not have Freud's books to hand.⁴⁴⁹ I mention this detail only to situate the psychoanalytic context in which he would ultimately express these general hypotheses concerning the symbol. In 1923, Warburg understood the oscillation of *Greifen* and *Begreifen* as being directly related to the psychoanalytic model of the "traumatism of birth": "The originary category of causal thought (*die Ur-Kategorie kausaler Denkform*) is childbirth. Childbirth links the enigma of a materially determinable interconnection (*Zusammenhang*) with the inconceivable catastrophe (*unbegreifliche Katastrophe*) of separating one creature from another (*Loslösung*). The abstract space of thought between subject and object is based on the experience of the severed umbilical cord."⁴⁵⁰

One could scarcely go any further in contesting the Kantian abstractions governing the relationships between subject and object. The anthropology of survival and the metapsychology of unconscious memory had been the tools of this contestation. Beyond that, they made it possible to establish this entire *symptomatic* comprehension of symbols—a comprehension at once emotional, empathetic, and psychopathological. One should therefore not be surprised that Warburg, in 1923, was so eager to reread *Totem and Taboo*: his own analyses of magic and the "demonic" intersected at many points with the "omnipotence of thought" theorized by Freud on the basis of the obsessional structure.⁴⁵¹ How can one forget, for example, that for Freud the paradigmatic situation of the creation of symbols was that—analogue to giving birth—of the "survivors' position in relation to the dead" (*die Situation des Überlebenden gegen den Toten*)? When faced with the cadaver of his fellow human, must not the survivor transform the "inconceivable catastrophe of the separation" into a *relation* in the realm of thought, and the empathy of the situation into a *distance*, into a "primitive representation of the soul" from which all the symbolic polarities are able to flow?⁴⁵²

Moreover, the highly technical—or symbolic—nature of Warburg's studies of astrology, which were contemporary with his psychotic collapse and the

psychoanalytic treatment he underwent under Binswanger's guidance, should not lead us to forget that the higher we rise in the starry sky, the more deeply we find ourselves immersed in the material of the "monsters": that is to say, in the imagination of our own visceral upheavals. Not only are the zodiacal constellations modeled on elements in the realm of the organic [sur des champs organiques] (fig. 83), but even *prophecy* appears as a *desire* existing in a state of survival, a desire which does not say its name. Freud had illuminated this process as early as 1901, when he declared that superstitions provide an "indication" of an unconscious knowledge which is "allocated . . . by displacement to the external world."⁴⁵³ That is how our most intimate *monstra* continue on their path and describe such beautiful constellations in the ether of the celestial *astra*.

One thing is certain: that Warburg's understanding of symbols could not have developed without an energetics of psychic incorporation and of its "translation into motor language." It did not matter whether he understood this energetics with Nietzsche as Dionysian *pathos*, with Vischer as *empathy*, or with Freud and Binswanger as the symptom of a *psychopathology*—in each case, there was a shattering of the synthetic unity by which, in general, the notion of the symbol was conceived. What are the consequences of this shattering, now, for the status of all of cultural history and, *a fortiori*, for any form of art history?

SYMPTOMATIC FORCES AND SYMBOLIC FORMS: WARBURG WITH CASSIRER?

The question posed above is really that of the *development of the concepts* that Warburg employed with a view to establishing a historical science of images (which was still "without a name"). What was the ultimate goal of this endeavor? How was one to understand, in the context of all these theoretical borrowings—and thus beyond the specific vocabularies of Thomas Carlyle or of Robert Vischer, of Tito Vignoli or of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl—the "survival" of symbols in the visual forms of art? More specifically, what status was one to attribute at that time to the famous *Formsymbolik* of Vischer, which still belonged to the *épistémè* of the nineteenth century?

The crucial moment of this development was, once again, the year 1923. Within the space of a few months the strands which needed to be joined were tied together and the separations which needed to occur took place. This is the period when Warburg, still in Kreuzlingen but already engaged in the intellectual project of gathering his thoughts together again concerning the "survival of primitive man [in] psychology [and] artistic practice," experienced the terrible solitude of the exile, of the unaffiliated scholar. "Help!" he wrote at the beginning of his notes.⁴⁵⁴ This amounted to saying, among other things: how can I undertake a work of this kind when the strands of my own thinking are still so unraveled, or, on the contrary, so intricately with one another? How was he to think when he lacked his key references (and not just Freud's *Totem and Taboo*)? How, moreover, could he work without his most important tool, namely his library?

In contrast to the solitude of the patient in Kreuzlingen, the library in Hamburg had, if one may put it that way, turned a decisive page in its history; for Fritz Saxl had transformed the private tool of the absent founder into a public institute linked to the city's new university.⁴⁵⁵ This was how, in 1921, Ernst Cassirer came to make his famous visit among the master's bookshelves and was dazzled by what he saw.⁴⁵⁶ One recalls that later Cassirer was to evoke his meeting with Warburg in Kreuzlingen in 1924 as *a meeting which had already taken place*. It was an intellectual encounter, a confrontation of scholars grappling in different ways with related problems.⁴⁵⁷

Their meeting does indeed date from 1923. It was in that year, in the sanatorium, that Warburg, from within the midst of his insanity, managed to start developing his own thinking again about *symbolic forces*, thanks to his recourse to the notions of incorporation, of the unconscious, and of the symptom. During this time, in Hamburg, Cassirer, then at the height of his intellectual powers, opened the series of the *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* with a magisterial article which established the soon-to-become famous concept of *symbolic forms*.⁴⁵⁸

One can interpret this coincidence—but also the difference in status between the respective efforts of Warburg and Cassirer—in two entirely different ways. The first consists in sketching out a “circle” or framework in which this encounter would find its explanation, and even its final cause. It is certain that his discovery of the documentary riches assembled by Warburg oriented and lastingly influenced the style of the philosophical research that Ernst Cassirer undertook; at the same time, the ambitious nature of this research contributed to the general movement among German art historians of the time to establish their discipline on a new foundation.⁴⁵⁹ In this context, the Hamburg library quickly appeared to be the “community of workers” (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) so ardently desired by its founder, one in which art historians could join with philosophers, archaeologists with philologists, and historians of science with folklorists.⁴⁶⁰ This is how it came about that Warburg and Cassirer could have students in common, and not negligible ones either: for example, Erwin Panofsky and Walter Solmitz.⁴⁶¹

The signs of this “community of workers” can be seen not only in the fact that Cassirer opened the series of *Vorträge* with his article “On the concept of symbolic form” [“Der Begriff der symbolischen Form”] but also in his inauguration of the prestigious series called *Studien der Warburg Bibliothek* with an essay on “The form of the concept in mythical thought” [“Die Begriffsform im mythischen Denken”].⁴⁶² And in 1927, Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos*—another volume in the same series—devoted a three-page dedication to Warburg “for his 60th birthday.”⁴⁶³ Meanwhile, the whole enterprise of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, although published in Berlin, had benefited from the constant logistical support of the Warburg Institute.

Given all of that, nothing could be more tempting than to equate this “community of workers” with an identity of thought, or at the very least, with

a *coherent theoretical framework* from which there supposedly emerged that revolutionary methodological principle—which was soon to be the dominant one in all of art history—which became known as *iconology*. There are those who would like, first of all, to move from the common interest that Warburg and Cassirer had in the notion of the symbol to the idea that, “despite their differences in temperament, the two men advocated remarkably similar conceptions of the nature and development of human culture.”⁴⁶⁴ And commentators have been quick to invent a “Warburgian” Cassirer and a “Cassirerian” Warburg, with the differences between them simply being distributed to the different roles they supposedly played in developing this ideal framework for the “iconological program.” Thus, we are told of the “conjunction of the inspired *passion* of one man, Aby Warburg, and of the intellectual *power* of those”—above all, Cassirer and Panofsky—who were able to state *clearly* what Warburg had only a fatally *obscure* intuition of for so many years.⁴⁶⁵

This distribution of roles—“passion” experienced on the one side and an active “power” on the other—corresponds to a teleological approach as spontaneous as it is widespread. In other words, it is assumed that after Warburg’s overly Romantic or, on the contrary, overly positivist wanderings,⁴⁶⁶ Cassirer was able to establish *philosophically* the concept of the symbol upon which Panofsky was subsequently able to construct *scientifically* the discipline of iconology. It is as if we were witnessing, from Warburg to Panofsky via Cassirer, the standard “development” of a branch of knowledge for which its inventor had been incapable of providing strict rules.

The two directions ultimately taken by iconology have confirmed, and even strengthened, this distribution of roles, which is at once hierarchical and teleological: the *historicist* development of iconology rejects Warburg because of his anachronistic notion of the *Nachleben*; while the *semiotic* development of iconology rejects him because of his notion of the *Pathosformel* (that is to say, because of its phenomenology of emotional incorporation and imagination).⁴⁶⁷

One can also see that such a “distribution of roles” corresponds exactly to the strange *genealogical division* whose stigmata iconology seems to bear even today. This discipline, in fact, has had no fewer than two founding fathers. Warburg could be called the *phantom founder*. No one disputes the fact that at the Rome Congress of 1912 it was he who gave the term “iconological analysis” (*ikonologische Analyse*) its modern sense.⁴⁶⁸ The Dutch art historian Godefridus Hoogewerff recognized this in 1931.⁴⁶⁹ Later, William Heckscher sought to convey the full epistemological scope of Warburg’s invention by setting it within a context which included Einstein’s relativity, Freudian psychoanalysis, and the invention of cinematography.⁴⁷⁰

This erratic and phantom founder (who was crazy, into the bargain), this father who was incapable of baptizing once and for all his own “science without a name,” was contrasted with—and subordinated to—the figure of Erwin Panofsky. This second founding father came to represent, for every iconologist, the real *commanding figure*. Most discussions concerning the methodological

status of the interpretation of works of art have been obliged to refer to his monumental oeuvre. However, even before taking up the misunderstandings arising from such a *Panofskian development* of Warburg's iconology, we must first consider the decisive moment when this development began.

This was the moment, in 1923, when Cassirer set forth his famous conceptualization of "symbolic forms." This was the starting point of a series of steps which saw Panofsky, in 1927, explicitly draw on Cassirer's concept before constructing, on his own, the theoretical and practical edifice of iconology.⁴⁷¹ But this cycle (or this circle) was broken ahead of time, namely at the point where Warburg broke it with his thinking "without a name." Not only did Cassirer's construction—his general idea of a foundation of the "sciences of the mind"—owe nothing to Warburg's influence.⁴⁷² In addition, the latter maintained a certain reserve with respect to Cassirer's philosophical master stroke: he made no direct response to it, nor did he even comment on it. And it did not alter his own vocabulary (being absent, notably, from his *Allgemeine Ideen* and *Grundbegriffe*, written between 1927 and 1929).

In 1923, an ontological gulf already separated Warburg from Cassirer. In the succeeding years, Warburg proved to be as feverish in his intellectual projects as he was discreet—already phantom-like—in his publications, contributing not a single line, for example, to his own institute's famous *Vorträge*. He had already understood, perhaps, that the circle which had formed around his name was not really very eager to include the moving terrain of his thought. A new conception of the symbol was beginning to assert its dominance, one which in no way offered a clearer form with which to approach the problems he had submerged himself in to the point of madness. What this conception offered, instead, was actually a way of avoiding those problems altogether: namely, a Kantian, or neo-Kantian, formulation conceived with the aim of substituting *function* for *force* and *synthesis* for *symptom*.

* * *

Right at the start of his article, Cassirer, as if in response to the introduction by Saxl,⁴⁷³ wanted to pay tribute to Warburg's library—if not to his thought. Although his project "touch[ed] on the systematic aspect of philosophy" (*systematisch-philosophisch Art*) and, for this reason, seemed to exceed the historical field of the "sciences of culture," Cassirer evoked his first visit to the Warburg library by offering a very vivid image of an "uprising" ["*levée*"] or of a sudden "animation" of his own philosophical questions that occurred on the bookshelves: "and behold, they appeared suddenly to rise up before me in flesh and blood (*gleichsam verkörpert*)".⁴⁷⁴

The problems Warburg wrestled with thus supposedly provided the historical and figurative "incarnation" of the philosophical and systematic questions set forth by Cassirer. Did it not take the eye of a philosopher to understand immediately that such a library was organized less as a "collection of books"

(*Sammlung von Büchern*) than as a "collection of problems" (*Sammlung von Problemen*)? Undoubtedly. But this particular philosopher, far from being a Carlyle or a Nietzsche, immediately sought to determine which "general and systematic problem of the philosophy of mind" (*allgemeines systematisches Problem der Philosophie des Geistes*) Warburg's library wished to represent.⁴⁷⁵

Concerning the question of the *fields* involved, Cassirer observes in the library the convergence and correlation of the "history of art, [of] the history of religions, of myths, [of] the history of language and of culture." Concerning the question of *time*, it includes, of course, the *Nachleben der Antike*. Cassirer immediately translates the *field* into the "unity of a spiritual domain" (*die Einheit eines geistigen Gebietes*), postulating that Warburg's entire collection forms a circle organized "around an ideal central point (*idealer Mittelpunkt*) that is common to" all of it. Then he translates the *time* of the survivals into the canonical—and Platonic—expression of the "relationship between Being and becoming" (*die Beziehung des Seins auf das Werden*), that is to say, between "permanence" (*Dauer*) and change.⁴⁷⁶

In my view, this way of approaching the material already tells the whole story; for this translation of—really betrayal of, or, rather, disrespect for—Warburg's problems is immediately carried out in a way which blatantly contradicts their style of thought, even if Cassirer does not forget to render homage to the Romantic theories of the symbol, notably Goethe's as transmitted by Friedrich Theodor Vischer.⁴⁷⁷ The *bifurcation* is obvious, even though it is nowhere stated as such. Warburg, a marginal figure with respect to the *Vorträge* of his own institute, was not only absent—confined to Kreuzlingen—and thus unable to question this philosophy of mind; the idealist translation of his problems, their *reduction*, was effected with the authorization and even enthusiasm of his own assistant, Fritz Saxl.

By wrongly "clarifying" Warburg's problems, by linking them immediately to conceptual themes that are as academic as they are inadequate, Cassirer, as it were, *undid the anxiety-provoking aspects of survival* [*désinquiétait la survivance*] and, along with them, the relationships of the symbol to the image, to the body, and to the psyche. Where Warburg, in confronting the objects of his inquiries, found only *schisms in the soul*, Cassirer immediately sought to discover a *unity of the mind*. He does not even begin, as Vischer did, from the "multiform Proteus" displayed by the concrete life of symbols, but from a definition which, right from the start, is likely to reduce this multiformity to a "unity of function":

The unity of a mental domain (*die Einheit eines geistigen Gebietes*) can never be defined and secured starting from a consideration of the object, but only from the function (*von der Funktion*) which underlies it. . . . Symbolic expression, that is to say, the expression of something "mental" (*ein "Geistiges"*) through sensory "signs" and "images" (*durch sinnliche "Zeichen" und "Bilder"*), should be understood in its broadest meaning; and the question becomes whether this expressive form, given all the variety of its possible applications, is based on a principle which marks it as

a self-contained and unified basic process (*ein in sich geschlossenes und einheitliches Grundverfahren*). . . . "Symbolic form" should be understood as any instance of energy of mind in which a mental meaning is linked to a concrete sensuous sign and is intrinsically adapted to that sign.⁴⁷⁸

This definition of the "symbolic form" not only departs from Warburg's approach through its desire to reduce the problem to the philosophical dualisms of the academy—and to the hierarchy which implicitly organizes them—that is, to the oppositions between the concrete "sensible" and the spiritual or mental "meaning" ["sens"]. It is also distinguished from it by its intrinsic way of envisaging the whole nebulous cluster of relationships designated by the terms "sensible" and "sense" or "meaning," empirical and rational, singular and universal, and so on. Everything that Warburg, in studying his symbolic material, tried to understand at the level of its *intrication* (let us recall, once again, the embracing of man and snake in the *Laocoön* and in the Hopi ritual), Cassirer, good systematizer of problems that he was, sought to *dis-intricate*.

Similarly, whereas the Warburg library sought to create *circulations* between the different domains of knowledge, Cassirer continued to *separate* them into reconstituted areas, as distinct as the volumes or the chapters of his own works ("Language"—Mythical Thinking—"Knowledge"). Finally, everything that Warburg envisaged from the perspective of a perpetual and anachronistic movement of *dissemination* (the very kind that we experience just by leafing through the pages of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*), Cassirer brought back to the usual historical and encyclopedic *classification*, in the manner of Hegel.

Yet Cassirer spent many years among the books of the Warburg library, giving to his philosophical discourse a historical erudition and a cultural dimension that remain unequaled. This is because for him the relationships of the singular to the universal are not governed once and for all by a relationship of hierarchical inclusion. The "mental unity" never reduces the "diversity of the forms": the diversity reemerges in every thought of the "relation that the mind maintains [with] each one among [the forms]."⁴⁷⁹ It is one of the great virtues of Cassirer's thought that he wanted to respect diversity and the irreducible character of singularities. Accordingly, he always refused any attempt to create uniformity among the empirically given on the basis of some generalizing "reason." His whole polemic with the philosopher Konrad Marc-Wogau, in 1938, was centered around this point.⁴⁸⁰ Until the end of his life, Cassirer attempted to conceive the *unity* of the mental "world" without forgetting its *multiplicity*, that is to say, its diversity, which is shot through with tensions and even "disharmony."⁴⁸¹

But how did Cassirer solve this problem? He did so by supplanting, as early as 1910, the traditional metaphysical unity, which is a *unity of substance*, with a structural unity internal to the relationships of things, or of forms, among themselves. He called this a *unity of function*; and since it was conceived as an epistemological extension of the "Kantian primacy of function over the object,"

it made possible a new approach to historical and cultural phenomena.⁴⁸² In this way, Cassirer could envisage the *symbolic function* on the model of a general “grammar” applicable to “particular idioms,” which, in his eyes, is what language, myth, and art are [trans. modified—Trans.].⁴⁸³

That is how the “critique of reason” that was earlier formulated by Kant became transformed into a “critique of culture,” for which Cassirer claimed the support of the “fundamental principle of philosophical idealism.” The philosopher explored the multiplicity of particular symbolic expressions solely to reach the shore he so longed for, the shore of the “universal” (*Allgemeines*).⁴⁸⁴ “It would seem as though we could apprehend reality only in the particularity of these forms [i.e., language, myth, or art]. . . . [But] the philosopher desires to apprehend the world as an absolute unity (*die Welt als absolute Einheit*); he hopes ultimately to break down all diversity, and particularly the diversity of symbols: [so as] to discern the ultimate reality, the reality of ‘being’ itself.”⁴⁸⁵

Now we are better able to understand the great distance which separates such an ambition from Warburg’s project. Cassirer was looking for the unity of *function* where Warburg had found only a dialectic of irremediably contradictory *forces*. Force, according to Warburg, presupposes—as it did for Nietzsche and as it soon would for Baraille—expenditure and *excess*, whereas function as Cassirer meant it is ultimately conceived on the mathematical model of the *integral*.⁴⁸⁶ When Cassirer employs the word “formula” (*Formel*), whether in the context of language, of myth, or of art, he is thinking first of all of the “abstract chemical formula” inasmuch as it “no longer designates according to its sensuous content, its immediate sensory data,” but instead grasps it in a *regulative stability outside of time*, or, put in other terms, as the “totality. . . of possible chains of causality which are defined by general rules.”⁴⁸⁷ We know that for Warburg, to the contrary, a “formula” designates a *surviving moment of the form*, at once tenacious (in its repetitions) and fleeting (in its differences).

The symbolic *function*, according to Cassirer, does not exist without the unity and the “laws” of its functioning, which he calls the “unique system of actions of the mind.”⁴⁸⁸ [The second part of this quote does not appear in the English translation—Trans.] For Warburg, on the other hand, the functioning of symbols never occurs without the *dysfunction* that the survivals bring to the regular unfolding of forms in history. Cassirer’s model can be compared to a circle embracing diversity: a *synthesis* reducing the ambivalences of meaning to the unity of the function. Warburg’s model, in contrast, is that of an intrusion that is never stilled: the *symptom* intensifies the ambivalences to the point of destroying any possible functional unity.

In 1922, Cassirer, citing Warburg, evokes the “fear of demons” characteristic of mythical thought solely in order to describe their disappearance in the mathematical concept of “functional number.” “Astrology,” he asserts, “does not yet recognize this new and decisive significance of number.”⁴⁸⁹ Yet Warburg had already suggested, in 1920, that the conquests of reason never reduce ambivalence, and that the “fear of demons” derives from a basic psychological order, one

which is tenacious precisely because of its "primitiveness" and therefore always capable of producing survivals and of introducing symptomatic intrusions into the exercise of reason.⁴⁹⁰

In sum, where the philosopher wanted to make order and introduce a structure into diversity, the man of the "science without a name" had been content to embrace the necessary disorder, the proliferation of polarities, and the structural intrication inherent in diversity. Where the man of Enlightenment believed in the progress of science to the point of extending the Kantian "critique of reason" to a "critique of culture," "the man of chiaroscuro"—if I may be allowed to dub him that—dared to invert the "critique of pure reason" into a "critique of pure unreason" (*Kritik der reinen Unvernunft*).⁴⁹¹ This was still a way of seeking Enlightenment, but in a tragic mode—in the melancholy affirmation that the "monsters" resist or, rather, survive all the stages of the "progress of reason."

* * *

After 1929, the "circle" of iconologists was able to see in Cassirer's "symbolic forms" a necessary clarification of the vast cultural domain traversed by Warburg's inquiries. Actually, this *clarification* was only a *schematization* in which the "domains of the spirit" perhaps regained their autonomy, but also their frontiers. The result was that Cassirer's presentation, paradoxically, ended up obscuring the relationships—the contacts, intrusions, and confusions—of the cultural fields among themselves. From this point of view, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* played a role with respect to Warburg's manuscripts and *Mnemosyne Atlas* analogous to the one that Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* played with respect to the extraordinary *General Sketch* penned by Novalis, in which it is not the unity of each domain, but rather the circulation of relationships among them, which appears most prominently.⁴⁹²

And the schematization of the field was accompanied by a schematization of time. In his 1923 article, Cassirer reduced the entire "form of time" (*Form der Zeit*) to the paired notions of "to be born" and "to persist."⁴⁹³ He thus forgot the essential lesson of Warburgian *Kulturwissenschaft* concerning forms and symbols, namely that they, too, are capable of *dying* and of *surviving* their own death. It is no accident that Cassirer was interested in the philosophy of the fifteenth century solely in terms of the "renaissance." The birth of a systematic unity of thought marked, for him, the advent of our own modern world, and he paid scant attention to the unexamined elements or "survivals" stemming from Antiquity or the Middle Ages.⁴⁹⁴

Moreover, Cassirer viewed the historical understanding of cultural phenomena from the almost Hegelian perspective of a *reconciliation* between the present and the past: "This view into the depths of time is opened up only when action is replaced by pure vision (*das reine Schauen*)—when our present becomes penetrated with the past, and the two are experienced as an immediate unity (*als unmittelbare Einheit*)."⁴⁹⁵ Taking a completely opposite tack, Warburg's

historical practice—like that, soon to come, of Walter Benjamin—presupposed the examination [épreuve] of a past which suddenly splits the present, divorcing it from its own manifest genealogy.

Finally, where Warburg troubled the meaning of history by insisting on the phantom-like impurity of the *revenances*, Cassirer hypostasized the meaning of history by establishing an order which takes on all the appearances of a *teleology* of the Hegelian type.⁴⁹⁶ In his 1923 article, this teleology is organized according to a progression which goes from myth to art and from the latter to science: in myth, says Cassirer, the symbols are products of the “nondifferentiation of the image and the thing”; art “supplants the in-differentiation with a constant tension between the image and the meaning”; finally, science alone produces the absolute unity of the concept, the “ideal form” of all our relationships to the world.⁴⁹⁷

In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, this progress undergoes an important modification: the three volumes of that work treat, in succession, language, myth, and knowledge, with the result that the question of art—precisely the one that could have led Cassirer to make use of Warburg’s research in his synthesis—disappears from the “picture.” But the third volume, subtitled *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, reconceives the problem from the ground up by proposing a new, more conceptual terminology for this “trinity” of the symbolic function. Specifically, the phenomena of “expression” (*Ausdruck*) are succeeded henceforth by “representation” (*Darstellung*), and then by “meaning” (*Bedeutung*) as such, which Cassirer will also call “pure meaning,” because it alone, in his view, that “constitut[es] . . . scientific knowledge.”⁴⁹⁸

The “phenomenon of expression” (*Phänomen des Ausdrucks*) obviously brings us back to all the things that Warburg found interesting in the “emotive formulas” of the art of Antiquity and of the Renaissance. He defines the link uniting the *empathetic forces* with the *symbolic forms*. Moreover, in 1929 Cassirer offers a strictly empathetic definition of expression: “the fact that a certain phenomenon in its simple ‘givenness’ and visibility (*Sichtbarkeit*) makes itself known to be inwardly animated (*als ein innerlich-Beseeltes*).” We are not surprised that in this context Cassirer is able to evoke the “biological roots” of mythic expression as described by Vignoli.⁴⁹⁹

For it is indeed myth—and not art—which he is discussing here. And he considers myth to be based on the lack of distinction between the psychological and the corporeal, between content and form, and between image and thing. In Cassirer’s account, myth is the bearer of the “living force” of images, of oneiric emotion, and its domain is characterized by the “fluid and vague character” of all limits, the sovereignty of an omnipresent and demonic “it” [“ça”], the perpetual transformation of familiar things into powers of the *Unheimliche*, etc. He calls myth a “genuinely primitive phenomenon,” from which knowledge draws its “roots”—but from which, of course, it must distinguish itself with all its might.⁵⁰⁰

Expression, as “primary form of consciousness of the real,” exists only to be overcome, in the Hegelian sense of the term. It becomes so in the “richer and

higher forms of experience" (*zu reicherer und höherer Formen der Weltansicht*),⁵⁰¹ in the first rank of which Cassirer places *representation*. Representation conditions the "structure and formal unity of consciousness" (*der Aufbau des Bewusstseins . . . und . . . die Bedingung seiner eigenen Formeinheit*)—nothing less.⁵⁰²

The keystone of the system of symbolic forms, representation separates itself from empathetic force just as it does from the "sensuous material" (*sinnliches Material*) of the image. The latter, thanks to representation, finally assumes its "fixed nature" (*Feste . . . Wesenheit*), far from the confusions of the dream and from the fluidities of the mythic world.⁵⁰³ Here Cassirer returns to a Kantian tone completely, deriving all consciousness of space and time solely from representation.⁵⁰⁴ But what does this reign of representation lead us toward, if not a *schematization of the mind*, and thus into a trap—a philosophical trap—that Warburg never fell into?

Cassirer's great error was probably to have conceived the symbolic forms on the implicit model of an exact science. "Non-knowledge" and unconscious knowledge have no place in it—except in terms of negation, absence, or dismissal. When representation supplanted expression, the latter existed henceforth only as error. The primitive state is always *overcome* in the *progress* of the mind: thus it never makes a *return*. In other words, Cassirer failed to learn the Freudian lesson about the symptom, just as he failed to learn the Warburgian lesson about survival. His "analysis" is Kantian, transcendental, wholly indebted to the "philosophy of mind." Whereas Warburg's analysis is immanent, indebted to rhizomes and to the returns of "pure unreason," an approach which presupposes an energetics, a dynamic of psychological intrications in which the life of symbols never ceases to be the scene of struggle.

We now understand better why Cassirer never wrote his famous volume—foreseen since the beginning—on art as a symbolic form. The organization of his own working tool, that is to say, the Warburg library, would have destroyed his *progressive* schema by making it confront that perpetual *debate*, that tenacious intrication, and that fundamental impurity of artistic forms revealed by all of Warburg's research. In a letter to Paul Arthur Schilpp dated 13 May 1942, Cassirer justified this "empty place" by noting that an "unfavorable period [had] always delayed the composition of the work."⁵⁰⁵ But the rediscovered manuscript of this famous "fourth volume" devotes only a few pages to the question of art.

The problem is therefore intrinsic to Cassirer's thought. From beginning to end, Cassirer, following a long-standing philosophical tradition, placed all aspects of the question of art under the jurisdiction of aesthetics. (Let us recall that Warburg started from the opposite premise.) From 1917 to 1922, Cassirer followed step by step the path which led from Romantic poetry to the great conceptual systems of German idealism. Then he went back to the Platonic tradition, arriving at the position that the primacy of the "beautiful" and the "idea" must govern every approach to art.⁵⁰⁶ (Let us recall that Warburg had arrived at the opposite conclusion.) The system of symbolic forms was, of course, obliged to incorporate this idealization of art, which is henceforth envisaged as the

overcoming of expressive "imitation" and the consequent attaining of "pure symbol" (*von der Nachahmung zum reinen Symbol*).⁵⁰⁷

Art as "pure symbol"? By that term Cassirer means the "very highest and purest spiritual activity known to consciousness." In it, the mind is reconciled with the sensible world, which amounts to saying that here "the demonic element of the mythic world [has been] defeated and destroyed" [the second part of this quote does not appear in the English translation—Trans.].⁵⁰⁸ (One recalls that Warburg, from the Florentine portrait to the work of Böcklin,⁵⁰⁹ had observed the opposite phenomenon.) All of Cassirer's later reflections on art will thus be oriented by an "analytic of pure forms." And his main reference in art history will henceforth be Wölfflin and not Warburg.⁵¹⁰ Keeping himself very far from any "ghost stories for grown-ups," Cassirer will continue, until the 1940s, to investigate art employing the "pure" approach of aesthetic value, or even ethical or "educative" value.⁵¹¹

* * *

Yet one must also say of Cassirer what Heidegger somewhere says of Kant: he is a philosopher who does not cheat. He never tries, on the path toward what he considers the truth, to avoid obstacles. He did, of course, refrain—despite his respect for diversity and for singularity, and despite his frequent visits to the Warburg library—from looking closely at even a single painting and producing a detailed analysis of it. But he did take the risk, on one occasion, of examining a *symptom* in detail; he considered it, certainly, as the *negative of the symbol*, a "pathology of the symbolic consciousness," as he puts it. Still, he accorded it such great attention—a hundred pages, making it the longest chapter in the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*⁵¹²—that one senses in these pages something exceptional. It is as if the Cassirerian system was putting itself to the test, if not deconstructing itself.

The chapter deals mainly with aphasia and was written during the same period when Warburg was composing the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, his vast "mute" synthesis of Western art seen from the point of view of survivals and of emotive formulas. Cassirer, for his part, took as his point of departure the clinical material gathered by H. Jackson, K. Wernicke, Freud, and, above all, Adhemar Gelb and Kurt Goldstein. His argument is as passionate as it is troubling, because one senses that in it the theory of the symbol is obsessed by its own negative counterpart, the *a-symbolism* [*asymbolie*] of the symptom. Here we suddenly come very close to the areas explored by Warburg (empathetic "incorporations" of the image) and by Binswanger ("thymic" moments of delirium).

If I speak of obsession, it is because here the symptom constitutes much more than a simple countermotif of the symbol. The problem that it poses, Cassirer already admits, "goes far beyond its own confines," by which he means its nosological limits.⁵¹³ One suspects that ultimately the symptom, inasmuch as it is the *negative of the symbol*—in the sense of a failure, or even of a total collapse

of its functionality—constituted from the very beginning a *model of symbology* itself. John Michael Krois, in a remarkable article, has shown, moreover, the importance of the medical and psychopathological paradigm in Cassirer's construction of the idea of "natural symbolism."⁵¹⁴

Now, just before this elaboration of the "pathology of symbolic consciousness," Cassirer wrote a kind of brief parenthesis, meant to constitute the link with the question of time, which was treated in a preceding chapter. At this point, one grasps that his thinking is all of a piece. The *question of time* was no doubt expressed in neo-Kantian terms, that is, in terms of consciousness and of representation; but the *question of the symptom* was in the process of recasting, of surreptitiously modifying this whole schema. The "parenthesis" I am speaking of is only the uncertain sketch—a very rare situation for Cassirer—of such a modification. It is entitled "Symbolic Pregnance."⁵¹⁵

Let us admit that we do not immediately understand what is going on here. It seems that at this point the philosopher is seized by a kind of anxiety in the face of the problem, clearly a redoubtable one, of the "construction of experience." He reaches at first for the guardrail [*garde-fou*] par excellence. Accordingly, Kant returns to the scene, with his "transcendental apperception," his "synthesis," and his "understanding." But Cassirer, who does not cheat, suddenly admits that this Kantian schema "resembles a magician and a necromancer animating 'dead' sensation, awakening it to the life of consciousness," without explaining the magic employed in this process of animation. He then turns toward "modern phenomenology," which, he says, "starts much less from Kant than from Brentano," and which has a somewhat greater chance of describing the very mysterious relationships between the experience of things and its symbolic construction.⁵¹⁶

Finally, Cassirer throws out his hypothesis—as one would throw a pair of dice: "We will attempt to express this reciprocal determination by introducing the concept of *symbolic pregnancy* (*symbolische Präganz*)."⁵¹⁷ We learn very little about this in the following two and half pages, as if the philosopher himself had fallen victim to vertigo when facing the possible consequences of this sudden breach opened up in the neo-Kantian system that he had so patiently elaborated.

From this breach there escaped or, rather, reappeared, right in the midst of the reign of "represent[ation]," a whole vocabulary that one assumed had been definitively shipwrecked on the shores of "expression." But the problem under consideration is none other than that of the most basic link between "life" and "meaning." More than that, it is how one should understand "life *in* meaning" that is at stake here.⁵¹⁸ At this point we see the resurgence of all those "structural biomorphisms" that Warburg, in 1923, asserted are stubbornly persistent—and pregnant—at all levels of culture and of symbolism.

In speaking of "pregnance," Cassirer is speaking to us of imprinting and, above all, of vital latency, of gestation, and of future births. "The now is filled and saturated with the future: *praegnans futuri*, as Leibniz called it." Could one not say, as well, that it is saturated with the past, considering that Cassirer clearly

recognized the existence in this process of the characteristics of primitive intrication? Reading these two pages, one is struck by the appearance of terms such as "pulse" (*Pulsschlag*), "flow" (*Bewegtheit*), "participation" (*Teilhabe*), and, above all, "interlacing" or "interwovenness" (*Verwobenheit*).⁵¹⁹ It is no accident that Cassirer arrives at the most precise formulation in the chapter on the symptom: "we have designated as 'symbolic pregnancy' the relation in consequence of which a sensuous thing embraces a meaning and represents it [*immediately*] for consciousness."⁵²⁰

Despite the fact that this presentation was much less systematic than was usual for him, "symbolic pregnancy" has recently been promoted by specialists in Cassirer's thought, mainly on the basis of rediscovered manuscripts, to the rank of "the most basic concept of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*."⁵²¹ Why has this concept become so important? Because this is precisely where, in Cassirer's work, the problem of the *symbol* is coupled with that of the *organism*. This is where Cassirer sought to understand the meaning which is "immediately" expressed by a bodily movement. (On this point, he comes close to the views of Erwin Straus.) This was a way of returning to the notion of empathy and of casting doubt on the primacy of articulate language as the symbolic form par excellence.

Could one now, on this basis, tie together the theoretical threads of the *symptomatic forces* Warburg discovered in images and those of the *symbolic forms* Cassirer discovered in all the other spheres of culture? Probably not. For the theoretical styles of the two thinkers were entirely different, despite the profound esteem in which each one held the other. Warburg was undoubtedly several steps behind with regard to the possibility of constructing the "circle" of his discoveries in conceptual and functional terms. But he had taken a giant step just by gathering the historical and anthropological material for his library.

For this reason, he had *given up* on what we might call *dis-intricating* his subject matter; he had given up on making use of the available philosophical concepts to create dividing lines in the objects he studied—dividing lines which Cassirer tenaciously clung to. Warburg found the traditional distinctions between nature and culture or between body and symbol⁵²² to be irrelevant. He set them aside, because he knew that all these notions, originating where they did—that is to say, in the nineteenth century—were unsuited to giving a rigorous form to the intrications he observed. One could say that throughout his life, Warburg, faced with the "pile of living snakes," was waiting for a formulation or an original form which would be able to *display this intrication*. A form which would be rigorous (in other words, theoretically well founded) *and* which would not be schematic (in other words, not impoverishing, but rather capable of respecting each and every singularity).

THE MONTAGE *MNEMOSYNE*: PICTURES, MISSILES, DETAILS, INTERVALS

This form of exposition does exist. Certainly it is paradoxical, and, given its status as a *hypothetical work*, it is irremediably provisional. It is the *Mnemosyne*

Atlas, the assemblage of images on which Warburg worked tirelessly from his return from Kreuzlingen in 1924 until his death, in 1929.

It is generally said that Fritz Saxl had the idea of grouping together a number of photographs which would provide a "summary in images" of certain of the themes studied by his master. The point was to set up an aide-mémoire in order that Warburg's research might be reborn from its ashes or, rather, from his fall into madness. The idea of an atlas goes back in Warburg's thinking to 1905.⁵²³ But in 1924 it was something more, something like a *raptus*: suddenly a form appeared which, in his eyes, was not only a "summary in images" but also a *way of thinking by means of images* [*une pensée par images*]. It was not only an "aide-mémoire" but an instance of *memory at work*. In other words, this was memory as such, the "living" memory, from which he derived the proper name that was to be given to the whole enterprise: *Mnemosyne*, the classic personification of memory, mother of the nine Muses and, as one might expect, vaguely related to *Ninfa*.

Above all else, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is a photographic apparatus [dispositif]. The paper prints, drawn from the immense collection assembled by Warburg,⁵²⁴ were, at first, glued to large pieces of heavy black paper, grouped by themes and displayed side by side, edge to edge, in a uniform manner, throughout the elliptical space occupied by the reading room of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, in Hamburg (fig. 86). But the display took on its definitive form when Warburg and Saxl began to use screens of black cloth stretched out on frames (measuring a meter and half by two meters), on which they were able to group the photographs by affixing them with small, easily manipulable hooks (figs. 69-71, 90-91).

Strictly speaking, what they did, therefore, was *to make a picture* [*tableau*] *with the photographs*, and that in both senses of the word *tableau*. [In French, the word means both a picture or painting and a table, such as one would find in a textbook—Trans.] In the *pictorial sense*, inasmuch as the cloths suspended from the frame became the support of an imagery of extraordinary diversity, both in subject matter and in chronology, but one drawn together by the choice of a consistent tone of black and white or, more accurately, of *grisaille*, which was the effect produced by the grouping of all the photographs when viewed from a distance. Warburg's atlas created a "*tableau*" above all in the *combinatory* sense of the word—a "series of series," as Michel Foucault so well defined it⁵²⁵—since it created ensembles of images that it then placed in relation to each other. But this table was no longer of the same type as that used by Charcot or Lombroso. What, then, was its style?

One could usefully devote a study specifically to the art of the groupings and cross-references in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, given the many types of serial effects, and contrasts, coexisting in it. The images of a single group of photographs shown at the same scale produce the effect of a deck of cards spread out upon a table.⁵²⁶ In contrast, certain plates seem to pour out a chaotic accumulation of images which are themselves "cumulative."⁵²⁷ The groupings may

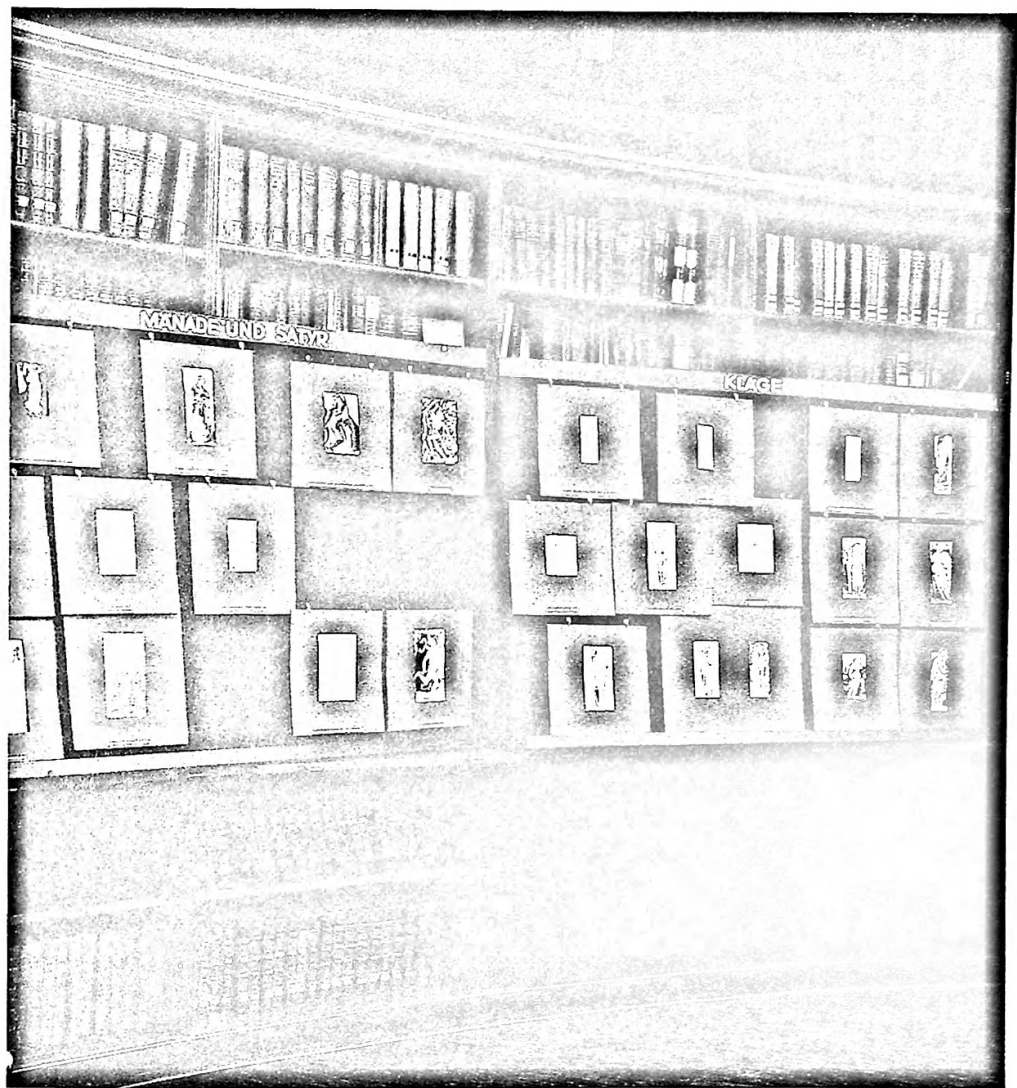


FIG. 86 Reading room of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg, on the occasion of the exhibition *Die Geste der Antike in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, 1926–27. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

be formal (a circle, a sphere) or gestural (showing death or lamentation).⁵²⁸ A single image can be dispersed into a repeated display of its own details⁵²⁹ (fig. 91). A single location can be explored systematically from a distance or from up close, or even, so to speak, in a "traveling" shot, as one sees in the case of the Malatesta temple in Rimini and the Chigi chapel in Rome.⁵³⁰ The photographic prints can be used several times and be seen in differing formats or be differently framed as they move from one plate to another.

The chromatic unity of the ensemble serves, paradoxically, to highlight all the possible heterogeneities: contrasts of the ensemble (a statue) and its details (the motif of its base); the *mise en abyme* of photographs (art objects) and of photographs of photographs (art books shown displaying their own use of montage),⁵³¹ violent shifts in scale (the Arch of Constantine next to a *Gemma Augustea* as big as the arch),⁵³² and reversals of spatial orientation (an aerial view right next to a subterranean view).⁵³³ There are also anachronisms (Giorgione with Manet, an ancient medal with a postage stamp) and even montages which deliberately consist of different levels of reality (the *Mass at Bolsena* painted by Raphael next to an informal photograph of Pope Pius XI).⁵³⁴

What should we make of these pictures [tableaux] composed of photos (notably of photos of pictures)? This could be considered a minimal definition of art history as seen from its most practical point of view. What, in general, does the practitioner of this discipline do? First of all, he explores areas that present the most disconcerting and sharply contrasted diversity of elements imaginable. He goes from one culture to another, from one period to another, from a familiar topic to an exotic one, from one museum to another, from a church to a library, from a miniature to a cycle of frescoes, or from a chapel to a cathedral. The common denominator in all of this is the photographic scale; for it allows him to spread all of that out on his work table, then to arrange it in accord with his hypotheses, and, finally, to produce a *comparative series* of all these objects which are so distant in real space and real time.

In joining his library with a photo collection—for the constitution of which he initiated several photographic campaigns, such as the one undertaken by the Alinari brothers at the Sassetti chapel—Warburg showed very early on that he understood that art history could achieve an epistemological mutation only by allowing itself be guided by the recently developed capabilities of photographic reproducibility. As early as 1894, Émile Mâle had offered a very clear expression of this new *épistémè*:

One could say that the history of art, which until then was the passion of a few curious individuals, has only become a science since the existence of photography. . . . Photography partially freed the work of art from the conditions which constrain it, distance and immobility. Photography has made it possible to compare, that is to say, to create a science. The establishment of a library of photographs—but photographs taken by archaeologists, not by amateurs—will no doubt appear, in a short time, to be a necessity for scholars.⁵³⁵

Like other historians of his period, Warburg was constantly exploring the new heuristic possibilities offered by the manipulation of photographs. It is said that at his famous talk at the Congress of Rome in 1912, he became the first art historian to use color slides.⁵³⁶ He conceived each lecture less as an argument illustrated by images than as a sequence of images illuminated by an argument. Thus, in 1923, he placed his entire lecture at Kreuzlingen under the double sign—characteristic of *Mnemosyne*—of a series of photographs “that I myself have taken for the most part,” and of an attempt to “refresh and rework old memories” (*alte Erinnerungen . . . auffrischen und durcharbeiten*) linked to a basic question concerning the anthropological significance [pregnancy] of images: “I can only assure you that, in sharing my distant memories, aided by the immediacy (*durch die Unmittelbarkeit der Aufnahmen*) of the photographs what I have to say will offer an impression both of a world whose culture is dying out (*die aussterbende Welt*) and of a problem of decisive importance in the general writing of cultural history: In what ways can we perceive essential character traits of primitive pagan humanity?”⁵³⁷

From this point of view, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* appears as a radical overcoming of the constraints—and of the shortcuts—imposed by the lecture form; for it provides a *synoptic exposition* which avoids reductive, summary accounts of a topic. Wölfflin had become famous with his introduction of the double projection of slides, which was especially well suited to the conceptual polarities he was attempting to establish.⁵³⁸ The *Mnemosyne Atlas*, by contrast, is a tool designed to maintain intrications and thus *to make perceptible the overdeterminations* at work in the history of images. It enables one to compare, in a single glance, and on a single board, not two, but ten, twenty, or even thirty images.

I have often indicated how hard it was for Warburg to eliminate any aspects of the multitude of meanings he detected in the singularities of his material. Thus, whereas a lecture often obliges the speaker to choose, to summarize, to be reductive, and to present the subject at hand in a linear fashion, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* allowed the speaker *to display the entire archive*: to unfold, as it were, the many strata contained in the file drawers. What had been blindly piled up in the library or in the photo collection quickly became an obsidional, *expanded visual milieu*, with the spread-out plates of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* constituting a kind of elliptical double wall surrounding the reader at the Hamburg library (fig. 87).

Already in 1926 Warburg gave a lecture on Rembrandt⁵³⁹ in which the images were not projected one by one in the course of his argument but presented together, right from the start, on the famous black cloth screens. Thus, the lecturer spoke while going from one to another, as if he were moving about in the very interior of the conceptual space of his argument. One of the most intense activities of the Institute, until 1929, was thus the mounting of exhibitions which restored to the archive itself its theoretical force. The subjects addressed in this way included astrological and astronomical imagery, ancient gestures—“Primitive words of the language of passionate gestures” (*Urworte*

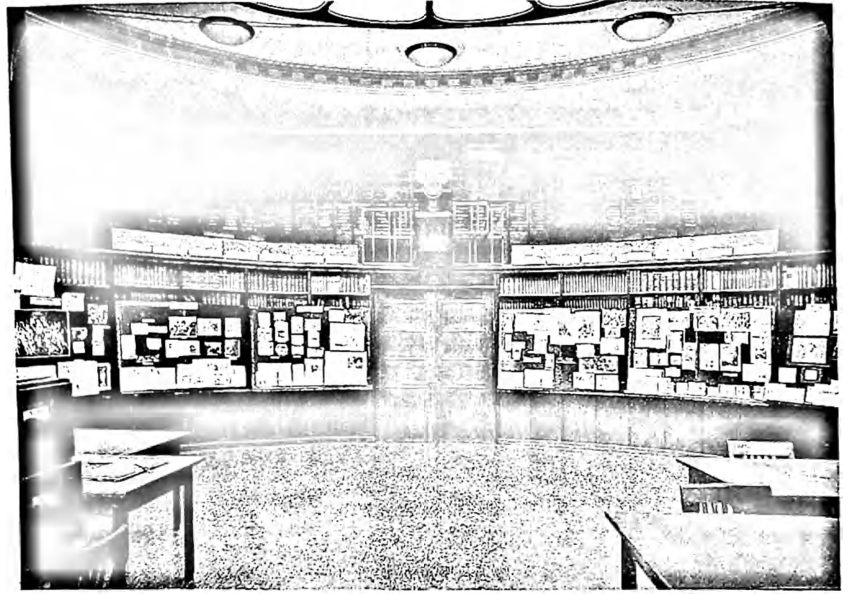


FIG. 87 Reading room of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg, on the occasion of an exhibition devoted to Ovid, 1927. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

leidenschaftlicher Gebärdensprache) was the exact title—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, postage stamps, etc.⁵⁴⁰

Warburg thus devoted the whole last period of his life to *exhibiting the pictures of his thinking*, presented as series of images and series of series. Beyond simply recapitulating a work of art or a research topic, which ran the risk of bringing discussion of the subject to a conclusion, Warburg wanted to unfold it in all its aspects in order to promote the discovery of still undetected possibilities. In the plan originally conceived for Warburg’s “complete works” (*Anlage der Gesamtausgabe*), Fritz Saxl had expected to publish the *Mnemosyne Atlas* under one of the numerous titles—or rather subtitles—imagined by the master: “A sequence of images exploring the function of the ancient, predetermined expressive values through the representation of the vital activity seen in the art of the European Renaissance” (*eine Bilderreihe zur Untersuchung der Funktion vorgeprägter antiker Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens in der Kunst der europäischen Renaissance*).⁵⁴¹

This project is significant; for it is a response to the recognition that Warburg’s writings constituted only a part of his work. Henceforth, one must view the *Mnemosyne Atlas* not as the illustration, but, on the contrary, as the visual armature of his whole way of thinking (as the library provided its textual armature).

* * *

None of Warburg's commentators have overlooked the importance of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Saxl was the first to see in it an original way of presenting the full richness of Warburg's scholarly work in a form that would show its "unity" and iconographic "plenitude." For him, it went without saying that this "unity" (*Einheit*) revolved around one central question (*einer zentralen Fragestellung*); for was it not obvious that the *Nachleben der Antike* provided the *raison d'être* and the coherence of such an atlas, and even what was at stake in presenting his argumentation in this manner? Saxl rightly says that with the *Mnemosyne Atlas* we possess an "*ad oculos* demonstration" (*ad oculos demonstriert*) of Warburg's whole conception of images and their modes of transmission over time.⁵⁴²

But the Cassirerian tone of these statements will not have escaped the attention of the attentive reader. It is one thing to recognize the importance and coherence of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* throughout the entire course of Warburg's thinking,⁵⁴³ or even to emphasize its real philosophical importance.⁵⁴⁴ But it is quite another thing to offer a circular, synthetic, or unitary idea of this coherence. Gombrich has already underscored, and rightly so, the "kaleidoscopic" aspect of Warburg's atlas.⁵⁴⁵

It would be even more accurate to speak of "constellations" in the sense in which Walter Benjamin used the term, provided one emphasizes that each of the configurations obtained is always subject to *permutation*. If Warburg, through a supplementary photographic *mise en abyme*, had developed the habit of photographing each arrangement of his material before completely changing it in favor of a new transformation, it is because the coherence of his gesture resided in the permutability itself. In other words, it resided in the incessant *combinatory displacement* of the images from plate to plate, and not in some kind of "final point" (which would be the visual equivalent of a form of absolute knowledge). If one examines the question carefully, one cannot be satisfied with a single "result"; for in this context each interpretation is always theoretically modifiable, awaits the surprise of a new datum, and thus can never lead conclusively to any kind of "unity."

Warburg understood that he was obliged *to give up the idea of placing the image in a fixed configuration*, just as a philosopher has to give up the idea of keeping his opinions permanently unchanged. Thought is a matter of plasticity, of mobility, and of metamorphosis. That is why Warburg even had to give up on gluing the photographs to the cardboard plates, just as Saxl was later obliged to do later for other exhibitions held at the Institute's London home. The simple technical device of the little clips, which enabled the images to maintain their mobility and to never finish the "game," in itself constituted a refutation of any potential synthesis or definitive state. Let us observe, one more time, that photography made it possible both to remember each version and yet not to conclude definitively with any one of them.⁵⁴⁶

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* can doubtlessly be considered a "program." But it is an open program. What it "*demonstrates ad oculos*" does not take the form of a classic syllogism: it does not refold diversity back into the "unity" of a logical

function. What, then, is the *form* of this atlas, the *style* of this exposition, of its presentation [monstration]? Warburg himself responds that he had undertaken, from the beginning, a work of *unfolding* [*de dépli*]: a work designed to “unfold the [memorative] function” inherent in the images of Western culture:

Thanks to the zealous assistance Dr. Bing has accorded me, I have been able to assemble the material for an atlas of images which, by virtue of arranging them in a series (*zusammenbringen*), will spread out [i.e., display in space] the function (*die Funktion . . . ausbreiten*) of the ancient expressive values, originally imprinted through the presentation of life in movement, whether internal or external. At the same time, this will be the foundation of a new theory of the memorative function of images for human culture (*eine neue Theorie der Funktion des menschliche Bildgedächtnisses*).⁵⁴⁷

Such is the grandeur of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In it Warburg turns a recapitulation of the subjects he himself had studied into a genuine theoretical program for future research. Much more than in the Kreuzlingen lecture, here dissociation is transformed into construction, and paralysis is overcome, turning into real movement. Upon his return from the Bellevue clinic in 1924, Warburg felt himself incapable of embarking on any entirely new scholarly endeavors, and even incapable of completing his work on astrology, which he felt was still imperfect.⁵⁴⁸ He understood at this point—on the basis of his psychoanalytic work with Binswanger—that only an *anamnesis* of his own thinking could restore his capacity for theoretical *invention*.

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* thus bears all the traces of a private language and of an autobiographical quest. It is a kind of self-portrait that has burst into thousands of pieces, namely those several thousand images pinned to the sixty-three black screens in which Warburg's thought—the history itself of this thought—could be recognized in the countless interrelationships among them. As Giorgio Agamben has said, it is a “mnemonic system for private use, into which the psychotic scholar projected and sought to resolve his personal conflicts.”⁵⁴⁹ But its intrinsic force consists rather in having converted the particular elements of this personal reminiscent introspection into materials for a “new theory of the memorative function of images.”

What is this “memorative function of images”? That is the very question which, from the beginning, Warburg's concept of *survival* was meant to answer. It designates the way in which images *survive* [*surviennent*] and *come back* [*reviennent*] in a single movement, which is that of the symptom—its dialectical relationship to time. For several reasons, therefore, we should consider the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as an *atlas of the symptom*. Above all, it is the atlas of a symptom characteristic of Warburg himself: that incapacity—so strange in a historian—to recount the history of art as one would recount an ordered sequence of events, or else, in the manner of Vasari, as a charming family saga (at this same period, Robert Musil, while writing *The Man Without Qualities*,

was experiencing his own incapacity to recount a story). But, more explicitly, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is an atlas of the symptom in the sense that it is a collection of the “emotive formulas” that Warburg detected throughout a lifetime of investigating Western culture.⁵⁵⁰

This compulsion to engage with the world of pre-established expressive forms (*Formwelt vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte*)—regardless of whether their origin is in the past or the present—signifies the decisive critical moment for any artist intending to assert his own character. It is recognition of the fact that hitherto this process had been overlooked, despite its unusually wide-ranging importance for the stylistic formation of the Renaissance in Europe, that led to the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. The work here, based on its fund of images (*in ihrer bildmateriellen Grundlage*), seeks most immediately to present nothing but a traceable inventory of pre-coined expressions that demanded that the individual artist either ignore or absorb this mass of inherited impressions (*Vorprägungen*), surging forward in this dual manner.⁵⁵¹

Let us remember that between 1905 and 1911 Warburg had tried to organize this vocabulary of the “pre-established forms” of emotion into a group of *regularly arranged tables* [*tableaux réguliers*]⁵⁵²—with ranges, abscissas, and ordinates. And let us remember, too, the failure of this attempt, which was entitled *Schemata Pathosformeln* (figs. 47, 48).⁵⁵² From that time on, Warburg clearly understood that one cannot “schematize” the history of images, let alone the history of their emotive formulas, because the images do not allow themselves to be “pigeonholed,” if I may put it that way, except at the cost of losing their own capacities of metamorphosis and openness to overdetermination.

Organized into *proliferating tables* [*tableaux proliférants*], the *Mnemosyne Atlas* responds better to the challenge that the image addresses to all forms of classificatory reasoning: how can one conceive of an order, within the image, consisting as it does of a mixture of rationality and of irrationality? How can one orient oneself amidst the “pure unreason” of the symptoms? How should one present the unconsciousness of the symbols? How does one unfold their intrications and account for their multiple forces? How does one give form to their dissemination? Scarcely had Warburg returned from Kreuzlingen and his difficult work of trying to “construct [something] amidst insanity” and there he was, confronted with a—quasi-Freudian—“interminable analysis” of “pre-determined expressive values” that have been ceaselessly transformed by the very fact of their survival over the long course of Western culture.

The author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* found himself, from this time on, confronted with a genuine *dispossession of thought*, in the very elevated sense that Merleau-Ponty suggests when he writes that “to think is not to possess the objects of thought; it is to circumscribe by their means a domain of thought that we are not yet thinking about.”⁵⁵³ It should be remembered that Warburg was not without resources in facing such a task: the classification of his library—with its system of three permutable capital letters, evoking the Talmudic exegesis of

the roots of Hebrew words and always admitting “forthcoming developments in research,” as Edgar Wind has well explained—had already, subtly, constituted the order of a space that is limited by the chaos of a rhizome-like domain and that, in theory, is infinite.⁵⁵⁴

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Looking at the plates of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, it is impossible to get a clear sense of how Warburg intended us to look at them, or of the exact meaning he attributed to the relationships among the neighboring images. The more one looks, the denser and more intricately the relationships begin to appear. At the same time, the images appear to take off in several directions, to stream out everywhere like fireworks. Even the saturated “packets of images” seem like sprays of light about to explode. It thus appears that the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is less the illustration of a preexisting interpretation of the transmission of images than a visual matrix meant to increase the possible levels of interpretation.

Its great virtue is, first of all, rhythmic. When looking at these plates, it is as if we are scanning a *Nachleben*, so that the atlas seems to present, in miniature format, long spans of cultural history. It is a rhythm composed of surprises and recurrences, of prominences and pregnant moments, of *survivals* [*survivances*] and *returns* [*revenances*] that are observable in the relationship of each image with all the others. And all that appears to us *visually*, as if preceding any explanatory scheme and any notion of historical determinism. Judging from contemporary photographs, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* appears as a collection of images lacking any guidance or even any captions.

Commentators have often—too often—stressed the exclusively visual character of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, and they have spoken, in this regard, of an “art history without a text,” and even of a “mute” art history.⁵⁵⁵ This fits in with the approach taken by Gombrich, for whom the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is, first of all, a response to a blockage in what he considered to be Warburg’s psychotic and “paralyzing” relationship to language.⁵⁵⁶ But this is to forget that the original plan for the atlas was not only to extend the corpus of images to about two thousand, but also to accompany it with no less than two volumes of written commentary.⁵⁵⁷ Above all, this is to forget that the *visual layout* of the atlas—by turns chaotic and ordered, compact and centrifugal, saturated and dispersed—corresponds exactly to the *textual layout* of the numerous manuscripts that Warburg produced at the same time that he was developing his collection of images.

These manuscripts (which one will naturally be able to discuss more fruitfully when they are finally published) testify to an extraordinarily intense period of writing, especially in the years 1927 to 1929. Their titles are enough to indicate that Warburg wished to accompany the *Mnemosyne Atlas* not with a *history* of the “influences of Antiquity,” but rather with a theoretical discussion of the *memory* of images and of symbols based on the phenomena associated with

memory's forms of *survivals* [*survivances*]. Thus, we find him working on topics like "General Ideas" (*Allgemeine Ideen*), "Fundamental Concepts" (*Grundbegriffe*), "Method for a science of culture" (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Methode*), etc.⁵⁵⁸

Reading these manuscripts can be a very disappointing experience for anyone looking to find in them a clearly formulated theoretical framework. Warburg had long before given up on creating such frameworks. In these texts, therefore, the author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* does not attempt any formal presentation. He devotes his energies instead, erratically but tirelessly, to a *theoretical experience*—at once a testing [épreuve] and an experiment [expérimentation]—which finds its coherence in the very style of its exposition. The latter relates to the standard philosophical dissertation exactly as the *Mnemosyne Atlas* relates to a standard historical account. It is composed entirely of repetitions (revenances) intersected by strokes of genius (survenance) as well as by large empty stretches (blank spaces, silences, intervals).

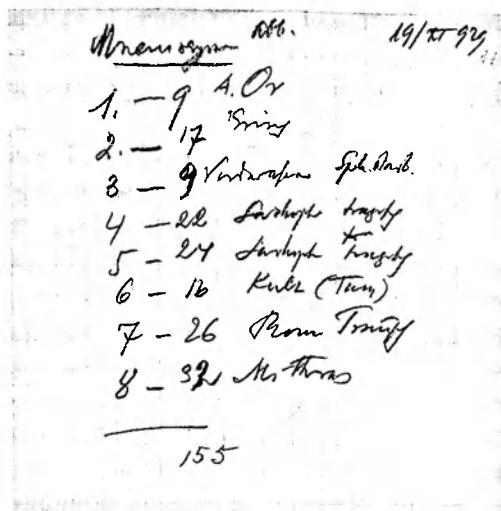
Reading these texts turns out to be by turns exhausting, exciting, and disquieting. The two volumes of *Grundbegriffe*, for example, are almost entirely occupied by the quest—compulsive, proliferating to the point of delirium—for a subtitle for the *Mnemosyne Atlas*: the various versions number in the dozens.⁵⁵⁹ As for the 222 folio pages of the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Methode*, they bear approximately the same relation to a treatise on method as *Finnegans Wake* bears to a realistic novel: the theoretical intuitions fly off in every direction, and everywhere there is an absence of links, of the articulations of an argument.⁵⁶⁰ The ideas are disposed on the white pages like the images on the black screens of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*: in living piles, in constellations, in exploding packets.

One of these manuscripts, dating from 1929, bears a very significant title: "Fugitive notes" (*Flüchtige Notizen*).⁵⁶¹ In it Warburg attempts to develop several hypotheses for the arrangement of his atlas. The plates are provisionally numbered and ordered, and placed facing a stenographic summary of their theme. Thus, one reads—one example among many other possible ones—for the date of 19 September 1929 (fig. 88):

Mnemosyne. Pl[ates]:
1-9. A[n]cient] Or[ient]
2-17. Greece
3-9. Asia Minor Sph[aera] Barb[arica]
4-22. Sarcoph[agus] tragic
5.-24. Sarcoph[agus]tragic
6-16. Cult (dance)
7-26. Rome, triumph
8.-32. Mithra⁵⁶²

In these scattered notes one can find all the shades of meaning of the German adjective that Warburg uses here: *flüchtig*. What he is attempting to construct will in fact remain ineluctably ephemeral, temporary, transitory,

FIG. 88 Aby Warburg, "Flüchtige Notizen," 1929, III.12.32, fol. 11. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.



volatile . . . and thus always incomplete, always needing to be redone.⁵⁶³ The ideas *burst forth*, but they also *flee*. This twofold state offers a good summary of Warburg's whole way of thinking—its genius and its suffering—at the time when he was trying to elaborate the *Mnemosyne Atlas*.

Whether it is a matter of images pinned to a cloth or of works thrown down, as it were, on paper, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* project surely derives from what we might call an *explosive style of thinking* [*une pensée en fusées*]. By that we mean everything that the word *fusée* can mean in French: (1) *something temporal*, since the "*fusée*" is the technical name of the horological mechanism necessary for rewinding a clock; (2) *something intricated*, since the "*fusée*" also designates the mass of thread rolled around the spindle of a loom (which is why, figuratively, we say "untangle a spindle" ["*démêler une fusée*"] for penetrating or "unraveling a mystery," or "finish off his spindle" ["*achever sa fusée*"] for "ending his life"); or (3) *something projected, something illuminated* and employed for the ephemeral beauty of fireworks or for the definitive death of enemies in an artillery battle. In music the "*fusée*" is an extremely quick diatonic note that only a few great singers can boast of mastering. But it is, above all, a French equivalent of the German word *Witz*: a witty or brilliant remark.

Voltaire—a man of the Enlightenment—liked this word and used it. But it was Baudelaire—a man at home in chiaroscuro—who lent it its true stylistic dignity when he employed *Fusées* as the title of a collection of erratic thoughts, as philosophically profound as they are free from dogmatism in their intimacy of tone. There we find a whole conception of pagan culture and survivals that Warburg undoubtedly would not have objected to. Baudelaire suggests, among other things, that the sacred survives everything, even and indeed, above all, the nonexistence of God; that pantheism survives into modernity; that magic

survives in language, even and especially in popular sayings, in its unperceived aspects; and that, finally, civilized man is no less "in the savage state" than an American Indian.⁵⁶⁴

Baudelaire was aware that his *Fusées* [*Skyrockets*], spurting forth but fugitive, did not constitute a "work" [une "oeuvre"] in the sense of something completed—any more than did his *Pensées d'album*, his *Aphorismes*, or the jottings [notules] of his *Mon coeur mis à nu* [My heart laid bare]: "I believe that I have produced what the professionals call an 'hors-d'oeuvre,'" he wrote. "Yet I will leave these pages, because I want to record my anger."⁵⁶⁵ Warburg, too, preserved all his *Flüchtige Notizen*, taking care, day after day, to record his anxieties. Warburg hastily jotted down the arrangements of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* and the most complex hypotheses about the structure of symbols with the urgency and fragility one would expect to find in an intimate journal. He knew, therefore, that he was writing only the "hors d'oeuvre" of a future art history, an "hors d'oeuvre" whose very depth, with its character of *more-than-thought* [*plus-que-pensée*], had to be paid for by the permanent disassociation of a state of *near-insanity*.

Binswanger wrote one day to Warburg's son that, at a later date, his father's psychosis would merit being described and analyzed on account of its great fecundity. Binswanger never did that, however, since it was apparently too difficult to disentangle, within the same *emotional style* [*style pathique*], the rockets [fusées] generated by thinking from those produced by the impossibility of thinking. But only four years after the death of his illustrious patient, he published a magisterial work of which it has sometimes been remarked that it perhaps owes certain of its pages to the daily observation, in the years 1921 to 1924, of Warburg's style of thinking. It is, in fact, a book on the twofold notion of *Flüchtiges*: a book on the way that the ideas that *spurt out* [*fusent*] cause their author—their actor—to run the risk of having only ideas which *flee*.

Über Ideenflucht (On the flight of ideas) appears at first to be a study of the *maniacal mode* of thinking and existing: "For the maniac, nothing is definitive." There is only a *world in which division, opposition, and contradiction reign*. Instead of describing psychologically the maniac's changes of state "from one extreme to the other, sometimes transported by joy, and sometimes mortally afflicted," Binswanger tries to offer an anthropological characterization of the maniac, whom he baptizes "the problematic man" (*der problematische Mensch*) par excellence.⁵⁶⁶ In this way of considering the problem, the maniac becomes the man "who has the clearest mind concerning the oppositions" which structure the real world as well as the imaginary ones he experiences.⁵⁶⁷

The "fleeing ideas" thus turn the patient into an extraordinarily lucid observer: he sees the world in its constitutive "transience" and plasticity; he perceives the relationships among things better than he perceives the things themselves, with the result that the "contours of the objects of his thinking are no longer sharp" and tend to a generalized "pallidness"⁵⁶⁸—to that *grisaille* which so fascinated Warburg.

But, in pondering this general intrication, this fluidity of all things, teeming with polarities and antinomies, Binswanger understood—with the help of Bergson and Dilthey, but also of Rilke and Proust—that all this is a question of time, of rhythm, of tempo.⁵⁶⁹ The man with the fleeting ideas is thus the man of sudden changes, of rapidity, of the “rocket” [“fusée”]: his rhythm is the *jump from one thought to another*. When the jump is festive, it is a dance (and one is aware of the importance Warburg attributed to the latter). When it is not, it is a loss, a fall, a whirlwind with “howls and violent gesticulations”⁵⁷⁰ (of the type that Warburg often displayed at Kreuzlingen). But in all these cases, *the jump is the method*: it is first of all as a heuristic that one must interpret the “[maniacal] linkage of ideas”:

Even [if only] in a *fugitive* manner, [the] patient always pays attention to the *rule* or the *method* determined by the conceptual theme, and to the *linkage of [his] thoughts*. . . . Seen from the vantage point of his original behavior, his thought certainly displays no [tendency] to jump over an intermediate element, but solely a *determinate manner of the jump itself*. This stems from the act that, for [the] patient, everything—thoughts, people, things—is much closer together “in space,” so that [he] has “everything within reach,” much nearer and more easily [than in the normal case].⁵⁷¹

This is a good description of what the *Mnemosyne Atlas* represented for Warburg: a way of having “at hand” a whole multiplicity of images, a practical tool for “jumping” easily from one to the other. But this jump, Binswanger remarks, bears, beyond its *rapidity*—its capacity, as I would put it, of allowing the *survivals* to spurt forth—a second characteristic, which is *repetition*, the tempo of the *revenances*. The man with fleeting ideas is also the man with ideas which return, except that they never return completely, a circumstance which constantly incites him to make renewed attempts.⁵⁷² This is exactly the impression, a painful one, that one is left with after reading Warburg’s manuscripts.

The genius of Binswanger lay in not leaving things at this point. Contrary to everything that Wernicke had affirmed concerning the incoherence and dissolution of “fleeting ideas,”⁵⁷³ he attempted to bring to light the *serial coherence*, indeed the *knowledge value* [*valeur de connaissance*], inherent in this type of thinking. It is very disturbing to recognize, in Binswanger’s description of “maniac grammar,” a quite precise insight into Warburg’s late style: a “linguistic prolixity” which uses and abuses “compression” or the concision of formulas; an immoderate taste for series with an abundance of rimes, assonance, similarities between words (alternately close to poetry and to drivel); a recurrent use of corrections, inversions, and negations; a characteristic rarity of verbal forms (“the retreat of the verb,” as Binswanger puts it) in favor of an accumulation of nouns; the coexistence of a fragmentation of words and of a linkage of syllables permitting the “new formation of other words”; the high level of complexity of meanings capable of lodging themselves in an “impoverishment of syntactic

articulation"; and the ludic, and sometimes poetic, character of the puns, and even of the "grand words" pronounced as prophecies.⁵⁷⁴

Thus, the man with fleeting ideas constructs his "castles in the air" (*Luft-Schlösser*), as Binswanger terms it. Does that mean that he lives in a world of illusion? Not at all. For one has to invert the psychologico-positivistic perspective—for which the symptom is a deficiency and exaltation an error—and consider, in a phenomenological way, the "problem of the existential meaning of the imagination (*Phantasie*)."⁵⁷⁵ The imagination is so predominant in the style of the man with fleeting ideas that the only knowledge he is capable of achieving—but in this domain he is a master—concerns images; it is, Binswanger states, an *aesthetic knowledge*, in which the "mental life" knows, more than elsewhere, how to become intricately in the "life of the drives."⁵⁷⁵

Indeed, Binswanger did not hesitate to recognize in someone with this condition not only an "intellectual dignity but also a moral one." And to make his point he cites two examples—important ones for Warburg throughout his life, as we have seen: Nietzsche and Goethe. According to Binswanger, they both definitively posed the question of whether the "maniacal style" is the razor-sharp dividing line between psychosis and genius.⁵⁷⁶ Binswanger's conclusion again accords with a theme that is omnipresent in Warburg's work when he writes that the "flight of ideas" manifests a "demonic form of existence" that is precisely characterized by the "tension between the creation of form and the destruction of form" (*Spannung zwischen Formschöpfung und Formzerstörung*).⁵⁷⁷ Does not the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, like Penelope's cloth, respond exactly to the rhythm—the systole and diastole—of such an oscillation?

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Warburg himself had offered a somewhat similar interpretation of his own work. In December 1927, feverishly preparing for the annual meeting of the governing committee of his library—where he would have to sit face to face with his banker brothers and justify a new financial subsidy—he wrote a short presentation in the form of an intellectual autobiography. It is entitled *Vom Arsenal zum Laboratorium* (From the arsenal to the laboratory).

In it one finds, in a very condensed form, the whole dialectic—and gamble—which was to serve as the scientific basis of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* he was trying to construct. At the start, Warburg presents his work as having always been motivated (but perpetually threatened) by *contradiction*, and he attributes "the beginning of [his] intellectual development" (*der Anfangspunkt meiner wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung*), the initial affirmation of his own self, to the "struggle against a severely dogmatic orthodoxy" (*der Kampf mit einer dogmatisch strengen Orthodoxie*), which was suffocating him.⁵⁷⁸ Here we may understand the latter term in all its possible dimensions, including familial, since Orthodox Judaism was the first obstacle he had to surmount in his project of devoting his life—his "dominant passion"—to images; and intellectual, since the historical orthodoxy

of Winckelmann and the aesthetic orthodoxy of Lessing had been the first obstacles to overcome in his project of establishing an art history understood as anthropology or *Kulturwissenschaft*.⁵⁷⁹

At the same time, Warburg admits that his work is motivated (but perpetually threatened) by *intrication* and the loss of self that it presupposes. He is aware of the intrinsic folly of his initial project, which is to have wanted to consider all the images along with all their possible interrelationships. He adds that "in order to avoid the danger of my projects becoming infinitely dispersed (*dass mein Forscherwille sich nicht ins Unendliche verlor*), I have maintained, as the core of my research, the theme of the influence of Antiquity."⁵⁸⁰ But this is a limitation in name only; for Warburg knows very well that with the concept of the *Nachleben* he has set free the entire mass—the "rocket"—of an infinitely branched historical material.

The "revenant" of Kreuzlingen—as Warburg called himself at this period—was also well aware that the *style of his way of knowing things* [*le style de son savoir*] had always been motivated, but also threatened, by the same dialectic. A constitutional sensitivity to the power of images obliged him to experience the empathies, the attractions, and the alienations of a "nervous disease" (*nervöse Erkrankung*); but this very fragility simultaneously gave him a "chance to freely develop [his] passion for research."⁵⁸¹ It was as if his insanity, which threatened to destroy him (through an overabundance of intrication), also protected him in his struggle to oppose (through ceaseless contradiction) all the reigning orthodoxies.

Warburg concluded this brief and magnificent "self-presentation" (*Selbstdarstellung*) by showing that the dialectic of contradiction and intrication governed his style of knowing things so forcefully only because it governed, in the first place, the *objects of his knowledge*. Were not his first contributions to art history, at the time of his studies on Botticelli and Ghirlandaio, concerned with revealing the "process of polarization in the formation of style" (*der Prozess der Polarität der Stilbildung*)? Were not the contradictions he found there omnipresent, including those between North and South, realism and classicism, and Apollonian and Dionysian? Did he not find, however, that all these antinomies and all these tensions also turned out to be intricated among themselves, as if they existed within one and the same ceaselessly moving "enigmatic organism"? Warburg was so convinced of this that he wrote one must "consider works of art to be the stylistic product of an entanglement with the dynamic of life itself" (*eine Verflochtenheit mit der Dynamik des Lebens*), which, he stresses, is precisely what he saw with his own eyes during his travels in the land of the Hopi Indians.⁵⁸²

Why, we may ask, does he call the place to observe this dialectic a *laboratory*? It is because direct observation—whether spontaneous, positivist, or historicist—does not allow one to comprehend as a single ensemble the relevant intrications (whether considering the phenomena en masse, as tangled

together, or in their fluidity) and contradictions (i.e., the phenomena of rupture, of tension, and of polarity). For that, one needs to invent an *experimental* protocol. This is what the library was meant to achieve with its very particular classification, designed to engender individual problems, as well as series of problems. It is also the role of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, which was an experimental protocol conceived to present visually, and as an ensemble, the intrications and polarities of the *Nachleben der Antike*.

To achieve this, it was necessary to invent a new form of collecting and of displaying. A form which would be neither an *arrangement* [*rangement*] (which consists in placing together things that differ as little as possible, under the authority of a totalitarian principle of reason) nor *bric-a-brac* (which consists in placing together things as different as possible in a totally arbitrary manner, in the absence of any authority). It was necessary to show that the fluxes consist exclusively of tensions, that the potentially explosive packets [*gerbes*] that have been amassed will indeed wind up by bursting forth, but, equally, to show that differences also form specific configurations and that, when taken together, the dissimilarities create unperceived orders of coherence. Let us call this new form a *montage*.⁵⁸³

The montage—at least in the sense that interests us here—is not the artificial creation of a temporal continuity on the basis of discontinuous “planes” [“plans”] arranged in sequences. It is, on the contrary, a way of *visually unfolding the discontinuities of time* throughout all of history. When Warburg “mounts” on the same plate of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* the agony of a vanquished figure from Antiquity and the triumph of a Renaissance conqueror (fig. 44), he is “recounting” the use value of the same gestural formula only in order to *break the temporal unity* of this destiny: the formula survived only at the price of a fundamental hiatus, which here is found in the “dynamic inversion” of its meaning.

Each montage at work in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* liberates, it seems to me, paradoxes of this kind: the manifest disparities are almost always the signs of latent connections, and the manifest homologies are almost always the signs of latent antinomies. In this context, therefore, the “mounting of images” never derives from an artificial narrative designed to unify scattered phenomena; on the contrary, it is a dialectical tool which splits the apparent unity of the figurative traditions of the West.

Once again, the manuscripts Warburg worked on in parallel with the constitution of the atlas lend support to this practice, characteristic of Warburg's montages, of “dissociative linkages,” which are also deconstructive and hence *analytical* in the strong sense of the term. Thus, the idea of a *Nachgestaltung*, which seems to combine in a single *survival formation* a “formation according to a matrix” [d'après une matrice] and a “formation after the fact,” presupposes at the same time the preexistence of an “inventory of original impressions” (*Inventar der Vorprägungen*) and the transformation necessary to every “creation of style” (*stilbildende Funktion*).⁵⁸⁴

When reading these fragments, one quickly comes to understand that the form of *montage* inaugurated in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* tends to displace the canonical arrangement of the comparative *table*, just as a nonorthodox form of the dialectic, a *proliferating dialectic*, replaces any pretension to the establishment of a *unifying dialectic* (whether one of Hegelian reconciliation or of the "functional unity" proposed by Cassirer). In the years 1905 to 1911, Warburg was still making use of double-entry (and later) triple-entry comparative tables⁵⁸⁵ (fig. 47). But during his final years, the *montage* form he used presented simultaneously as many elements to be compared to each other as the pile of snakes presented interlaced animals.

The images of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* are intended to illustrate this process, which one could define as the attempt to absorb pre-coined expressive values by means of the representation of life in motion. Its images will most immediately form the basis of an inventory of pre-coined classical forms which inform the stylistic development of the representation of life in motion in the age of the Renaissance. Such a comparative analysis would have . . . to draw on a more penetrating examination of social psychology, in order to grasp the sense of these remembered expressive values as a functional and meaningful intellectual technique.⁵⁸⁶

With the *Mnemosyne Atlas* Warburg truly invented a new form of comparison. At one point—during the *n*th attempt to come up with a subtitle for his atlas—he called it a "comparative linkage of the images of art in history [with a view toward a] science of culture" (*Vergleich kunstgeschichtlicher Kulturwissenschaft*).⁵⁸⁷ In this context, how could the dialectical tenor of the phenomena fail to engender a proliferation of relationships? The polarities or the contradictions thus affected each organism, each organ of this living ensemble; every function will be at least "doubly oriented" (*doppeltendenziös*); every "conceptual space" (*Denkraum*) will be surrounded by a "space of desire" (*Wunschraum*) which simultaneously guides and disorients it. Henceforth, no one will be able to claim he or she understands an image without undertaking an analysis of the context in which it is inscribed and which it disturbs at the same time. According to Warburg, all energy will seek to expand its domain, but it will also tend to become involuted, and even inverted—and all this type of activity will continue in an endless play of metamorphoses.⁵⁸⁸

All art will henceforth be understood as an art of memory. But the transmission of the latter—in what Warburg call the "migration of images" (*Bilderwanderung*)—will be engulfed in the "drama of the soul" (*Seelendrama*) engendered by the schism of conscious memories and unconscious engrams.⁵⁸⁹ The result is that every *historical strand* will be entangled in the mass—or else projected into the lightning flash—of the *rockets of memory* [*fusées de la mémoire*]. Hence, in the atlas we find presented together, on the same plate, epochs far distant from each other in time. The basic anachronism of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is thus completely justified by the concept that gives it its very title. Memory is not deciphered through a

text oriented by successive historical stages, but rather in the anachronistic puzzle of the “survivals of Antiquity”—whether it takes the form of a sarcophagus next to a postage stamp or an ancient nymph next to a contemporary female golfer.

* * *

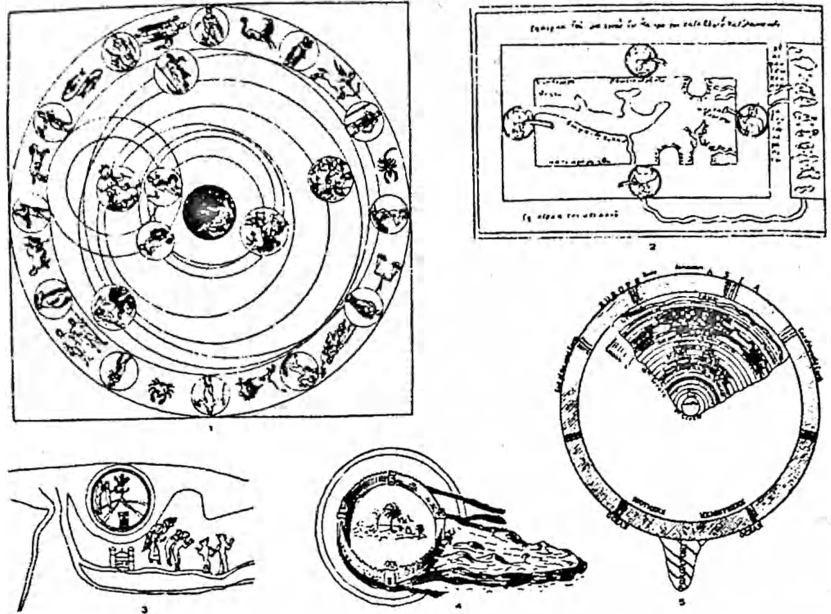
While it is a montage, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* clearly offers something very different than a simple collection of memory images [images-souvenir] recounting a story. It is a complex mechanism designed to present, indeed to open up, the visual markers of an aspect of historical memory that had hitherto remained unexplored or even undetected, namely that which Warburg had always termed *Nachleben*. The knowledge it yields is so new in the field of the human sciences that it seems very difficult to find models for it, let alone equivalents.

Atlases did, however, proliferate at the end of the nineteenth century. Whereas Darwin's essay on *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* still appears as a book occasionally illustrated by line engravings (figs. 40, 41) and a few photographs, Duchenne de Boulogne's work *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine* is already divided into two parts: a text offering “general considerations” and a photographic “atlas” that is also called “Partie esthétique” (fig. 42). In 1875, Charcot created his *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, while Cesare Lombroso, in 1878, recorded the results of his studies of “criminal anthropology” in an atlas which constituted a separate volume on its own.⁵⁹⁰

In Germany, the *Ethnologisches Bilderbuch* of Adolf Bastian, published in 1887, probably gives us a good idea of what Warburg would have expected of a summary, comparative presentation of anthropological themes arranged in the form of a repertory.⁵⁹¹ But a comparison of the plate that Bastian devotes to cosmological illustrations (fig. 89) with its Warburgian equivalent (fig. 90) immediately makes clear how vastly different they are. In the one case, the unity of representation—all the images are reduced to the same type of line engraving—serves as support for a hypothesis concerning the unity of meaning, namely that in all periods of human history people have had a tendency to represent the world in a circular fashion. In the other case, the disparity in the representation, with the objects shown in their respective formats and their heterogeneous materials (Babylonian terra-cotta, Etruscan bronze, or Roman stone, next to Ptolemaic miniatures or Egyptian reliefs), immediately renders the perception of the theme under consideration more complex and more problematic.

Whereas Bastian is content to compare *symbolic schemas* reduced to the same scale, Warburg enters into the heart—and the disproportion—of the anthropological questions raised by the very idea of a “cosmos.” It is only when viewing the plate of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* that one understands the *imaginary intrication* of the relationship between man and the image he constructs of his universe. That is why on this plate one sees representations of the sky placed together, but also a whole world carried on the back of a man (Atlas) and, what is more, worlds configured within our own viscera (at the top of the plate are four

FIG. 89 Cosmological and geographic illustrations. Reprinted from A. Bastian, *Ethnologisches Bilderbuch* (Berlin, 1887), pl. 15.



photographs of livers used by the Babylonians and Etruscans for the purposes of “divination”) (fig. 90).

In order to account for the strange appearance of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, several of the most knowledgeable commentators on Warburg have proposed an artistic and avant-garde model, contradictory to, but perhaps also complementary to, this scholarly and positivist one. The first to do so, William Heckscher, suggested that Warburg’s atlas employed a form of composition (though one seeming to be a noncomposition) equivalent to certain artistic experiments contemporary with Warburg’s work, including the cubist collages of Braque and Picasso, Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and the experiments in cinematography of the first decades of the century.⁵⁹² Martin Warnke, Werner Hofmann, and several others then developed the notion of collage as Warburg’s model, recalling the experiments of the Dadaists and the Surrealists.⁵⁹³ Recently, Giorgio Agamben and then Philippe-Alain Michaud have taken up the notion of “montage” in its most specific sense, seeing Warburg’s efforts as a real manipulation of “photograms,” in short, as a “history of art in the age of cinematography.”⁵⁹⁴

These comparisons are debatable, and not only because Warburg was completely unaware of the montages of the Surrealists or of Marcel Duchamp; he was even, it appears, uninterested in the cinematographic experiments of his time. For example, while he was feverishly attempting to acquire a cast of a liver used for divination in Piacenza,⁵⁹⁵ he never tried to procure the short films made by Dickson of Indian dances. Thus, Benjamin Buchloh has sharply

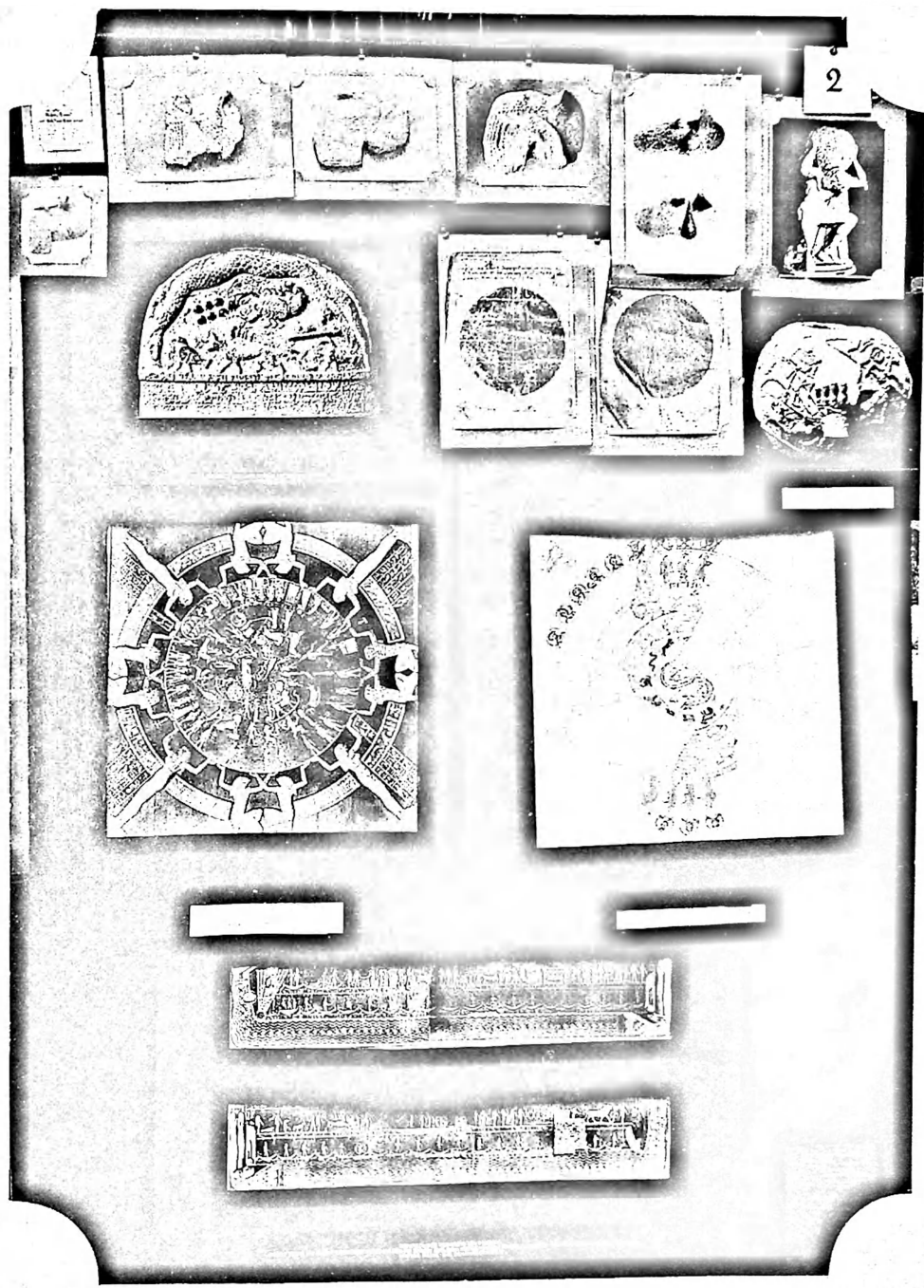


FIG. 90 Aby Warburg, provisional version of plate 2, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927–29. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

challenged "any comparison between Warburg and the montage techniques of the avant-garde."⁵⁹⁶

His argument is threefold. First of all, it is specific or *technical* in the sense that he emphasizes the procedural differences that separate all the avant-garde types of assemblage from the arrangements of material in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In this regard, Buchloh is right to distinguish the photographic montages of Rodchenko from those of Warburg: they are not produced in the same manner and consequently do not signify the same thing. Second, there is the question of the *ideological* division concerning the confidence—or lack of it—that one should place in the "emancipatory functions of technological reproduction and dissemination," a debate which, at the period, saw Siegfried Kracauer and certain Russian avant-garde artists taking opposing positions.⁵⁹⁷

It soon becomes obvious, however, that it is misleading to maintain such sharp divisions, and with so little dialectical awareness. The liberation that a technique provides in one area may be offset by restrictions in another. Warburg harshly criticized the way in which modern techniques, the telephone in particular, had become "ominous destroyers of the sense of distance" (*verhängnisvolle Ferngefühl-Zerstörer*),⁵⁹⁸ yet he equipped his library with telephones and with sophisticated means for rapidly transmitting the books. He was probably well aware that what he gained by manipulating his thousands of photographs had to be weighed against all that he lost thereby: the scale of the objects, the empathic relationship to colors, the concrete space, and even the dusty air of that Florentine *Archivio* where he used to say that he heard the "timbre of the voices" of the men and women of the Quattrocento.⁵⁹⁹

A much more general and *philosophical* argument supports Benjamin Buchloh's rejection of the attempt to understand the *Mnemosyne Atlas* in terms of a montage. It concerns the models of time inherent in the atlas, on the one hand, and in "avant-garde" thought, on the other. The atlas emerged from an attempt to "model of the construction of social memory" and to reconstitute the "different layers of cultural transmission." According to Buchloh, that presupposes that the *Mnemosyne Atlas* employs "a model of historical memory and continuity of experience" which is opposed in all respects to models of modernity, inasmuch as they "provid[e] instantaneous presence, shock, and perceptual rupture."⁶⁰⁰

Presented as something totally obvious, this latter opposition—instantaneousness and rupture, on the one hand, and memory and continuity, on the other—has the great demerit of subscribing to a postmodernist credo, one inspired, notably, by the questionable authority of Jean Baudrillard.⁶⁰¹ Beyond the fact that it excessively schematizes the *history* of the avant-gardes themselves,⁶⁰² this approach completely misunderstands the meaning given by Warburg—and by certain of his contemporaries, such as Freud and Walter Benjamin—to the notion of *memory*.

Buchloh is satisfied, in fact, to prolong the usual confusion of survival with the "continuity of the tradition," and of memory with the "mnemonic ties

to the past." He is thus unable to imagine what the theoretical lesson of the symptom has taught us: that the act of memory presupposes the intrication of everything that he wishes to oppose—we must expect to find "shock" *with* "historical memory" and "rupture" *with* "cultural transmission."⁶⁰³ It is not because it is a mechanism for conveying memory that Warburg's atlas does not invent anything as radically "shocking" and out of step with its time as a Surrealist montage in the manner of *Documents*. [*Documents* was a Surrealist journal published in Paris from 1929 to 1930—Trans.]

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* is thus clearly, in its way, an avant-garde object. Not because it *makes a break with the past*, of course (a past into which it ceaselessly plunges); but because it makes a break with a certain way of *thinking about the past* (regarding which our contemporary postmodernists propose, without knowing it, the most trivial schemas, even if only those of *ante* and *post*). The Warburgian break consists precisely in *having thought about time itself as a montage* of heterogeneous elements. This is the anthropological lesson of the "survival formations," and one which finds such a strong parallel in the metapsychological domain in the form of "symptom formations."

The montage we see in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is obviously not a *procedure* that Warburg might have borrowed from Geroges Braque, Kurt Schwitters, or Alexander Rodchenko in order to produce his atlas. It is not only the way it constructs its objects which obliges us to see that montage is used in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*; it is, above all, the *paradigm* itself of the thinking which supports it and of the knowledge which results from it. William Heckscher has understood this, as we can see from his discussing Warburg's constructions in terms of "decompartmentalization" and of "interpenetration." Moreover, in this regard he cites Warburg's remark that "thoughts cross frontiers without having to pay a toll" (*Gedanken sind zollfrei*).⁶⁰⁴ Now, it is only montage, considered as *a form of thinking*, that makes it possible to spatialize this "deterritorialization" of the objects of knowledge.

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* is an avant-garde object in the sense that it dares to deconstruct the historicist *souvenir album* [*album-souvenirs*] of the "influences of Antiquity," in order to replace it with an atlas of memory. However, this is an atlas in which memory is shown to be erratic, governed by the unconscious, saturated with heterogeneous images, invaded by anachronistic or immemorial elements, and surrounded by the blackness of the screens, which, in many cases, is an indicator of empty spaces, of *missing links*, of memory gaps. Given that memory is made up of gaps, the new role that Warburg attributes to the historian of culture is that of an interpreter of repressions, of a "seer" (*Seher*) of the black holes of memory.⁶⁰⁵ The *Mnemosyne Atlas* is an untimely object because it dares, in the age of positivism and of the triumph of history, to function as a puzzle or a game of tarot, in which the cards are not subject to the normal rules (allowing unlimited configurations and an infinitely variable number of cards to play with). The differences are never absorbed into some kind of superior identity: as in the fluid world of "participation," they are *animated*

by their interrelationships, which are detected—through constantly renewed experimentation—by the fortune-teller of this game played with time.

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* is thus the anachronistic object par excellence: it plunges into time immemorial (in the Babylonian astrology of the first plates) and later jumps forward to the future (in the prediction, in the last plates, of the outbursts of fascism and anti-Semitism).⁶⁰⁶ It has been said that the atlas lies midway between the Talmud and the Internet.⁶⁰⁷ Above all, it creates an entirely new epistemic configuration: a *knowledge obtained by means of montage*, close to that conceived of by Walter Benjamin, but also to that of Bataille and Eisenstein.⁶⁰⁸ And it achieves this on the basis of an observation of the *Nachleben* itself; for *the images, which are bearers of survivals, are essentially montages of heterogenous meanings and temporalities.*

In this sense, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* is an ageless object. For it mimics the very thing it seeks to know, namely the temporal montage that is constituted by every “survival formation.” Warburg had an intuition of this very early on, since in his manuscript notes from 1890 we find him observing that the “vital movement” of the figures of the Renaissance—we may think of Pollaiuolo—owed its force not to an “isolated image” but, in every case, to a “sequence of images”: “Attribution of movement. In order to attribute movement to a figure which is not moving, it is necessary to awaken a series of images which are linked to each other—not an isolated image (*kein einzelnes Bild*): loss of calm contemplation.”⁶⁰⁹

Let us consider one example. Plate 43 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, devoted to Ghirlandaio's Sassetti chapel (fig. 91), clearly appears to be a *dismantling* [*démontage*] of the pictorial ensemble itself (fig. 92): that is to say, an interpretive *reassembling* [*remontage*] of its main configurations. At the upper right, the entire space of the chapel is displayed in three drawings due to Mary Hertz, Warburg's wife, who was herself a painter. Right next to that it is a presentation of stylistic and iconographic history that we find displayed, specifically in the comparison between *The Confirmation of the Rule of Saint Francis* by Giotto and the renewed version by Ghirlandaio.⁶¹⁰ Warburg sets up other comparisons: between Ghirlandaio's retable (northern and classicizing) and a contemporary *Madonna* by his brother Benedetto (inspired exclusively by the tradition of the Master of Moulins); and between Ghirlandaio's *Saint Jerome* and Botticelli's *Saint Augustine*. All the other fragments of this montage are concerned with the portraits: the kneeling donors, the children, and their humanist tutors piling out of the famous underground staircase invented by the painter, and finally the group of notables, among whom Warburg recognized, between Francesco Sassetti and his brother Bartolomeo, the figure of Lorenzo de Medici.⁶¹¹

The plate of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* thus *produces* [*fait acte*], interpretively, a montage by displaying, on the black screen, visual makers organized either in polarities or in sequences of details (“photograms”). At the same time, it *makes evident* [*prend acte*], even if only partially, the fact that the chapel presents itself as being an art of memory, a gigantic album unfolded on the walls of

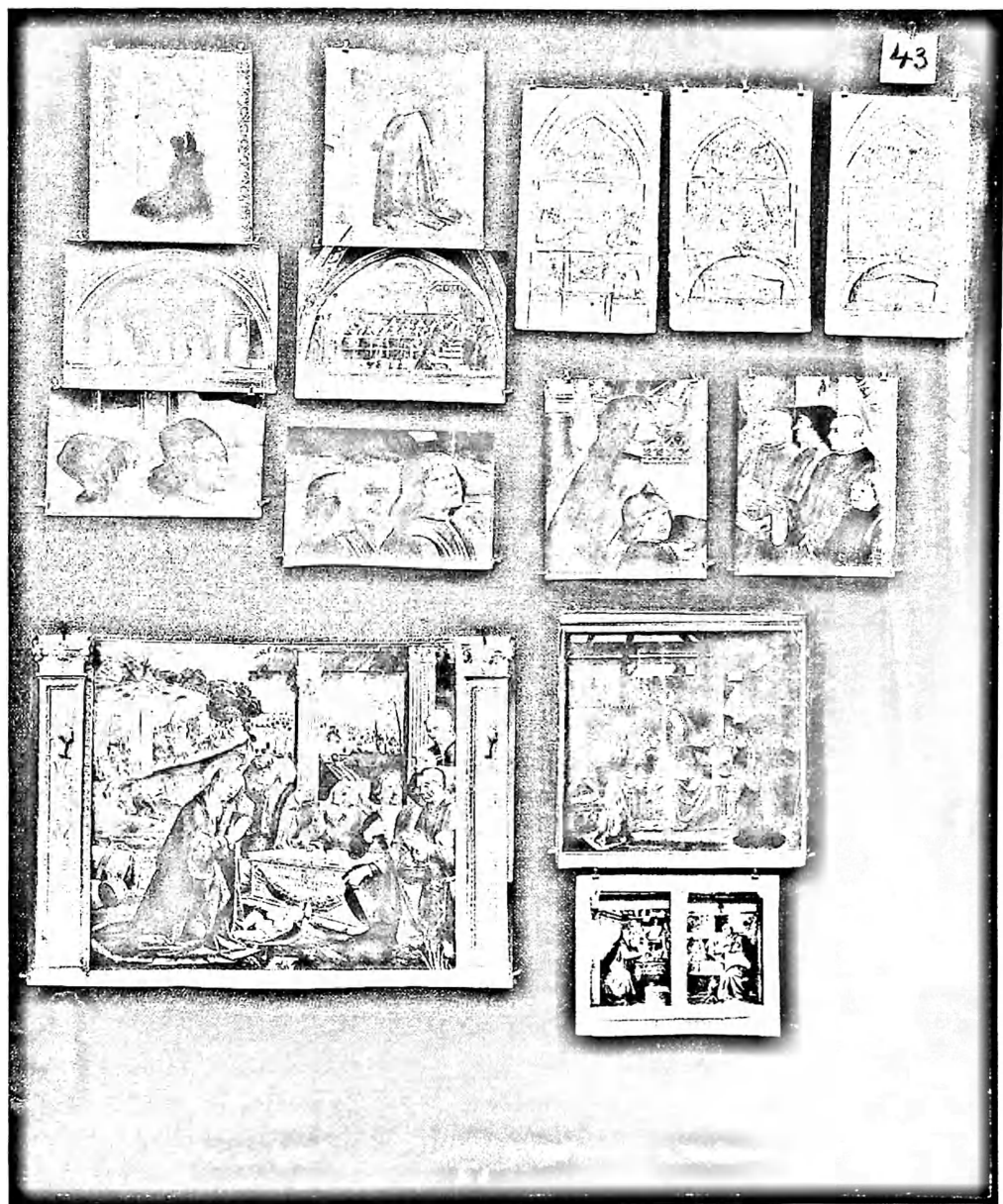


FIG. 91 Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, 1927-29, pl. 43. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

FIG. 92 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Sassetti Chapel*, 1479–85, Santa Trinita, Florence. Frescoed walls and altar in tempera on wood. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, Sailko.



the Florentine church, a space of iconographic and temporal montage. The “present” of the portraits anticipates the “future” mortality of the donors: the chapel is funereal, with the images of Sassetti and his wife placed adjacent to their own sarcophagi. The “past” of the Franciscan legends or of the stories of Christ serves as a model for the “future” of the Resurrection: a divine child is born on the altar table, with his head supported by an ancient sarcophagus; a dead child, an allusion to a family drama of the Sassettis, is resuscitated in the scene depicted in the next register; while a number of children emerge from the ground in the highest register of the chapel’s decoration. All of that occurs under the liturgical authority of the altar and its inexhaustibly renewable “real presence” (with aid of the Holy Communion).

Ghirlandaio thus *assembled* [*monté*] in its frescoes all the levels of the sacred and profane, of private and public, of distant space (Bethlehem) and local space (Florence), of the history of Christ and of Franciscan history (which is an imitation of the former), of the northern realistic style and the southern classicizing style, of medieval values and Renaissance values, of the humanist intellectual and of bourgeois “materialism,” of the births and deaths of all types—and integrated them all into a grand Christian figurative system haunted [*hanté*] by the survivals of ancient paganism.⁶¹²

The first model of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* should be sought, therefore, in the structure itself of the objects it analytically investigates, “disassembles” [*démonte*], and “reassembles” [*remonte*]. The atlas allows us to understand “survival formations” as montages; this is true for Ghirlandaio, but also for the

rebus-frescoes of the Palazzo Schifanoia, the bas-reliefs framed within the Arch of Constantine, and the enigmatic assemblages displayed in Dürer's engraving *Melancholia I*. It is equally true, however, that the images of this figurative tradition allow us to understand the importance of this knowledge acquired through montage and rooted in it (the very newness of which, paraphrasing Benjamin, returns us to the "whirlwind of the origin"). Does not the *Mnemosyne Atlas* create precisely this mutually enriching link between art and knowledge, between the sensible and the intelligible?⁶¹³ This, in any case, is what Warburg himself was seeking to establish in his atlas.⁶¹⁴ "Thanks to this research [for my atlas], I am today able to understand, and to demonstrate, that concrete thought and abstract thought are not strictly opposed to each other but, to the contrary, determine an organic circle of man's intellectual capacity. . . . In my *Mnemosyne [Atlas]* I hope to be able to represent such a dialectic in its historical development.

* * *

Of what, then, does a montage consist? What are its *elements*? Warburg, who did not have at his disposition the technique of the "photogram," often spoke in terms of "details." Details: little unperceived things, such as those discrete motifs lost in the grisaille of a fresco, the reverse side of an unknown medal, or the modest base of a statue that one sees, here and there, within Warburg's atlas. Details, above all: clippings, cutouts, and reframings crowded together in the vast field of images, like those isolated faces of the three children of Lorenzo the Magnificent on plate 43 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (fig. 91).

Here we are brought back to the most famous Warburgian motto (unfortunately as misused as it is celebrated): "The good Lord dwells in the details" (*der liebe Gott steckt im Detail*), a maxim Warburg made note of, in October 1925, for his Hamburg seminar. Gombrich, having found the phrase written in French in certain manuscripts, attributes it to Gustave Flaubert.⁶¹⁵ According to Wuttke, however, the direct source is really a philological dictum of Usener's, namely that "it is in the smallest points that the greatest forces lie."⁶¹⁶ But William Heckscher is surely right to look much further back in time—to Vico and to the "little perceptions" of Leibniz—for the origin of this theoretical, or theological, notion;⁶¹⁷ for one senses that it is the bearer of a whole tradition haunted by the image of the *mundus in gutta* [the world in a drop—Trans.] and by the problem of the *hidden truth* in all things, even the humblest.⁶¹⁸

The detail has no intrinsic epistemological status: everything depends on what is expected from it and on the use made of it. Thus, in order to understand Warburg's maxim, it is necessary to investigate the *use value* of the detail in his work. If plate 43 "brings together" in this manner the faces of the children who come spilling out of the ground in Ghirlandaio's fresco, it is because Warburg was seeking, by presenting them in detail, to singularize them. First of all, by giving names, by identifying them: Piero, Giovanni, and Giuliano de Medici. The detail thus serves, in the first place, as an *index of identity*: the

historian has scrutinized the faces, compared paintings to medals, followed the modifications of the physiognomies over time, studied the family crests, the *ricordanze* [memoirs], and the genealogies. And this how he was able to give a name to almost every one of the faces painted by Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinita or by Memling on the external panels of his *Last Judgment*.⁶¹⁹ Warburg applied the term “nominalism”—unhelpfully, perhaps—to this act of prosopographic reconstruction, the difficulties of which are close to those of “detective work”:

[In this case] the material supplied by historical detective work (*durch die Künste historischer Detektivarbeit*) lies before us, for the time being inert. For all the effort that has been lavished on digging for information, nothing as yet has emerged but the milestones on long-buried roads, with the distances half-obiterated. And yet, as we cast about for indirect ways of bringing the record to life (*indirekte Wiederbelebungsmitel*), historical nominalism (*der historische Nominalismus*) at long last comes into its own. Even so superficial a fact as the knowledge of Catarina’s maiden name restores her to us as a living personality (*lässt Catarina als leibhafte Persönlichkeit auferstehen*).⁶²⁰

By succeeding in identifying all these painted figures by means of “indirect methods” or of “external data”—that is to say, primarily through multiple cross-checkings in the archives—Warburg seems to have beaten the positivists on their own ground. The temptation is thus great to include Warburgian detail in the armory of the “scientific detectives” of art: “Warburg has worked so skillfully at making these figures speak that they revealed their own names to him,” writes, for example, Enrico Castelnuovo, with unfeigned admiration.⁶²¹ Consequently, the temptation is great to reduce the Warburgian “detail”—and with it the Freudian “symptom”—to “clues” of the type used by Sherlock Holmes (or, worse, in the manner used by Galton and Bertillon), or to the “criteria” used for identification by an “attributionist” historian like Morelli.⁶²²

The detail, according to Warburg, is not a simple index of identity, nor a *sèmeion* allowing us to include a work of art in a nosology of styles, nor, lastly, an iconological “key” enabling us to reveal the hidden meaning of images. The detail is always understood by Warburg on the basis of its *symptomatic* nature, which implies, at the least, four very precise points. First of all, the *identification* of the painted figures is not at all the goal of Warburgian interpretation. Just as, for Freud, the declaration of an identity (“It’s mama!”) does not mark the result of the analytical work but, on the contrary, its beginning, so, too, for Warburg, “Catarina’s maiden name” serves only to initiate the interpretative work, which, he says, aims at “resuscitating” (*auferstehen*) a phantom, at giving back to it something of its lost “incarnation” (*Leibheit*). The ultimate goal of Warburgian history is not the identity—the prosopography or the sociology—of the actors depicted in the image, but rather their paradoxical “life” (*Leben*) as enigmatic fossils: their *Nachleben*.

Secondly, for Warburg the detail is always to be understood on the basis of its intrusive effects or of the exception it represents; in short, as a *historical singularity*.⁶²³ The epigraph he chose for his 1902 text on the portrait is, not by chance, a "eulogy of the exception" taken from Francesco Guicciardini.⁶²⁴ This is indicative of the fact that Warburg's real concern is not the identity of the individuals represented in a Renaissance fresco, but rather the "particular character" (*Besonderheit*), one could even say the abnormal—or pathological—character, of the mysterious relationship established between a portraitist and his client, between an effigy and the person it represents. What he desires to investigate is not the "product" (*Resultat*) obtained by the artist but rather the "process" (*der Prozess im Werke*) intersubjectively employed in the making of the images.⁶²⁵

Thirdly, this singularity, this breach in the present, is understood, in turn, as the index of a *structure of survival*. If Ghirlandaio, in his retable, represents the devotion of the shepherds with such a luxury of details—the tracing of whose origin back to Flemish realism is sufficient to satisfy the historian—this is partly, Warburg states, in order to bring to life and to facilitate the survival of an ancient treasury of pagan superstitions linked to the practice of the ex-voto realists (molded on the deceased's own body) since Etruscan and Roman times. Accordingly, the "acute observation of the detail" in the painter's work should be interpreted as a function of an age-old anthropological phenomenon, a "religious background" in which one finds the "enigmatic" intrication of northern and southern customs, of Christianity and paganism, and of the historical Present and the surviving Long Ago.

Fourthly, this use of detail assumes that the scholar, in understanding its function, is guided by the *powers of the unconscious*. Just as in Freud's work, the detail in Warburg's work is revealed in the "rejection of observation": it is a detail *produced by displacement*, and not a *detail produced by enlargement*. Think, for example, of the famous "accessories in motion," those details which are practically ornamental and on which Botticelli placed the burden of supporting the "good God" of emotional expression.⁶²⁶ Likewise, think of the crucial importance—stylistic but also anthropological and symbolic—that Warburg accorded to the "minor arts" such as engraving and to the "applied arts" such as tapestry.⁶²⁷

For Warburg, therefore, detail is not a matter of a *consciousness of minutiae* directed at establishing with exactitude what is seen and discerned. That is why one finds scattered through his texts so many instances where the *detail is criticized* from an aesthetic point of view: for example, Piero della Francesca is praised for his doing "without the inessential" constituted by "natural phenomena," while Agnolo Gaddi is taxed for still indulging in them.⁶²⁸ The fact that this critique of detail "considered as exactitude" likewise elicited Warburg's praise of contemporary painters such as Arnold Böcklin and Max Klinger⁶²⁹ clearly indicates the degree to which his theoretical model, here as elsewhere, is "emotional" or even psychopathological (as Edgar Wind suggested already

in 1931).⁶³⁰ Accordingly, the significant detail pertains to movements or displacements of a desire that does not tell its name; what is involved here is less a *consciousness of minutiae* than a *sly unconscious* which is always quick to reside where one is not looking for it.

Does the "good Lord" of Warburg's aphorism harbor a sly genius and a certain power proper to phantasms? He in fact is not all-seeing, nor all-knowing, as a positivist would hope. The details turn out to be meaningful only when they are bearers of incertitude, of non-knowing, of disorientation. At the very period when Warburg was investigating the "compromises" that Ghirlandaio managed to effect between the Christian superego and the pagan survivals, Freud was discovering that the details which seem to convey certainty are only the mask or "screen" of a compromise with repression.⁶³¹ It is not by chance that Warburg's celebrated formula, "The good Lord dwells in the details," appears right next to another formula, one which is concerned, precisely, with non-knowing: "We are seeking to find our own ignorance, and where we find it, we fight it."⁶³²

Why tirelessly seek out this element of *non-knowledge* and then fight it? Quite simply put, why not be satisfied with *knowing*, as all scholars are supposed to be? Warburg's response to this question emerged from his own psychoanalytic experience at Kreuzlingen: non-knowledge bears the mark of what is most crucial in ourselves and in our culture, but also of what is the most "combated," the most repressed, the most excluded. For this reason, the "good Lord" should be seen as the emergence of all our unavowed demons in a "detail" which is capable of generating a paradoxical knowledge, namely a knowledge woven of non-knowledge, incapable of constituting its object without being implicated in it, without being entirely intricated in it.

In any case, Warburg's assumption that the detail has symptomatic value makes it easier to understand the strangely *non-iconographic* structure of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In 1891-92 Warburg had indeed attempted to classify certain figurative motifs by alphabetical order in a repertory entitled *Ikonomographische Notizen*, with entries like "Judas" under "J," "King" under "K," etc. But this repertory, like so many other attempts of this sort that Warburg made, remained almost entirely empty.⁶³³ It is clear that the dictionary model—that is to say, the organization found in Cesare Ripa's famous *Iconologia*—was unsuitable for an epistemologically informed study of survivals. Warburg's rhizomatic, comparative approach was less concerned with the *identification* of motifs and the law of their historical evolution than with their *contamination* and the latter's effect on survivals over time.⁶³⁴

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* makes it abundantly clear, right from the start, how Warburg, in breaking the iconographical guardrails, displaced, right from the start, all the ambitions of the type of *iconology* that he is assumed to have fathered. "Iconology" is certainly not the "science without a name" that Aby Warburg was hoping to create his whole life long. First of all, because it constitutes only one instrument among others—and that is the whole burden of his famous speech at the Congress of Rome in 1912.⁶³⁵ Secondly, and most

importantly, because the iconology magisterially developed by Erwin Panofsky has secretly rid itself of all the great theoretical challenges that Warburg's oeuvre had borne. Panofsky wanted to define the "meaning" of images, whereas Warburg sought to grasp their very "life" (*Leben*), their paradoxical "survival." Panofsky wanted to *interpret* the contents and the figurative "themes" beyond what they expressed, whereas Warburg sought to *understand* the "expressive value" of images beyond what they meant.

In short, Panofsky wanted to reduce particular symptoms to the *symbols* which encompassed them in a structure—in accord with the famous "unity of symbolic function" dear to Cassirer; whereas Warburg had undertaken to follow the reverse path: to reveal, within the apparent unity of the symbols, the structural schism of the *symptoms*. Panofsky wished to start out from Kant on the road to what we may call *knowledge-as-conquest*, and the success of this approach is to be seen in the extraordinary fecundity of his studies, his constant self-awareness, and the impressive quantity of the results he obtained. Warburg, in contrast, set out from Nietzsche on the path of what we may call *knowledge-as-tragedy*, and the results can be seen in the erratic nature of his studies, the extraordinary pain involved in his thinking, the place occupied in the latter by non-knowledge and empathy, and the impressive quantity of unanswered questions that he left us with. In order to establish his knowledge, Panofsky—like all those who, after him, derived their authority from the discipline of iconology—never ceased to separate form from content, whereas Warburg never ceased to entangle them. To see this one has only to look at the steadily increasing importance Panofsky accorded to *iconographic discernment*. In essence, he says that no study can begin as long as one does not know for sure, whether, for example, a certain figure represents Judith or else Salome.⁶³⁶ Warburg, on the other hand, from the *Ninfa* up through the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, never stopped decomposing this kind of discernment or discrimination in order to work on the basis of intrications—Judith *with* Salome and with so many other possible incarnations—on the basis, in other words, of what we may call *iconographic indiscernibles*.⁶³⁷

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All the same, Warburg does make claims for an "iconology," as is attested by his manifesto of 1912. But in using it he displays a considerable degree of precision, which distinguishes it from all the Panofskian and neo-Panofskian decodings which succeeded it. While the declared aim of standard iconology has been to offer a *solution to the rebus* constituted by the figurative work of art, Warburg had energetically protested against this ambition in advance: "My fellow students: I need hardly say that this lecture has not been about solving a pictorial riddle for its own sake (*die Auflösung eines Bilderrätsels*)—especially since it cannot here be illuminated at leisure, but only caught in a cinematographic spotlight (*kinematographisch Scheinwerfen*)."⁶³⁸

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* perfectly clarifies this “non-aim” of Warburg’s. In his work he does not attempt to come up with the decoding of a rebus but, rather, with the *production of the rebus* itself, in other words, a montage; for the latter is an interpretation which does not seek to reduce complexity but instead to show it, to lay it bare, to unfold it in a way which reveals a further, unexpected degree of complexity. This presupposes that one can construct it, but only by unavoidably discontinuous “shots from the movie projector.” In thinking about this metaphor, which evokes the quasi-filmic character of the slides that the lecturer projects in the form of “shots” [“fusées”], one can hardly avoid recalling the theories of montage elaborated by several great figures of the cinema who were Warburg’s contemporaries, such as Dziga Vertov and S. M. Eisenstein, as well as the “disjointed” (*sprunghaft*) flux mentioned by Walter Benjamin in characterizing his own notion of the “dialectical image.”

Warburgian iconology seeks, in fact, to produce something like a *dialectical image of the relationships between images*. It works by disassembly [démontage] of the figurative continuum, by “shots” [“fusées”] of disjointed details, and by the reassembly [remontage] of this material in original visual rhythms. Warburg was famous, even before the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, for his lectures, in which, after a brief introduction, he shouted “Darkness!” (*Dunkel*) as a director shouts “Action!” He commented on the images from his seat in the darkened room, in the jerky rhythm of the successive images. Then he shouted “Light!” (*Licht*), concluded, and the session was finished.⁶³⁹

With the *Mnemosyne Atlas* this “jerky” or “disjointed” character becomes a tabular characteristic, perceptible synchronically. The semidarkness of the projection room, where the slides burst onto the white screen, gives way to a series of black screens, where, in the ambient light, the photographic prints, in black and white and shades of gray, tend to merge on the cloth they are pinned to. All the “attractions” and all the contrasts are, henceforth, presented visually in simultaneous packets, while the darkness of the background of the screens gives to this montage its basic *milieu of appearance*. Right from the first glance, the layout of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* stands out sharply from those of all the other scientific atlases of the period, thanks to the visual impact of the black screens (figs. 44, 69–71, 90, 91).

What, then, is the function of this semidarkness, the importance of which, it seems, was not fully grasped even by Warburg’s own disciples:⁶⁴⁰ What is the meaning, in this context, of the “milieu of appearance”? It means, first of all, a *background [fond]*: the black cloth of the screens of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* are located physically *under the images*, which thus appear to us to be in front of it. But the “milieu” in question here is not simply the optical field upon which the figures stand out. It constitutes, at the same time, their material space, the dynamic environment, their “abode” [“séjour”]. The dark milieu is therefore to be understood as the *Umwelt*—the surrounding environment—of the images mounted on the screens of the atlas: like an ocean in which flotsam and jetsam,

originating at many different times, have become amassed at the bottom of the dark water.

Such a "milieu" can be understood, equally, as the chromatic *material*, the images of which then appear as textural variations ranging from a black stroke on a white background (fig. 14) to grisaille, to the most confusing shadows and traces (fig. 90, at the bottom). The "milieu" can thus be understood as a *medium*—in the physical, or even chemical, sense of the term—that is to say, as a visual atmosphere capable of manifesting itself even *in the images* themselves.

Finally, the "milieu" can be understood as the *interval* which occurs *between the images*, those "details" or "monads" of each plate. The interval first appears in the borders that separate the photographic prints: they often form large empty spaces on the black cloth. This latter sense of the word "milieu," which in German would be called *Zwischenraum*—the "space in between"—is essential for understanding everything that the *Mnemosyne Atlas* invents and employs in its manipulation of images and in the knowledge it yields. Because these black zones arranged by Warburg produce a "backdrop" ["fond"], a "medium," and even a "passage" between the photographs, it is clear that they are far from being a mere background [arrière-plan] on which to place the various elements of a puzzle. They are integral parts of the puzzle itself, providing the montage with its *working space*, something which Dziga Vertov—in a very different context, of course—had observed as early as 1922: "[It is] the *intervals* (passages from one movement to another) and not at all the movements themselves which constitute the material (elements of the art of movement). . . . The organization of movement is the organization of its elements, that is to say, of the intervals."⁶⁴¹

Is it surprising, then, that Warburg defined the particular characteristic—even the goal—of his iconology as an "iconology of the interval" (*Ikonomie des Zwischenraums*)?⁶⁴² This expression has struck many of his interpreters as very enigmatic. It seems to have defined, in 1929, the project of his atlas as the grouping together of a "stock" of images forming the visual corpus of his hypothetical "psychology of evolution in the determination of causes," an expression in which we recognize one of the innumerable formulations Warburg considered for the possible subtitle of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*.⁶⁴³ It also seems to relate to the dictum, inspired by Goethe, according to which "the problem"—but Warburg also wrote: "the truth"—"lies in the middle."⁶⁴⁴

In order to grasp what is at stake epistemologically in the "iconology of intervals," we must start from a consideration of the process itself of montage as employed in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Let us look again at plate 43 (fig. 91): each "detail" is clearly separated from the adjacent one by a more or less intensely dark "interval," which sketches out, negatively, the *visual armature of the montage* as such. But each "detail" is itself reframed in such a way as to include the whole system of "intervals" which organizes, on the walls of the Florentine chapel, the arrangement of all the elements of the representation: the Sassettis, husband and wife, for example, are visible between the two false marble cornices which

frame them and which serve, above all, as an intermediate space, a *Zwischenraum*, between the period of the portrait (Florence, in the year 1480) and the one which is represented right near it, by the retable of the *Adoration* (Bethlehem, in the year 1).

Each "detail" of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* could no doubt be analyzed as a function of the network of "intervals" that its own framing has produced. But Warburg has gone even further, because the framing of the photographs has been selected precisely to make visible the arrangement of the "intervals" which structure their referent, i.e., the fresco itself. Thus, the three "details" of the Medici children, on plate 43, lead us to discover, close up, that big cleft—a spatial interval par excellence—invented by Ghirlandaio in the ground of his *Confirmation of the Rule of Saint Francis*.

By being attentive to this, we are able, if we refer to the chapel as a whole (fig. 92), to understand the essential role of the "intervals" in the figural montage effected by the painter himself. His moves include the following: creating the zone separating the real altar and the painted sarcophagus on the retable; the *mise en abyme* of the pilasters of the gilded wood framing and of the pillars represented in the picture; the moving fold of the wall which includes the donor's sarcophagus and the wall exhibiting his portrait; the dramatic role of the intervals created between the different registers of the wall: a figure *in abisso* springs up *above* the heaven of the *Adoration*; the depiction of the living children emerging from an *underground* level situated *above* a celestial apparition of Saint Francis resuscitating a dead child, etc. All of this leads us to understand that the "intervals" are a *network of figural hinges* [*charnières*] that organize the entire system of the representation.

From the above description one could thus deduce, without distorting the facts, that for Warburg "the good Lord dwells in the interval." Now, this assumes that he has a *notion of the detail which is based on the existence of intervals*; this, in turn, requires a *detailed analysis of the intervals*. In defending the former position, Warburg anticipated a key idea of Walter Benjamin's, according to which "it is precisely in the minute details of the *intermediate zone* [*l'intermédiaire*] that the eternally identical [aspect]" of those things capable of survival manifests itself.⁶⁴⁵ In promoting the latter view, Warburg anticipated the project of a structural analysis of the singularities. The *detail* is valuable only inasmuch as it is a singularity, that is to say, as a hinge or pivot—in other words, as the interval which makes it possible to effectuate a *passage*—between heterogeneous orders of reality that one nevertheless has to *mount* together as an ensemble.

In his speech of 1912, Warburg maintained he had shown that iconological analysis can "range freely, with no fear of border guards, and can treat the ancient, medieval, and modern worlds as a coherent historical unity (*als zusammenhängende Epoche*)."⁶⁴⁶ The interval—which had already allowed the painter Ghirlandaio to bring together in the same composition the antiquity of a Roman sarcophagus, the characteristic religious devotion of the Middle Ages, and the modern age in the form of a bourgeois portrait—would therefore

become the primary *epistemological tool of disciplinary deterritorialization* employed by Warburg throughout his life. Frontiers, as we know, are often arbitrary separations in a country's geological rhythm. What does the clandestine traveler do when he wants cross a frontier? He makes use of an already existing interval—a fracture line, a fault, a corridor formed by erosion—and if possible, a “detail” unnoticed by the customs agents. And that is how the “iconology of the interval” functions: by following the geological rhythms of a culture in order to transgress the limits artificially imposed between disciplines.

If Warburg wished to have the word *Mnemosyne* engraved on the pediment of his house, that is, of his library, it is because he understood the essentially mnemonic nature of the facts of culture. Now, memory is an excellent *assembler* [*monteuse*]: it arranges heterogenous elements (“details”); it creates faults in the continuum of history (“intervals”) in order to open up new pathways; and it plays with—and works with—the *interval between fields*. That is why the library, like the atlas, had to create bonds between all the domains of human history, which are so diverse and yet so intricately. Once again, Edgar Wind got it right, for he understood perfectly the essential role played in this landscape by the “transitory” (*transitorisch*) intervals which are omnipresent in reality and which are to be seen as “pregnant moments” (*fruchtbarster Augenblick*) of a given culture considered in its entirety.⁶⁴⁷

All the phenomena connected with memory present themselves as intrications—of fields, of meaning, of time. If one wants to see what takes place inside a given intrication, if one wants to come close to the living intimacy of a pile of snakes, one discovers that the movement of the entangled bodies produces a whole network of intervals which themselves are in motion. This is pretty much what Warburg wanted to do when he studied a fresco, a votive ritual, or an astrological belief. By paying attention to the intervals, one is able to observe how the elements of a given intrication embrace and separate, how they fight each other and mingle, and how they distance themselves from one another and exchange places.

That is why the interval immediately alters the notion of iconology that Warburg associated with it: it completely alters the idea of the relationship between images (*icono-*) and texts (*-ology*) that is still widely accepted among historians of art. Where Panofsky and his disciples wanted to read texts as “sources” or interpretative “keys” to images, or where a historian like Mario Praz maintains the images in their “parallel” relationship to literary texts,⁶⁴⁸ Warburg, for his part, quickly sought to bring to light that “milieu” lodged in the interval between them which functions as the “natural connection between word and image” (*Zusammengehörigkeit von Wort und Bild*).⁶⁴⁹

This does not mean that everything can be joined in an undifferentiated mass with everything else, nor that some “symbolic form” crowns both images and texts from a position of “higher” unity. It means, rather, that the *differences*—and the polarities, and even contradictions that they presuppose⁶⁵⁰—free up, here and there, processes which occur in the intervals and in which one can

detect the *passage*, or the possible conversion of one order of reality into another. In his lecture of 1923, Warburg remarked that “the topological attitude is a state of mind that allows image exchange to be observed in *statu nascendi*.”⁶⁵¹ And here he put his finger on that function called *figura* by the ancients and, later, “figurability” (*Darstellbarkeit*) by Freud. It is thanks to the latter that the exchange of word and image—in art, in the dream, or in the symptom—becomes possible. There is no “natural link between world and image” (that is to say, a hypothetical *milieu-as-Umwelt* which would join them together) except in the symptomatic opening which can sometimes occur in the one or the other (that is to say, in a *milieu-as-Zwischenraum* which dissociates each one of them from itself).

The *Mnemosyne Atlas*, which plays—and works—with the intervals of fields of knowledge, does the very same thing with the *intervals of meanings*. No symbolic world would be possible without the creation of a “distance,”⁶⁵² and no image could be created without the rhythmic movement of this distance (meaning-as-significance) [sens-signification] with incorporation (meaning-as-sensible-embodiment). The interval thus rules everywhere: it is a basic *psychological law*, one that Tito Vignoli already had an inkling of,⁶⁵³ and that Freud later integrated into his theory of the symptom, for example in noting the importance of those “points at which an interruption has been made by [the unconscious desire] into the ego organization,” points that he compares to a “frontier-station with a mixed garrison.”⁶⁵⁴

There is no doubt that Warburg always conceived of “iconology” from the perspective of a psychological symptomatology of images: a “psycho-iconology.”⁶⁵⁵ And he did not hesitate to use it to analyze himself, carefully preserving all his schemas, both theoretical and autobiographical. In them one can observe an abundance of fracture lines (figs. 13, 15, 77, 80), openings, and oscillatory motions (figs. 23–25)—all of them ways, among others, of bringing to light the power of intervals. Warburg’s whole way of thinking—its power and its tragedy—can be seen as revolving around this question of intervals. In working his way through the innumerable polarities waiting to be discovered in the details of the images he studied, he finally understood the “schizophrenia” of Western culture in its entirety, with its perpetual oscillation generated by the “ecstatic ‘Nympha’ (manic) on the one side and the mourning river-god (depressive) on the other.”⁶⁵⁶

At Kreuzlingen, Warburg waged a struggle with himself in exactly this interval: the one which separates manic states from depressive ones, ideas which shoot forth from ideas which flee, and mornings of delirium from afternoons of reflection. In his interactions with Warburg, Binswanger derived from this fecund interval something like a comprehensive interpretation, a rhythm yet to be discovered. Pierre Fédida writes that with Binswanger “a psychopathology worthy of the name opened itself up to the phenomenology of the encounter—to *what takes place ‘in between’*.”⁶⁵⁷ It appears that in this area, too, the ideas of Warburg and Binswanger are closely allied, and that this interpretation, like a montage, could only be constructed on the basis of the interval itself: “Here

we could compare this phenomenon to that of the cinematographic montage or to the technique of collage used in painting. The result, then, is that what appears to pertain specifically to the interpretation lies within the realm of the *interval*. . . . This amounts to saying that the interpretation is to be worked out in the [zone] *between two meanings* [dans l'*entre-deux sens*]⁶⁵⁸—thus, in the area where meaning has not yet been thematically constructed.

Now, a zone “between two meanings” cannot come into existence except in the zone “*between two times*” [“*l’entre-deux temps*”] of a scansion, of a rhythmic syncopation, whether in the articulation of a sentence or in the continuum of an image. All the oscillatory phenomena that Warburg, whether he was studying them or experiencing them, compared to the beating of a heart—the diastole of the dilation and the systole of the contraction—manage to “persist” only by virtue of the temporal interval [ce temps intervallaire] constituted by the “nothing” of silence, or, as the case may be, the suspension of life. A cardiac rhythm is not binary (strong beat, weak beat), but ternary (strong beat, weak beat, silence): “‘Nothing,’ therefore, ought to count at least as much as the beat; and perhaps even more, for without the ‘nothing’ there would be no beat.”⁶⁵⁹ The ultimate meaning of the dialectical montages presented by Warburg should thus be conceived of in rhythmic terms. All things considered, the interval ought to be understood above all as an interval within time [intervalle des temps].

Seen from this perspective, Warburg’s notion of experience reveals itself as a perpetual rhythmic dance, exalted in one place and collapsing in another—a dance around intervals whose temporal periods weave the structure, the perforated armature of our existence. The notion of the “interior history of life,” dear to Binswanger and taken up by Warburg, is based entirely on this *discontinuous temporal texture* that other phenomenological psychiatrists have sought to express as precisely as possible, as have other psychoanalysts of succeeding generations.⁶⁶⁰ But Warburg had already touched on the essential point with his leitmotif par excellence, his central epistemological model: if the *Mnemosyne Atlas* calls for an “iconology of the interval,” that is first of all because the *Nachleben* itself presupposes a theory of time which takes into account the intervals within it, or, to put it more clearly, a theory which recognizes that *time itself* is constituted of intervals.

The interval structures the *Nachleben* from the inside: it is, in fact, everything which occurs between the *Nach*—the “after” or the “according to”—and its *Leben*, this past “vivacity” [“vivre”] to which it grants a delayed, and different, existence. It is what links two disjointed moments of time and makes one the memory of the other. It is what relates a fossil body to a living body of the past, i.e., a vestige that has resurfaced, to the organism still buried in the earth (fig. 66). It is what occurs between an unconscious gesture of today and a ritualized gesture of times gone by (figs. 30, 31); between a Renaissance gesture of triumph and an ancient gesture of dying (fig. 44), between a suffering Magdalene and a sexually aroused maenad (fig. 54, 55), between a young Florentine serving girl and a forgotten goddess of Roman religion (figs. 67, 70).

The interval enters into every Warburgian object. It is the ephemeral *intermezzo* of a Florentine festival or the zone in grisaille that separates two painted *istorie* in a Renaissance painting.⁶⁶¹ It is the memory-laden breeze that opens up each fold in a sculptured robe (figs. 21, 22). It is the energy that transforms a purely graphic effort into a symbol of the cosmos (figs. 34, 35). It is the contortion that agitates, as if from within, the cruel embrace of man and animal in the desperate gestures of the *Laocoön* or the hieratic dance of a Native American priest (figs. 36, 37). It is the network of affinities that makes it possible to join conceptually in a single ensemble a celestial constellation and an anatomical figure (fig. 83). It is, already in Warburg's earliest studies, the subtle movement that separates an imperturbable Venus from her own emotionally charged tresses.

In short, the interval, in such a context, designates the entire *work of the symptom as something that is affected by time*. (And here we mean "affected" ["atteinte"] in its two meanings, emotional and gnoseological: what is wounded is affected, but so, too, is what is touched or known.) The interval is what renders time impure, perforated, multiple, residual. It is the interface of the different strata of a thick archeological layer. It is the milieu of phantom movements. It is the amplitude of the "dynamograms," the separation of the polarities, the game of latencies and crises. It is the opening created by the seismic faults, the fractures in history. It is that abyss that the historian must agree to examine, even if his reason might suffer as a result. It is the dislocation created by genealogical ruptures or proliferations. It is the *contretemps*, the grain of difference in the mechanism of repetitions. It is the hiatus of the anachronisms, the latticework of the lapses of memory. It is what gives the "primitive" its paradoxical "topicality." It is what alternately intricates and separates the threads—or the serpents—of the skein of time. It is the path that an impression (*Vorprägung*) travels toward its incarnation (*Verkörperung, Verleibung*). It is the gap that separates a symbol from its symptom. It is the material of repressions and the rhythm of aftereffects. It is the eye of the whirlpool, of the vortices of time.

Now, it is indeed there—in the gray interval of things, in the eye of the hurricane—that Warburg asked the historian to stand firm or, at the very least, to fix his gaze. And not to be afraid, in this difficult situation, of either *knowing*, even if the corpus of an "iconology of intervals" is, in principle, limitless, or of *not knowing*, since the eye of the hurricane is, by definition, a place without self-consciousness.

EPILOGUE OF THE PEARL FISHER

Is this really a *wise method* for art history to adopt? If one takes these words in their usual or utilitarian sense, then certainly not. If Warburg had few followers, if he did not even create a historical school on the model of a Wölfflin or a Panofsky⁶⁶²—and that is the case despite the inexhaustible tool of his library, the obstinacy that marks great methods, and the dialectical perception of things that is the sign of great wisdom—it is because he remains, like all phantoms,

difficult to follow. He continually strays into a *no-man's-land* of questions, somewhere between depressive sparseness and manic proliferation. The former reached its climax in the part of the final manuscripts of 1929, entitled, precisely, "Method" (*Methode*): the word stands isolated on one page; the name of Nietzsche stands out on the following page; a third page evokes the "end" (*Schluss*), "flight" (*Flucht*), and "destiny" (*Schicksal*). Then the following twenty pages remain blank.⁶⁶³

The manic proliferation, on the other hand, is at work in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, where new constellations of figures are constantly bursting forth, along with the possible relationships between these figures. Being the veritable atlas of imaginary and symbolic overdeterminations that it is, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* obviously provides no discourse on method: only the *insane requirement* to think each image in relationship to all the others, and to make this thinking itself produce other images, other relationships, and other problems, which have been occluded previously but are, perhaps, no less important. Warburg's "science without a name," because it is a science of fundamental problems posed by fecund singularities, exceptions, intervals, symptoms, and the unthought-of aspects of history, thus appears to be "without limits," just like the "interminable" (*unendlich*) analysis to which Freud, ten years later, was also to resort.⁶⁶⁴

But let there be no mistake about it: Warburg's scholarly demands do not owe their kind of "madness" or vertigo to the unhappy history of his individual ego, but rather to the marvelous lucidity of the latter with respect to the trans-individual history of the objects he studied with such passion, namely images. From this point of view, the "mad" scholar (Warburg) and the scientist of the "mad" (Freud) were advancing along the very same terrain—uneven, rhizome-like, without boundaries—of the "drama of the soul," the *Seelendrama* that the author of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* talked so much about. This was a drama which constantly broadened out from symbols into symptoms, from culturally produced images into obscure dream images, from territories into migrations, from formations into deformations, from historical novelties into surviving aftermaths, etc. But how does one orient oneself in this space?

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It is impossible to determine the coordinates of such a space. One must therefore take the risk of *plunging* right into it—as Warburg did, to the point of losing his reason for a time. One needs to plunge into it, empathetically, as one plunges into an ocean without known limits, and find oneself in the deepest waters, as, already, one finds oneself in the middle of a dark space when getting too close to the screens of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* [i.e., in the Warburg library—Trans.]. To make this comparison is to claim that Warburg was a researcher of an entirely different sort than the "detective" or "headhunter" he has so often been depicted as being. He was, rather, I would say, the kind of researcher one could compare to a *pearl fisher*.

Let us imagine the scene: a pearl fisher plunges into the sea. At this moment, he doubtless still imagines he is the "detective" of the sea. In the dark depths he seeks his treasures as if they were puzzles to be solved. One day he finds a pearl. He immediately brings it up to the surface, brandishing it like a trophy. Happy and proud, he savors his triumph. Having stolen its treasure from the sea, he thinks he has understood everything—for his trophy is meaning—the *meaning* of the sea that is supposedly contained in one of its minor parts, the pearl. He thinks he is done with the abysses. He returns home and places the pearl in a showcase, after taking care to make a card, which he assumes to be definitive, for his catalogue. He does not yet suspect that, beyond the puzzle, lies a mystery of an entirely different kind. One day—much later, and by chance—he realizes, in total bewilderment, that he had never really *looked* at his pearl. While dreamily contemplating it on that day, he suddenly recognizes it for what it is. It is none other than the eye of his dead father, according to the unforgettable prediction sung by Ariel in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.⁶⁶⁵

The question—the anxiety, the schism, the search for time gone by—enters the mind of the pearl fisher and begins to obsess him. He thus decides to plunge in again. Descending slowly toward the depths, among the algae, the medusas, and the growing darkness, he understands three things. First, that the sea's treasures continue to proliferate and are infinite in number. Not only has his drowned father left him other marvels than the single pearl found at the start; for example, the coral of his bones and so many other little things which have become "strange treasures." Beyond that, there are also, dispersed pell-mell along the sea floor, all the corals and all the pearls of all the generations of ancestors, both close and distant. Innumerable fathers lie in innumerable treasures at the bottom of the sea. Covered with algae and impurities for centuries, this heritage waits to be recognized, gathered up, and thought about.

The fisher then understands—and this is the second point—that what he is plunging into is not meaning but time. All the beings of times past have been shipwrecked. Everything has become corrupted, of course, but everything is still there, transformed into memory, that is to say, into something which is no longer made of the same material nor has the same meaning as before. A new treasure is created on each occasion; a new treasure is created by every metamorphosed Former Time [Autrefois]. Finally, our hero understands the most important thing: it is the very milieu in which he swims—the sea, the murky, maternal water, everything which is not hardened "treasure," the

"between-the-two" of things, the invisible flux which passes between the pearls and the corals—which, with time, has transformed his father's eyes into pearls and his bones into corals. It is the interval, the material of time—here flowing, there stagnant—which is responsible for all the metamorphoses which turn a dead eye into a surviving treasure.

At the moment when he understands this, the pearl fisher is gripped by an overwhelming desire: to remain there forever and to turn the organic milieu in which he is swimming into the object of his quest. In other words, it is not the *meaning* of the treasures themselves that he is seeking, but rather the *Leben* of the fluxes which have made them possible. He is well aware of the madness of such a desire: in order to know completely this milieu of life, of survival, one would have to live in it and thus drown in it, thereby losing one's life in it. In this parable which, as the reader will have grasped, inverts the model of the Vasarian "renaissances" or "resurrections" (fig. 1), one can perhaps recognize the magnitude of Warburg's "insane requirement" for knowing something, and his tragic lucidity in the face of the dialectical relationships linking the time of history with the time of the survivals:

this thinking delves into the depths of the past—but not in order to recuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what was once alive, some things "suffer a sea change" and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living—as "thought fragments," as something "rich and strange," and perhaps as everlasting *Urphänomene*.⁶⁶⁶

* * *

The objects of Warburgian knowledge therefore appear less like outmoded objects from the past than like *Urphänomene*, in other words "original phenomena" observed in the form taken by their survivals. They are always in motion and, like certain marine animals, diffuse round about themselves a trail of ink, a cloud of darkness which makes it difficult to take their exact measure or to examine them at one's leisure. They are without precise limits, and they project their dark energy into the surroundings, as far as into our own interiors. Calcified phantasms, crystallized fictions, corals of memory, they are, in the murky waters of time, eminently phantasmal. The objects of Warburgian history—images—are thus not entirely objects. To reduce them to that status is to deny their "life," that is to say, their capacity to metamorphose and to move about in a milieu in which their own substance actually participates, and that Pierre Fédida has so aptly named the "indistinct breath of the image."⁶⁶⁷ This breath

is simultaneously *image* and *time*. Warburg expressed this notion, a few months before his death, in his assertion that the history of images is to be understood as a “ghost story for grown-ups” (*Gespensstergeschichte ff[ür] ganz Erwachsene*).⁶⁶⁸

This last proposition—put forth by someone who already thought of himself as a “revenant” (fig. 93)—evokes, and indeed extends, two others which are obviously close to it. The first one, from Nietzsche, asserts that “a truly historical rendition would be ghostly speech before ghosts.”⁶⁶⁹ The second, from Freud, affirms a status for psychoanalysis—one that is still denigrated—as a “scientific fairy tale,” a status which was subsequently to find its theoretical foundations in the notion of metapsychology.⁶⁷⁰ In a letter to his wife written from Kreuzlingen in December 1923, Warburg, too, evoked the objects of his research in terms of a “fairy tale derived from reality” (*ein Zaubermärchen aus der Wirklichkeit*); but the ghosts he studied, even though they were “themes drawn from [such] a fairy tale” (*Märchenmotive*), were nevertheless capable of sweeping through an entire cultural history, so that Perseus—his chosen example at the time—could contain, solely within himself, by his very nature as a mythic figure confronted with Medusa, “the sum of European intellectual history.”⁶⁷¹

The characters in fairy tales, like ghosts, always display a certain penchant for melancholy. They can never manage to die. Beings who are essentially survivors, they wander like *dybbuks*, somewhere between an immemorial knowledge of things which have happened in the past and a tragic, prophetic knowledge of things which will happen in the future. At the deepest point of his mental suffering, Warburg, at Kreuzlingen, compulsively ate small pieces of chocolate under the impression that by doing so he could avoid, temporarily at least, eating his own children.⁶⁷² This is undoubtedly because he thought he was Chronos, and was thrashing about in the throes of the terrifying idea that he himself *was time*.

“Happy is he who does not outlive his fame,” wrote Freud at a period in which the very survival of his work, and thus the chances of his own “immortality,” still seemed very doubtful to him.⁶⁷³ Forty-five years later, and very close to death but knowing that he was now destined to “survive himself,” he wrote to his friend Arnold Zweig a magnificent letter in which two slips *twist the story* dictated by his mind. He clearly wanted to write, “Who will (*wird*) be the stronger this time (*diesmal*), one naturally cannot foresee.” This was an evocation, of course, of his battle against his illness. But what he actually wrote was, “Who in the past (*damals*) will have been (*würd*, contraction of *wird*, “will be,” and of *würde*, “would have been”) the stronger, one naturally cannot foresee.”⁶⁷⁴ The sentence is faulty from the point of view of history (and of his logic), but is it not perfectly justified from the point of view of survival (and of the unconscious desire which supports it)? Can one ever *foresee* what, from the *past*, is destined to *survive* and to haunt us in the future?

On the day of his death, 26 October 1929, Aby Warburg made a similar slip. Ironically, as fate would have it, the slip was a *symptom of survival*. And the irony was twofold: it was not he who made it, but nature herself. On that



FIG. 93 Aby Warburg in 1929. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: The Warburg Institute.

day, in fact, Warburg noticed that the apple tree in the garden, which was sick and had been dry and gray for a long time—everyone thought it was dead—had suddenly turned green again, revived, and, even more surprisingly given the season, was putting forth buds. The very last words that Warburg hastily penned in his diary were written about his surviving tree (but it is clear that it was really a question of his own genealogy or lineage): “Who will sing the paean, the song of thanksgiving in praise of the fruit tree who flowers so late?” (*Wer singt mir den Paeen, den Gesang des Dankes, zum Lobe des so spät blühenden Obstbaumes?*).⁶⁵

In this respect, Warburg’s work is like that apple tree: many of its branches have long appeared to be dead, in particular those “branches of theoretical knowledge”—ambitious, difficult, and maybe even dangerous—that are gathered at the back of the top floor of the London library; this is the only dust-covered place there, a measure of the lack of interest in them on the part of art historians for the last sixty years at least. It is quite possible, however, that those branches will suddenly put forth new buds in a season when no one is expecting it.

Such is the magic of libraries (that of Warburg’s especially): everything lies in repose like pearls and corals on the bookshelves, but nothing there ever dies completely; everything waits to be recognized and reread one day for the new use it may serve. Every library experiences its eclipses, but, as long as it is not completely burned down—as Warburg’s nearly was in 1933, and, for that reason, was clandestinely transported to London—it can yield the most unexpected fruits on what seem to be its most withered branches.

In 1927, Warburg gave a speech on the occasion of the reopening of the German Institute of Art History in Florence. In it he recalled, melancholically, that period of the First World War during which, its doors having been closed, no fisher could any longer discover even the most minor pearl there. (During this same period, as we know, Warburg, who was mentally ill, could no longer immerse himself in his own library.) Then, speaking in a tone which evoked the poems of Hans Bethge as set to music by Gustav Mahler, he spoke of that constant “symphony of farewells” that is life itself (*Abschiedssymphonie des Lebens*). The library is an “instrument” (*Instrument*) to be used in this symphony, an instrument that no one, in his view, has the right to claim the ownership of. (Coming from a man who had spent his life establishing a private library, the remark naturally takes on a particular inflection.) One does not own such an instrument; rather, one *plays* it. It facilitates the essential “musicality” (*Musikalität*) of all research, and, *a fortiori*, of all research bearing on time.⁶⁶ Nietzschean in this regard, too, Warburg’s “gay science” is a musical science of the polyrhythms and symphonies of time that images enable us to hear.

I imagine Warburg entering every morning into the maze of the bookshelves with the feeling of the fisher who plunges into the depths. Each time it is as if the ocean’s currents have regained their power over everything and have entirely redistributed, even if only by slightly displacing them, the pearls,

the corals, and all the other possible treasures. That is no doubt why the speech he gave in Florence in 1927 is valid for every period of time, for every epoch, and even for every moment of research. Speaking in Italian, the language of his subject of predilection, Warburg concluded with the following statement: "*Si continua—coraggio!—ricominciamo la lettura!*" ["To be continued to our next—courage!—let's begin the reading again!"—Trans.]⁶⁷⁷ This was his way of saying that in every age, indeed in every moment, art history needs to be reread and begun anew.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Cf. translator's introduction to Pliny the Elder, 1985, 7-27.
2. Cf. Schlosser 1984, 140-52, 221-32; Tanturli 1976; Krautheimer 1929.
3. Vasari 1981-85, 1:41-64.
4. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2005, 53-84.
5. Foucault 1971, 237.
6. Cf. Justi 1898; Waetzoldt 1921, 1, 51-73; W. Ernst 1984; Einem 1986; Seeba 1986; Haskell 1991; Manton 1991; Potts 1994, 8 and *passim*; Décultot 2000.
7. Quatremère de Quincy 1989, 103.
8. Winckelmann 1880, 1:108, where Winckelmann castigates the "general terms of commendation" of the aesthetes as well as the "strange and false grounds" of the antiquarians who preceded him. On the more complex relationship of this emerging archaeology with the practice of the antiquarians, cf. Momigliano 1955; Käfer 1986, 46-49; Fancelli 1993; Schnapp 1993, 313-33.
9. Cf. Howard 1990, 162-74.
10. Cf. Morpurgo-Tagliabue 1994, and *Espagne* 1995, who rightly stresses the literary and even linguistic nature of this construction as much as its aesthetic nature.
11. Pommier 1994, 11, 22.
12. Potts 1994, 21-22, 31-32; Potts 1982. Another view of this "division" is proposed by Davis 1996.
13. Cf. Pommier 1994, 27-28.
14. Winckelmann 1880, 2:364-65.
15. Potts 1991, 11-12.
16. Potts 1994, 8, 50-54.
17. Cf. Vyverberg 1958.
18. Cf. Dechazelle 1834.
19. Quoted and commented on by Dilly 1979, 80.
20. Winckelmann 1880, 1:107.
21. Cf. Lepenies 1986; Pommier 1994, 14-15; Vouilloux 1996.
22. Cf. Aubenque 1962, 460-76.
23. Winckelmann 1880, 1:107.
24. Pommier 1994, 12.
25. Cf. Potts 1994, 33-46.
26. Herder 1993, 37, 42.
27. *Ibid.*, 42, 47.
28. *Ibid.*, 48. On Herder's essay, cf. Seeba 1985. On the more speculative aspects of Winckelmann's concept of history, cf. Seeba 1986.
29. Cf. Erichsen 1980; Potts 1994, 145-81.
30. Cf. Embach 1989.
31. Winckelmann 1880, 1:300.
32. Winckelmann 1987, 11-32.
33. *Ibid.*, 3-29. The expression "good taste" is found in the very opening lines of his work.
34. *Ibid.*, 35.
35. Winckelmann 1880, 1:355-56. The rest of the text on pp. 356-70 is devoted to the "modesty of the figures"—notably those of the dancers—and to a critique of "violent passions."
36. *Ibid.*, 2:364-65.
37. Potts 1991, 11-12.
38. Fried 1986.
39. Winckelmann 1880, 2:364-65.
40. Winckelmann 1987, 5.
41. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2005, 72-76.
42. Herder 1993, 42.
43. Warburg 1999c.
44. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1994, 405-32; Didi-Huberman 1996c; Didi-Huberman 2004.
45. Cassirer 1979; Panofsky 1929; Waetzoldt 1930.
46. Cf. Heckscher 1985a; Kulturmann 1993, 211-16; and Bazin 1986, 215-16, who devotes forty lines to Warburg in his 650-page book. On Warburg's more favorable reception in Italy, cf. Agosti 1985.

47. Pasquali 1930, 484.
48. Gombrich 1986, 8–10. The more “personal” biography by Cernia Slovin 1995 could not be less reliable.
49. Wind 1983a.
50. Cf. Warnke 1994, 126.
51. Cf. Saxl 1986. When first planning the *Gesammelte Schriften* in 1932, Saxl considered publishing the catalogue of the library as a completely separate “work” by Warburg.
52. Gombrich 1986, 3.
53. Warburg 1999i, 566.
54. Gombrich 1986, 68.
55. Warburg, *Tagebuch*, 24 November 1906, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 15.
56. Gombrich 1986, 16–17.
57. Cf. Panofsky 1955b; Eisler 1969.
58. Klein 1970, 224. [This essay is not included in the English translation, Klein 1979—Trans.]
59. Agamben 1998a.
60. Cf. Bing 1960, 101; Bing 1965, 300; Bing 1999, 81–87.
61. For an exhaustive bibliography, cf. Wuttke 1998. [A supplement to this work now exists; see Bijester and Wuttke 2007—Trans.]
62. Cf. Wuttke 1977; Warnke 1980a; Landauer 1981; Bredekamp 1991.
63. Bing observed that “[Warburg] is obscured by the size of the legacy.” Bing 1965, 300–1. The attempt by Vestuti 1994 to write a “sociology” of the Warburg school is very unpersuasive.
64. Cf. Ginzburg 1989b; Castelnovo 1977, 7–9; Białostocki 1981; Podro 1982, 158–68; Burke 1991.
65. Cf. Syamken 1980.
66. Cf. Pinto 1987 and Pinto 1990, 11–14. The author adds, equally mistakenly, that Warburg blithely passed by modernity without so much as a glance.
67. Cf. Pinto 1990, 12; Pinto 1992.
68. Cf. Iversen 1991; Iversen 1993, 541–53.
69. Gombrich 1986, vii, preface to the 1986 edition.
70. Warburg, letter of 3 August 1988, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 39–40.
71. Warburg 2004a, 301.
72. Warburg to Goldschmidt, August 1903, quoted by Warburg 2004a, 332.
73. Cf. Meyer 1988; Chernow 1993, 60–61, 121–23, 194–95, 204–5, 286–88; Roeck 1997. Cf. also Farrer 1974; Attali 1986; *Warburg und die Warburgs* 1988.
74. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 37–38, 55–56.
75. *Ibid.*, 27–31.
76. *Ibid.*, 27, 38–40.
77. Cf. Janitschek 1877; Janitschek 1879, 1–27, 73–99, where the conditions of the commissioning and patronage are studied; and Janitschek 1892.
78. Cf. Schmarsow 1886; Schmarsow 1921; Schmarsow 1923.
79. For “Mimik und Plastik,” see Schmarsow 1899, 57–79; Schmarsow 1907a; Schmarsow 1907b; Schmarsow 1929.
80. Gombrich 1986, 55. Gombrich’s view of Warburg’s intellectual development has been criticized and supplemented by Wind 1983a, 112–13, and by Gilbert 1972, who points out Dilthey’s influence on him.
81. Warburg, *Tagebuch*, 12 January 1897, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 95.
82. Warburg 1999i, 585.
83. *Ibid.*
84. Warburg 1999b, 205; Warburg 1999g.
85. Warburg 1999b, 187.
86. Cf. Saxl 1980b; Saxl 1986; Landauer 1984; Settis 1996; Dilly 1991; Stockhausen 1992; Brosius 1993; Diers 1993; Drommert 1995; N. Mann 1995. On the important role played by Saxl, see Bing 1957.
87. Cf. Blunt 1938, n.p.
88. Saxl 1923, 9–10.
89. Settis 1996, 128–63. The evolution of the classification itself gives the appearance of a series of permutations among the concepts of image (*Bild*), word (*Wort*), action (*Handlung*), and orientation (*Orientierung*).
90. Cf. Jesinghausen-Lauster 1985; Wuttke and Curtius 1989.
91. Cassirer 1979, 16–17.
92. Warburg 2004a, 301.
93. Warburg 1995; cf. Saxl 1957c; Dal Lago 1984; Naber 1988, 88–97; Burke 1991; Forster 1991, 11–17; Forster 1996; Settis 1993; Janshen 1993; Weigel 1995; Michaud 2004, 171–228.
94. Cf. Michaud 2004, figs. 66, 68, 70, 80–83.
95. Cf. Burke 1991, 41.
96. Cf. Weigel 1995.
97. Cf. Dal Lago 1984, 84–86.
98. Cf. Bing 1960, 106.
99. Cf. Dal Lago 1984; Maikuma 1985; Forster 1996.
100. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 29; Sassi 1982. Warburg continued to cite Uesner up until the 1920s: Warburg 1999l, 650.
101. Cf. Usener 1882; Usener 1887; Usener 1889; Usener 1896; Usener 1904; Usener 1912–13.

- On Usener, cf. especially Bodei 1982; Momigliano 1982, 33–48; Momigliano 1984.
102. Cf. for the art and psychology of the *Phantasia*, Wundt 1908, 3–109; for image and animism, Wundt 1910, 78–321; Schneider 1990.
103. For the “law of participation,” see Lévy-Bruhl 1926, 69–104; and for survival of the dead, 263–358; for “primitive logic,” see Lévy-Bruhl 1923, 35–38; Lévy-Bruhl 1928, 232–60.
104. Cf. especially Francastel 1945.
105. Cf. Mauss 1969b; Mauss 1969c; Mauss 1969a; Mauss 1905.
106. Vernant 1979; Detienne 1981; cf. Di Donato 1982.
107. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2004.
108. Cf. Le Goff 1983, ii, xxvii. For parallels between Marc Bloch and Aby Warburg, cf. Raulff 1991a.
109. Cf. Le Goff 1985, i–xxi.
110. Warburg, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 153.
111. This aspect of Warburg’s works, which is found throughout them, has been overlooked in France both by those art historians interested in the relationship between painting, gesture, and theatrical representation (cf. Francastel 1965, 201–8; Francastel 1967, 265–312; Chastel 1987) and by the semioticians and historians working on the very question of *pathos* in gesture (cf. Schmitt 1990; Greimas and Fontanille 1991). On the other hand, this aspect was not neglected by Huizinga 1984b.
112. Warburg 19991, 598. Let us draw attention to Warburg’s outline of a history of religions, cited by Gombrich 1986, 71–72. On the publications of the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* devoted to the history of religions, cf. Kany 1989.
113. Warburg 1999b. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1994.
114. Cf. Wind 1934, v, who says that this term is virtually “untranslatable” into English. Cf. Wuttke 1993.
115. Wind 1983b, 25.
116. Warburg 1998b, 2:670–73; the entry for “Nachleben” is the longest in the entire volume. Cf. Meier, Newald, and Wind 1934.
117. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1998b.
118. Schlosser 1993, 10; Warburg 1927a, 38, etc.
119. Saxl 1957c, 326.
120. Gombrich 1986, 16. Forster 1996, 6, is completely unaware of Tylor’s place in Warburg’s “anthropological culture.”
121. Cf. Panoff 1996, 4363.
122. Lévi-Strauss 1963a.
123. Tylor 1871, 1:13, 23–62.
124. *Ibid.*, 1:143.
125. *Ibid.*, 1:14–16. Cf. Tylor 1881, 373–400, where Tylor questions the notions of tradition and diffusion. Tylor’s first clearly formulated definition of *survival* appeared in 1865: “the ‘standing over’ (*supersitio*) of old habits into the midst of a new changed state of things”: Tylor 1865, 218.
126. Tylor 1861. An index of all these subjects appears in two columns in *ibid.*, 340–44. [The author is referring to French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’s celebrated account of his trip to Brazil early in his career, between 1935 and 1939, which appeared in French in 1955 and in a first English translation by John Russell for Criterion Books in 1961—Trans.]
127. *Ibid.*, 47–54, 85–89. This anachronism is particularly evident in the book’s system of illustration; cf. notably 110–11, 220–21, 236.
128. Tylor 1871, 1:16.
129. Cf. the contemporary work of G. Semper 1878–79.
130. Tylor 1871, 1:64.
131. *Ibid.*, 1:63.
132. *Ibid.*, 1:63–100.
133. *Ibid.*, 1:64–65.
134. *Ibid.*, 1:101–44.
135. Warburg 19991; Warburg 19991.
136. Tylor 1871, 2:1–327.
137. *Ibid.*, 1:145–217.
138. *Ibid.*, 1:142. Cf. Tylor 1994.
139. Tylor 1866–69b; Tylor 1866–69a. Cf. Hodgen 1936, 67–107.
140. Warburg 19991.
141. Cf., for example, Cook 1913; Weigall 1928; Saintyves 1930; Laing 1931. On the reception of Tylor’s notion of *survival*, cf. Hodgen 1936, 108–39.
142. Cf., for example, Clarke 1934; Leroi-Gourhan 1971, 9–113.
143. Cf. Hodgen 1936, 140–74.
144. Mauss 1990, 47–64.
145. *Ibid.*, 47.
146. Mauss 1969e, 372.
147. Mauss 1968, 155.
148. Mauss 1969d.
149. Lévi-Strauss 1963a, 4.
150. *Ibid.*
151. *Ibid.*, 6, 18–19.
152. *Ibid.*, 4, 9–10.
153. “Nor do primitive peoples lack history, although its development often eludes us. . . . The history of these peoples is completely unknown to us, and on account of the lack or

- paucity of oral traditions and archaeological remains, it is forever beyond our reach. From this we cannot conclude that it does not exist." Lévi-Strauss 1963b, 102-3.
154. Tylor 1865, 150-90.
 155. Cf. Hodgen 1936, 36-66.
 156. Preface (to the second edition of 1873), Tylor 1871, 1:vii-viii. Cf. Lowie 1937, 65-85.
 157. Cf. Hodgen 1936, 40, and especially Leopold 1980, 49-50 and passim.
 158. Cf. Panoff 1996, 4364-65.
 159. Gombrich 1986, 68, 168, 185, 321, etc.
 160. Gombrich 1994b, 635-49.
 161. Cf. Canguilhem 1977, 106.
 162. Cf. Tort 1983, 166-97 and passim, where he contrasts the scientific approach taken by biological evolution with the misguided ideological efforts of Spencerian evolutionism; Tort 1992.
 163. "Natural selection selects civilization, which is opposed to natural selection." Cf. Tort 1992, 13; Becquemont 1996.
 164. Cf. Spencer 1873.
 165. Cf. Eldredge and Stanley 1984.
 166. Cf. Devillers 1996a.
 167. Cf. Tort 1996b; Tort 1996c.
 168. Cf. Delsol and Flatin 1996.
 169. Cf. Devillers 1996b, who gives the example of the axolotl (which remains a larva capable of reproduction throughout its life and is simultaneously a young form and an adult) and who speaks of differential rhythms, accelerations, and slowdowns in development; the latter are termed, accordingly, "neotonies," "progeneses," "peramorphoses," "hypermorphoses," etc. Cf. also McNamara 1982.
 170. Cf. Delsol 1996.
 171. Warburg 1999l, 637.
 172. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 68-71.
 173. Cf. Harrold 1934, 151-79.
 174. Carlyle 1987, 37-40. The epigraph of this work is a famous passage from Goethe concerning time: "Time is my legacy, my field is time" (*Die Zeit ist mein Vermächtniss, mein Acker ist die Zeit*). Carlyle 1899c; Carlyle 1899a; Carlyle 1899b, 167-71. Cf. La Valley 1968, 183; Rosenberg 1985.
 175. Dilthey 1921.
 176. Cf. Gilbert 1972. Warburg was able to read Dilthey in the *Festschrift Eduard Keller (1887)* as well as in texts by Vischer and Usener.
 177. Gombrich 1986, 309-11.
 178. Warburg 1999q, 89-156.
 179. Michelet 1982, 34-35; Febvre 1962.
 180. Thode 1885. On the historiography of the concept of the Renaissance in Germany, cf. Huizinga 1984a; Kaufmann 1932; Vietta 1994; Ferguson 1948, 167-230; Ferguson 1948; Ferguson 1963.
 181. Warburg 1998b, 2:679, entry for "Burckhardt" in the index.
 182. Warburg 1999b, 188.
 183. *Ibid.*, 186.
 184. *Ibid.*; cf. Burckhardt 1991-95.
 185. Wölfflin 1982, 175, 189-200. On the relationship between Warburg and Wölfflin, cf. Warnke 1991; Neumeyer 1971, 35.
 186. Warburg 1999f, 186. As early as 1892 Warburg had sent his work on Botticelli to the "master of Basel," who termed it a "beautiful work" (*schöne Arbeit*). Cf. Kaegi 1933.
 187. Gombrich 1986, 145.
 188. Burckhardt 1966; Cf. Kaegi 1956, 645-79; Janssen 1970; Buck 1987; Buck 1989; Buck 1990; Ghelardi 1991, xi-xxiv; Ganz 1994, 37-38.
 189. Cf. Baron 1960; Baron 1988; Saporì 1963; Klein 1970, 204-23; Klein 1979, 25-42.
 190. Cf. Kristeller 1961, 29; Hay 1982, 1; Braden and Kerrigan 1989, 3-35; Jaeger 1994, 116-34.
 191. Cf. Rehm 1929; Uekermann 1985, 42-126; Goebel-Schilling 1990, 78-88; Bullen 1994.
 192. Burckhardt 1966, 1:197-245.
 193. *Ibid.*, 228-45.
 194. Cf. Gebhart 1887, 66.
 195. Cf. White 1973, 230-44, 263.
 196. Cf. Krüger 1930; Momigliano 1960; Holly 1988, republished, with some changes, as Holly 1996, 29-63; Lefebvre 1989; Nurdin 1992.
 197. Burckhardt 1999, 2, 6.
 198. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2000, 85-155.
 199. Burckhardt 1999, 3.
 200. Burckhardt 1966, 3:142-91.
 201. Klein 1979, 38.
 202. Burckhardt 1966, 2:11-169.
 203. *Ibid.*, 2:11-12.
 204. *Ibid.*, 2:13.
 205. Quoted by Ghelardi 1991, xvi.
 206. Burckhardt 1999, 2.
 207. Quoted by Ghelardi 1991, xvi.
 208. Cf. Boehm 1994.
 209. Warburg 1999l, 603.
 210. Warburg 1999e, 555.
 211. Warburg 1999b, 190.
 212. Cf. Dal Lago 1984, 73-79, who refutes the positions taken by Gombrich 1979, 24-59.
 213. Saxl 1920; Saxl 1922.
 214. Mesnil 1926, 237.

215. Saxl 1921–32. The same thing is true with respect to the twenty-one volumes of the *Studien*, published between 1922 and 1924.
216. Meier, Newald, and Wind 1934.
217. Herbst 1852.
218. Gombrich 1986, 49. Cf. Springer 1867. Warburg used the second edition, of 1886. In France, Eugene Müntz observed about that edition: "One of the masters of art history, M. Antoine Springer, professor at the University of Leipzig, shows us that antiquity survived in a certain fashion (such is the meaning of the term *Nachleben*) throughout the Middle Ages": Müntz 1887–88, 631.
219. Cf. Dehio 1895; Friedländer 1897; Jaeschke 1900; H. Semper 1906; Cauer 1911; Livingstone 1912.
220. Warburg 1926, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 238.
221. Cf. Warburg 1999i, 569.
222. Michelet 1982, 36.
223. Warburg 1999l, 598.
224. Warburg 1926, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 229–38.
225. Warburg 1999i, 567–84.
226. Warburg 1998b, II, 670–73, index, s.v. "Antike, Nachleben."
227. Warburg 1999l, 644–45, 650.
228. Warburg 1926, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 314.
229. Warburg 2001, 7.
230. Warburg 1999q, 89.
231. Warburg 1999l, 603.
232. Warburg 1999i, 585.
233. Warburg 1928–29, 3.
234. Warburg to his brother, Max, 30 June 1900, quoted Gombrich 1986, 129.
235. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1994.
236. Cf. Ragusa 1951; Contarini 1992, 91, who quotes André Jolles's very Warburgian formulation of the Renaissance having had "its cradle in a tomb."
237. Darwin 1896, 1:195–96.
238. Schlosser 1936, 36.
239. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1998b.
240. Schlosser 1993, 9–11, 119–21.
241. *Ibid.*, 10; Schlosser 1927.
242. Wind 1934, viii.
243. *Ibid.*, vii.
244. Bing 1965, 301–2, 310.
245. Didi-Huberman 2000, 85–155.
246. Gombrich 1986, 307–24.
247. *Ibid.*, 16; Gombrich 1994a, 48, where the Warburgian question *Was bedeutet das Nachleben der Antike?* is translated as: "How are [we] to interpret the continued revivals of elements of ancient culture in Western civilization?"
248. Gombrich 1966.
249. Goldschmidt 1921–22.
250. Sez nec 1961, 3, 6. Cf. as well Bezold 1922; Frey-Sallmann 1931.
251. Cf. Saxl 1957a; Saxl 1957d; Bialostocki 1996.
252. Cf. Jullian 1931; Heckscher 1937; Greenhalgh 1989; Gramaccini 1996.
253. Cf. Newald 1931; Newald 1960; Adhémar 1939; Heckscher 1963.
254. Cf. Saxl 1935; Saxl 1938; Saxl 1938–39; Weitzmann 1981b; Weitzmann 1981a; Keller 1970; Bialostocki 1973; Claussen 1977; Hammerstein 1980.
255. Immisch 1919; Salis 1947; Klemperer 1980; Lloyd-Jones 1982.
256. Cf. Dacos 1973; Cieri Via 1986, 5–10; Howard 1990; Recht 1992.
257. Gombrich 1986, 316–17.
258. Panofsky 1955a.
259. *Ibid.*, 237.
260. Panofsky 1929, 250.
261. Cf. Saxl 1920; Saxl 1922. From one article to the next, the term *rinascimento* already takes the place of *Nachleben*.
262. Let us note, however, the existence of the article Panofsky and Saxl 1926, and of Panofsky 1928.
263. Panofsky and Saxl 1933, 228.
264. *Ibid.*, 229.
265. *Ibid.*, 240, 263–68. This goes directly against the view that Warburg explicitly set forth in Warburg 1999i, 581: "the so-called medieval mind was quite capable of pursuing archaeological accuracy."
266. *Ibid.*, 268.
267. *Ibid.*, 276–78.
268. *Ibid.*, 235.
269. Panofsky 1944.
270. Panofsky 1972, 42–113.
271. Panofsky 1962, 3–31. [The author referenced the later English printing of this essay in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955). Here the original 1939 essay is cited from the 1962 paperback edition—Trans.]
272. Panofsky 1972, 8–9, 31.
273. *Ibid.*, 104–8.
274. *Ibid.*, 53.
275. *Ibid.*, 113.
276. Cf. Saxl 1963.
277. Panofsky 2004, 694, 697.
278. *Ibid.*, 701.

279. Warburg 1999g, 125.
 280. Gebhart 1887, 4.
 281. Burke 1986; S. Cohn 1995.
 282. Burckhardt 1943, 101-2, 80-81.
 283. Cf. Joël 1918; Löwith 1984; Joël 1918, 323-41; Löwith 1936, 39-361; Janner 1948; Ernst 1954; Heftrich 1967; Fuhrmann 1991; Siebert 1991.
 284. Burckhardt 1943, 81, 148-49.
 285. *Ibid.*, 82-83, 88.
 286. *Winners* 1929, 33-48; Grosse 1997.
 287. Burckhardt 1943, 79.
 288. *Ibid.*, 88.
 289. Burckhardt to Karl Fresenius, 19 June 1842; Burckhardt 1949-94, 1, 208.
 290. Cf. Ghelardi 1991, 115-25; Boerlin-Brodbeck 1994; Schlink 1997.
 291. Lacoue-Labarthe 1998, 5-9.
 292. Cf. Kaegi 1956, 49-51; Berger 1960; Schlaffer and Schlaffer 1975, 72-111; Boehm 1994, 76-81; Siebert 1991, 37-71, 153-56; Sitt 1992; Sitt 1994; Hinde 1994; Hinde 1996.
293. Burckhardt to Walter Beyschlag and to Karl Fresenius, 14 and 19 June 1842, Burckhardt 1949-94, 1:204-9.
 294. Burckhardt to Hermann Schanenbourg, 10 June 1844, Burckhardt 1949-94, 2:99.
 295. Warburg 1929c.
 296. Burckhardt 1943, 85.
 297. *Ibid.*, 84-85.
 298. Burckhardt 1999, 79.
 299. *Ibid.*, 67. Cf. Ritzenhofen 1979; Schulin 1994.
 300. Burckhardt 1943, 91.
 301. *Ibid.*, 143.
 302. *Ibid.*, 255-93, 347-70.
 303. *Ibid.*, 103, 130.
 304. *Ibid.*, 79, 81-82.
 305. *Ibid.*, 151-52.
 306. *Ibid.*, 101, 103.
 307. Burckhardt 1999, 3. He speaks of cases where there was not a "total decline."
 308. *Ibid.*, 4; Burckhardt 1943, 140-41.

CHAPTER 2

1. Warburg 1991. The participants in this seminar, which was held on 30 May and 27 July, were (in chronological order): I. Fraenckel, H. Schubert, L. Beachelt, F. Rouemont, L. H. Heydenreich, K. Sternelle, R. Strommert, and A. Neumeyer.
 2. *Ibid.*, 86.
 3. Burckhardt 1999, 2.
 4. Warburg 1991, 86.
 5. Cf. Schmidt 1879; Montessus de Ballore 1911, 33-65.
 6. Marey 1878.
 7. Cf. Frizot 1977; Dagognet 1987; Mannoni 1999.
 8. Heckscher 1985a, 254-55.
 9. Michaud 2004, 89, 90.
 10. Marey 1868, v; Marey 1885, v.
 11. Marey 1866, 3-10.
 12. Marey 1868, 81.
 13. Marey 1878, 1-46.
 14. Marey 1868, 105.
 15. Marey 1894, 4.
 16. Marey 1868, 106-202; Marey 1878, 107-240.
 17. Cf. Régnard and Richer 1878; Richer 1881, 537-658; Didi-Huberman 2003, 85-114, 177-85.
 18. Warburg 1991, 86-87.
 19. *Ibid.*, 87.
 20. On the relationship between Burckhardt and Nietzsche, see Löwith 1936, 44-90; A. von Martin 1945; Salin 1948; Salin 1959;
 Andler 1958, 1:181-227; Janz 1984-85, 1:285-90, 378-80; Janz 1984-85, 2:39-41, 256-58, 335-37; Janz 1984-85, 3:257-59, 419-29.
 21. Andler 1958, 1:181-83.
 22. Nietzsche 1977a, 494-95, Nietzsche to Gersdorff, 6 November 1870.
 23. Burckhardt 1955, 158-59, 187, 208-9, 211-12, Burckhardt to Nietzsche, 25 February 1874, 5 April 1879, 13 September 1882, 26 September 1886.
 24. Nietzsche to Burckhardt, 4 and 6 January 1889, Nietzsche 1989, 139, 150-52. [Translated from Nietzsche 1960, 3:1350, 1351-Trans.]
 25. Warburg 1991, 87.
 26. Cf. Andler 1958, 2:616-19; Janz 1984-85, 3:417-38; Otto Ludwig Binswanger (1852-1929), a professor at Jena, wrote on epilepsy, hysteria, "moral delirium," and on the treatment of patients in mental asylums, O. Binswanger 1887; O. Binswanger 1896; O. Binswanger 1899.
 27. Andler 1958, 2:613.
 28. Cf. Diers 1979; Koerner 1997.
 29. Cf. Artaud 1974, 77, 84, 88-89.
 30. Warburg 1991, 87.
 31. Warburg 2004a, 305; Warburg 2004b, 332.
 32. Tagebuch, 5-8 December 1895, quoted in McEwan 1998, 151.
 33. Cf. Forster 1995, 185-86.

34. Nietzsche 1999b, 147, fragment 26 [12].
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 149, 147, fragment 26 [12].
37. Ibid., 149–50, fragment 26 [12].
38. Ibid., 150, fragment 26 [12].
39. Ibid., 181, fragment 28 [1].
40. Cassirer 1950, 269.
41. Ibid., 270.
42. Ibid., 275.
43. Baron 1960, 209. See also Wilkins 1959.
44. Gombrich 1979, 34–42.
45. Gombrich 1986, 184–85. Cf. Warburg 1999s. For the question of the *intermezzi* and tragedy, cf. Meyer 1987; Pfothenhauer 1985.
46. Preface to the third edition of 1886, Nietzsche 1967a, 19. For Nietzsche and the philological paradigm, cf. Tatár 1989; Wotling 1995, 37–50; for Nietzsche's influence in Germany, cf. Aschheim 1992; for Warburg as a "philological-artist," cf. Glasmeier 1994; Zanetti 1985.
47. Warburg 1999g.
48. Nietzsche 1967b, 103–12.
49. Nietzsche 1977a, 308, fragment 7 [156].
50. Warburg 1999b, 190.
51. Nietzsche 1999a, 135–36; Nietzsche 1977a, 281–83, 308–9, 311, fragment 7 [116–17], [152–54], [157], [165].
52. Warburg 1999b. Cf. Nietzsche 1977a, 283, fragment 7 [177]: "the *work of art* and the *individual* are a repetition of the original process from which the world emerged, something like the curl of a wave within a wave."
53. Nietzsche 1977a, 281, fragment 8 [116].
54. Marx 1965, 265–66.
55. Nietzsche 1977a, 312–13, fragment 7 [168–69].
56. Ibid., 323, fragment 8 [2].
57. Nietzsche 1967a, 115, p. 108 of the edition used by Warburg, call number AMH 700 of his library.
58. Ibid., 118, 121.
59. Nietzsche 1968b, 561.
60. Ibid., 559, 560. The subsequent sentences offer further praise of Burckhardt.
61. Ibid., 562.
62. Warburg 1887, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 38.
63. Nietzsche 1977a, 277, fragment 8 [89–91].
64. Nietzsche 1999a, 125–34; Nietzsche 1967a, 33, 73.
65. Nietzsche 1999a, 126–30; Nietzsche 1967a, 47–48, 33–34.
66. Tagebuch, 9 December 1905, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 185.
67. Nietzsche 1967a, 36–45.
68. Nietzsche 1968b, 519.
69. Warburg 1999g, 97.
70. Warburg 1999e, 556.
71. Warburg 2001, 27–28.
72. Nietzsche 1999b, 11, fragment 19 [33].
73. Cassirer 1961, 182–217. These pages are primarily devoted to a commentary on Simmel 1988.
74. Cassirer 1961, 200–2.
75. Ibid., 202.
76. Nietzsche 1967a, 73.
77. Nietzsche 1977a, 166–67, where he refers to the book by Herker [actually J. F. C. Hecker—Trans.], Hecker 1832. The Warburg Library possesses a full range of books on this theme under the call numbers DCA and DCH.
78. Cf. Löwith 1956, chap. 4.
79. Nietzsche 1977b, 186, fragment 25 [23]. [This fragment is not included in the cited English edition—Trans.]
80. Nietzsche 1986, 113 [up to the third ellipsis—Trans.]; Nietzsche 1968a, 653. On Nietzsche and the Renaissance, cf. Hester 1976; Gerhardt 1989; Farulli 1990.
81. Nietzsche 1967a, 116–17.
82. Ibid., 119.
83. Warburg 1999i, 585.
84. Nietzsche 1986, 218.
85. Ibid., 194–96.
86. Nietzsche 1997, 59.
87. Ibid., 59–62.
88. Ibid., 64, 63. "For when it [history] attains a certain degree of excess, life crumbles and degenerates, and through this degeneration history itself finally degenerates too": Nietzsche 1997, 67.
89. Cf. Deleuze 1983, 71.
90. Ibid., 40, 6, 3–4.
91. Nietzsche 1999b, 31, fragment 19 [82].
92. Ibid., 151, fragment 26 [14].
93. Ibid., 265, fragment 29 [172]. [Author's reference corrected—Trans.]
94. Ibid., 53, fragment 19 [165]. [Author's reference corrected—Trans.]
95. Nietzsche 1997, 62.
96. The former position is held by Müller-Lauter 1998, the latter, by Lacoue-Labarthe 1986, 98–105. Nietzsche himself writes, "what is artistic has its inception in the organic," Nietzsche 1999b, 20, fragment 19 [50]. On Nietzschean "plastic power," cf. Deleuze 1983, 50–52; Robling 1996.
97. Deleuze 1994, 90, 115–16.

98. Deleuze 1983, 51.
 99. Ibid., 52–53.
 100. Warburg 2004a, 296.
 101. Warburg 1999f, 635.
 102. Warburg 1999g; Warburg 1900.
 103. Warburg 1999b, 204–8.
 104. Schlosser 1993; Didi-Huberman 1996b; Didi-Huberman 1998b.
 105. Cf. Deleuze 2005, where the subject of plasticity is not discussed as such, but rather is suggested through concepts like “layer” (“*nappe*”), multiplicity, metamorphosis, etc.
 106. Warburg 1925.
 107. Warburg 1999l, 635.
 108. Warburg 1927a, 12–19.
 109. Warburg 1999l, 603.
 110. Cf. Deleuze 1983, 73–75, 100–1.
 111. Michelet 1982, 34.
 112. Nietzsche 1997, 75. See also *ibid.*, 77–87.
 113. *Ibid.*, 98–105. Cf. Nietzsche 1999b, 188–285, fragment 29 [1–232].
 114. Nietzsche 1968b, 497.
 115. Warburg 1999b, 190, 207.
 116. Nietzsche 1997, 91, quoting Franz Grillparzer, and *ibid.*, 93.
 117. *Ibid.*, 95.
 118. Nietzsche 1999b, 20, fragment 19 [50].
 119. Nietzsche 1997, 120; Nietzsche 1999b, 237–40, fragment 29 [96]; Nietzsche 1999b, 209, fragment 29 [42].
 120. Nietzsche 1997, 60.
 121. *Ibid.*, 65.
 122. *Ibid.*, 94–95.
 123. Deleuze 1983, 48.
 124. *Ibid.*, 28–29.
 125. Deleuze 1994, 1–27.
 126. Klossowski 1969, 37–88, 301–56.
 127. Cf. Löwith 1956, 151–67, 181–211.
 128. Agamben 1998b, 78.
 129. Deleuze 1983, 2.
 130. Nietzsche 1967b, 27–31.
 131. Cf. Osthoff 1899; Osthoff 2001.
 132. Foucault 1977, 153–54.
 133. *Ibid.*, 139.
 134. *Ibid.*, 140, 162.
 135. Nietzsche 1967b, 84–86. On Nietzsche's symptomological paradigm, cf. Löwith 1956, 11; Deleuze 1983, 2, 42–44, 75; Long 1989, 112–18; Vozza 1990, 91–104; Wotling 1995, 109–82 (culture as symptom).
 136. Foucault 1977, 148.
 137. *Ibid.*, 155.
 138. *Ibid.*, 141–44, 160.
 139. Cf. Lash 1984; Sax 1989; Pizer 1990; Wilson 1995.
 140. Foucault 1977, 162.
 141. Benjamin 1985, 23–56.
 142. Warburg 1927a, 27.
 143. Warburg 1888–1905, 92, 162, 48.
 144. Warburg 1927a, 9.
 145. Warburg 1999i, 585.
 146. Warburg 1927a, 55; Warburg 1928a, 44.
 147. Warburg 1927a, 44.
 148. Warburg 1928a, 15.
 149. Nietzsche 1911, I:sec. 23.
 150. Nietzsche 1999a, 136–37.
 151. Warburg 1927a, 3.
 152. *Ibid.*, 20, 74.
 153. Cf. Warnke 1980b, 68–74.
 154. Warburg 1999b; Warburg 1999f; Warburg 1999c; Warburg 1999g.
 155. Gombrich 1986, 148–67.
 156. Rio 1861–67, I:401. Ghirlandaio's frescoes at Santa Trinita are analyzed in these terms on 401–6.
 157. Symonds 1881, I:234–38; Symonds 1881, 2:488–532.
 158. Gombrich 1986, 168.
 159. *Ibid.*, 184.
 160. Freud 1959c.
 161. Warburg 1903–6, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 147.
 162. Warburg 1927a, 21.
 163. Warburg 1999b, 190.
 164. Warburg 1999l, 650.
 165. Freud 1965b, 80.
 166. Warburg 1999l, 597.
 167. Warburg 2004a, 296.
 168. Warburg 1999l, 599.
 169. *Ibid.*, 650, 598–99. For the rest of his life Warburg continued to use the Nietzschean Apollonian-Dionysian polarity, cf. “the double countenance of antiquity as Apollonian-Dionysian”: Warburg 1928–29, 102, note dated 17 May 1929.
 170. Warburg 1999l, 598, 651.
 171. *Ibid.*, 637, 643–44.
 172. *Ibid.*, 1999l, 599.
 173. Warburg 2004a.
 174. Warburg 1999d, 702.
 175. Tagebuch 1927–28, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 268. Warburg's sentence continues with the theme of the “criticism of the periodizations of history” (*Kritik der weltgeschichtlichen Epochen-Abgrenzung*).
 176. Gombrich 1986, 252.
 177. Warburg 1992.

178. Warburg 1999d, 702. "And back again" [*und zurück*] are the last two words of this article.
179. Warburg 1928a, 28.
180. Goethe 1986, 18.
181. Warburg 1888–1905.
182. Warburg 1928–29, 43, note dated 4 May 1929.
183. Warburg 1928b.
184. Warburg 1999q, 89.
185. *Ibid.*, 103.
186. *Ibid.*, 108.
187. Warburg 1999e, 553.
188. *Ibid.*, 553, 555, 558.
189. Warburg 2001, 17, 19–20.
190. *Ibid.*, 28.
191. Wölfflin 1970, 231–335, where he seems to be implicitly responding to Warburg's statements of 1893.
192. Panofsky 1969, 204, 209–10, 228–31; Panofsky 1962, 13–15.
193. Gombrich 1966, 128; Gombrich 1982b, 55; Gombrich 1982c, 76.
194. Gombrich 1982a.
195. Gombrich 1986, 321.
196. Chastel 1987.
197. Francastel 1965, 201–81; Francastel 1967, 265–312.
198. Cf. especially, Warnke 1980b, 61–68; Barasch 1991; Vuojala 1997, 190–91 (with English summary); Bassan 1998.
199. Cf. Ginzburg 1996, 38–39, and for commentary, see F.-R. Martin 1998. See also Haus 1991; Barta-Fliedl and Geissmar-Brandi 1992; Barta-Fliedl, Geissmar-Brandi, and Sato 1999.
200. Cf. Warburg 1927a, 21, note dated June 1927: *Dynamogramm = Pathosformel*.
201. Cf. Kekulé von Stradonitz 1883.
202. Cassirer 1979, 17–18.
203. Cf. Bing 1960, 105–9; Bing 1965, 306–8.
204. Agamben 1998a, 11; cf. Settis 1981; Settis 1997.
205. Cf. Warburg 1927a, 45, note dated 23 May 1927.
206. Warburg 1995, 33–38.
207. Cassirer 1961, 202–3.
208. Warburg 1999q, 89.
209. Rilke 2004, 24.
210. One could cite, in no particular order, Lessing, Goethe, Haeckel, Darwin, Spencer, Lamprecht, Wundt, Schmarsow, Vignoli, Usener, Semper, et al.
211. Aristotle 1941, 2:5, 417a, p. 97.
212. Deleuze 1968, 299–311.
213. Frege 1971; cf. Imbert 1992, 119–62, 299–326.
214. Cassirer 1953a, 148. [The word "pathos" is in Greek in the English translation—Trans.] Cf. Cassirer 1953a, 94–117.
215. Cf. Justi 1898; Schmarsow 1907a.
216. "The simplicity and still grandeur [is something] which Winckelmann himself recognized in the Laocoon, writhing in the agony of death. . . . However [one should state] that a conception of antiquity sprang from the spirit of the Quattrocento which . . . stands precisely opposite to that of Winckelmann": Warburg 2001, 26, 27.
217. Warburg 1889, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 23–24, 50–51.
218. Dilthey 1974.
219. Lessing 1984, 17.
220. *Ibid.*, 19.
221. *Ibid.*, 54 and *passim*.
222. Springer 1848, 9.
223. Cf. Richter 1992; Settis 1999.
224. Schiller 1845a, 201.
225. *Ibid.*, 202. Schiller cites the Laocoon group on p. 203.
226. Hegel 1941, 2:246–54. Cf. also Schiller 1845b and the analyses of Szondi 1974, 9–25.
227. Goethe 1986, 17–18.
228. *Ibid.*, 20. Goethe gives another example, the death of Eurydice, in which a serpent is also present.
229. *Ibid.*, 21–22.
230. *Ibid.*, 22.
231. *Ibid.*, 20.
232. *Ibid.*, 15.
233. Nietzsche 1967a, 21, 34–37, 59–60, etc.; Nietzsche 1977a, 168, 319–22, 462, fragments VII, 200–204; XVI, 13.
234. Nietzsche 1999a, 124, 134–38.
235. Deleuze 1983, 62–63; Djuric 1989.
236. Riegl 1992, 1–11.
237. Nietzsche 2003, 256, fragment 14 [12].
238. Under the call number DAC.
239. Engel 1795, 1:51–52, 264–65, 294, etc.
240. Jorio 1832, v.
241. Cf. Requeno 1784; "Dell'antichità della chironomia," Requeno 1797, 40–42.
242. Tylor 1871, 1:145, 148–49. [Author's reference modified—Trans.]
243. Wundt 1922, 43–257. Wundt's analyses are based on an important article that Warburg no doubt read very closely: Mallery 1881. An extract from this long article was translated into German: Mallery 1882.
244. Cf. Schmarsow 1907b.
245. Wundt 1922, 143–99.
246. *Ibid.*, 158; cf. Mallery 1881, 382, 452.
247. Wundt 1922, 238–53; Wundt 1908, 138–76, 486–58.

248. Wundt 1922, 253-57.
249. Wundt 1886, 1:21-301; Wundt 1886, 2:475-500.
250. Espagne 1998, 83; Arnold 1980; Topel 1982; Schneider 1990.
251. Wundt 1886, 2:11-16.
252. *Ibid.*, 2:216.
253. Cf. Schmarsow 1886; Schmarsow 1899, 57-79.
254. Cf. Lamprecht 1896-97; Lamprecht 1897; Lamprecht 1900. See Lamprecht 1905b, 51-76, where he discusses "characters" or "psychological forces" (*seelischer Charakter, psychische Kraft*), and where he calls for a real "psychology of culture." But whereas Lamprecht was interested in "dominant" psychological characteristics (*Dominante*), Warburg was interested in *surviving* characteristics. On the relations between Warburg and Lamprecht, cf. Brush 2001.
255. Levinstein 1905. Lamprecht's preface was published separately as Lamprecht 1905a, 457-69.
256. Cf. Boas 1955, 17-63.
257. Warburg 1995, 50-51. It might seem astonishing that Warburg had used Lamprecht's protocol ten years earlier. Actually, their common source was an article by the American pedagogue Barnes: Barnes 1895 (who was himself preceded by Ricci 1887). I am grateful to Benedetta Castelli Guidi for drawing this to my attention.
258. Cf. Dippie 1992.
259. Janson 1952; cf. more recently Muraro and Rosand 1976, 114-15.
260. Camper 1792; Lavater 1820; Bell 1806.
261. Tagebuch, 1888, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 72.
262. Cf. Wind 1983b, 31; Saxl 1932; Bing 1965, 309-10.
263. Gombrich 1984, 119-20; Gombrich 1986, 307-24.
264. Mantegazza 1885, 67-87.
265. Wundt 1922; Wundt 1908; Wundt 1910; Klages 1923.
266. Cf. Liebschütz 1971; Schoell-Glass 1998a; Schoell-Glass 1998b; Schoell-Glass 1999.
267. Darwin 1965, 1.
268. *Ibid.*, 12.
269. *Ibid.*, 18.
270. *Ibid.*, 14.
271. *Ibid.*, 29.
272. *Ibid.*, 28.
273. *Ibid.*
274. *Ibid.*, 250.
275. *Ibid.*, 362.
276. *Ibid.*, 348.
277. *Ibid.*, 366.
278. Duchenne de Boulogne 1990, 109-225, for Laocoon and 169-88 for Lady Macbeth.
279. Darwin 1965, 355-56.
280. Cf. Warburg 1999q, 89.
281. Warburg 1999e, 553, 555. Cf. Warburg 1928-29, 140, undated note: "Energetische Auseinandersetzung/mit der Welt im Spiegel/antikisierender Ausdrucksprägung."
282. Warburg 1992, 171, quoted from the translation by Matthew Rampley, Warburg 1998a, 250-51.
283. Hering 1911; Butler 1880; Semon 1904.
284. Semon 1909, 137-43.
285. Cf. Springer 1848, 9; Hartmann 1877, 1, 80-87, 410-39; Vignoli 1877, 315-38.
286. Warburg 1999q, 89, 141.
287. *Ibid.*, 141, 89.
288. Warburg 2001, 15.
289. Reumont 1883, 2, 161.
290. Burckhardt 1892-94, 2:540. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 179, who quotes Burckhardt's statement, "Wo irgend Pathos zum Vorschein kam, musste es in antiker Form geschehen," from a secondary source.
291. Nietzsche 1977a, 163, fragment I, 13.
292. Warburg 1927a, 76, note dated 7 May 1927; Warburg 1928a, 13, note dated 1928; Warburg 1928-29, 118-29, notes dated from 22 January to 15 April 1929, and 131, note dated from 15 January 1929.
293. The last example calls for a clarification. It has been objected that the source of the *David* by Andrea del Castagno was not the pedagogue in the group of the Niobids (a group which was not discovered until 1583) but rather the Dioscuri of Monte Cavallo, of which there exists a beautiful drawing by Benozzo Gozzoli. If this is a matter of philological precision, then it is useful and positive; but if it is a matter of a theoretical objection to Warburg's *Pathosformel*, then it is illusory and positivistic. For the identification of the "direct source" does not eliminate the problem: within "classical instability" itself something was at work—as Warburg said—which led to a dynamic inversion of the same gesture found in the victim (the pedagogue) and in the hero (Dioscuri). The objections I am reporting here were formulated by Horster 1980, 28, and Nesselrath 1988, 197-98.
294. Warburg 1888-1905, 1:106 (typewritten, 45); 2:59 (typewritten, 158).
295. Tagebuch, 3 April 1929, Gombrich 1986, 303.

296. Warburg 1999b, 190.
 297. Warburg 1905-11.
 298. Warburg 1999q, 89.
 299. Warburg 1906-7, 9; Warburg 1927a, 40, note dated 26 May 1927.
 300. Warburg 1999e, 558.
 301. Osthoff 1899, 20-31.
 302. Warburg 1992, 171. On Warburg's use of Osthoff's linguistic theories, cf. Saxl 1932; Calabrese 1984; Caliandro 1997, 91-93.
 303. Warburg 1928a, 32, note dated 1928.
 304. Freud 1959c.
 305. Cf. Curtius 1956, 5, for the dedication to Warburg; 81, for "the good Lord is in the details"; and 145-46, for Botticelli and the ancient authors. Cf. Curtius 1960. On the relations between Warburg and Curtius—in whose work the *Pathosformel* tends toward the *topos*, cf. Warnke 1980b, 61-68; Wuttke 1986. On the relations between Warburg and Jolles, cf. Bodar 1991.
 306. Warburg 1999b, 187.
 307. Reinach 1924; Mauss 1985.
 308. Nietzsche 1999a, 136.
 309. Warburg 1900, with André Jolles. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 105-27; Bodar 1991; Contarini 1992; Weigel 2000, 103.
 310. Warburg 1999q, 95.
 311. *Ibid.*, 107-8, 91-142.
 312. Alberti 1956, 71.
 313. Warburg 1999g, 240.
 314. Warburg 2000, 84-89.
 315. Emmanuel 1896, v. The chronotypes are on plates II-V.
 316. Brandstetter 1995, 43-315.
 317. Emmanuel 1896, 28-37, 41-44.
 318. *Ibid.*, 198.
 319. *Ibid.*, 164-65.
 320. *Ibid.*, 267-75.
 321. *Ibid.*, 299-301.
 322. *Ibid.*, 296.
 323. Warburg 2001, 25-26.
 324. Warburg 1900, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 120.
 325. Warburg 1999q, 118; Warburg 1999e.
 326. Warburg 2001, 25; cf. Antal and Wind 1937.
 327. Nietzsche 1967a, 36.
 328. Warburg 1928-29, 8, 28, notes dated 2 September 1928 and 25 May 1929. On the "demonic" character of the *Pathosformeln*, cf. Radnóti 1985.
 329. Warburg 1992, 171-72. [Translated as Warburg 1998a, 250-52, translation modified—Trans.]
 330. Nietzsche 1967a, 36 [for "duality of the sexes, see p. 33—Trans.].
 331. Cf. De Martino 1975. Curiously, the recent edition [i.e., the 1975 edition—Trans.] omits the word *pagano* from the title.

CHAPTER 3

1. This proposal has been guided by a previous development of the theme; cf. Didi-Huberman 2003, 85-279; Didi-Huberman 1985, 20-28, 115-32; Didi-Huberman 2005, 162-83; Didi-Huberman 1995a; Didi-Huberman 1995b, 165-383; Didi-Huberman 1996c.
2. Warburg 1928a; Warburg 1928-29.
3. Gombrich 1986, 13. Cf. Gombrich 1984, 119, where Freud is simply missing from Warburg's psychological sources.
4. Roeck 1997, 102.
5. Gombrich 1986, 31, 184, 321-22.
6. Sauerländer 1989, 10.
7. Warburg 1999q, 89. [While the term "psychology of culture" does not appear in this text, it accurately captures Warburg's meaning—Trans.]
8. Freud 1955b, 13:184-87; Freud 1962c; Freud 1962a.
9. T. Mann 1970, 149; cf. Ghelardi 1998, 661.
10. Gombrich 1986, 184.
11. *Ibid.*, 287.
12. *Ibid.*, 242.
13. Saxl 1957c, 326.
14. Saxl 1957a.
15. Cf. Warburg 2004a, 314, etc.
16. Cf. Lamprecht 1896-97; Lamprecht 1897; Lamprecht 1900; Lamprecht 1905b, 77-102, 103-30; Lamprecht 1912, 54-72.
17. Simmel 1984, 61-72, 72-77; Bloch 1993, 188.
18. Janitschek 1879.
19. Two examples that Lamprecht himself studied in Lamprecht 1882 and in Lamprecht 1905a.
20. Warburg 1999q.
21. Warburg 2004a, 313.
22. Warburg 1999e, 558; Warburg 1999h.
23. Warburg 1888-1905.
24. Warburg 1927a.
25. Bing 1965, 309-10; cf. Raulff 1988.
26. Warburg, Tagebuch, 3 August 1988, cited by Gombrich 1986, 39-40.
27. Warburg 2004a, 301-2.
28. Cf. Bing 1965, 303; Gombrich 1986, 67-68, etc.

29. Mesnil 1926, 238.
30. Gombrich 1984, 119–20; Gombrich 1979, 47–49; Gombrich 1994b, 638, 646–47.
31. Cf. Wind 1983a, 107.
32. Cf. Cassirer 1997, 39–111; Cassirer 1923a, 11–39.
33. Warburg 1999q, 97–98.
34. *Ibid.*, 112–33.
35. Warburg 2001, 8.
36. Warburg 1999i; Warburg 1999l.
37. Warburg 1992, 171.
38. Tagebuch, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303.
39. Fragmente, 27 March 1889, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 48.
40. Briefmarke, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 252.
41. *Ibid.*, 251; Warburg 1927a, 14–16, notes dated 30 and 31 May 1927.
42. Warburg 1992, 172.
43. Warburg 1999g, 242.
44. Warburg 1999l, 632–41.
45. *Ibid.*, 637.
46. Cf. Michaud 2004; Didi-Huberman 2004.
47. Cf. Meynert 1884, 251–64; Jaspers 1913, 227–73; Cassirer 1953b, 205–77.
48. Ribot 1890, 103–18.
49. Ribot 1914.
50. Charcot and Richer 1889; Richer 1902.
51. Schade 1995.
52. *Ibid.*, 503. Cf. Richer 1902, pl. v.
53. Schade 1995, 499–501.
54. Didi-Huberman 2004.
55. Schade 1995, 502.
56. Nietzsche 1967a, 36, 45; Charcot and Richer 1984, 28–38.
57. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2003, 67–81; Didi-Huberman 1991.
58. Didi-Huberman 1984.
59. Cf. the tables left empty in Warburg 1905–11 (fig. 47).
60. Richer 1881, 89–116.
61. Didi-Huberman 1991.
62. Richer 1881, 69; cf. Didi-Huberman 2003, 162–63, 251–79.
63. Cf. Ritvo 1992, 264–73; cf. Lacoste 1994.
64. Cf. Freud 1964a, 456; Freud 1959k, 20:100.
65. Freud 1959j, 2:58.
66. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2003, 162–63; Didi-Huberman 1995a, 200–2; Didi-Huberman 1998a, 92–98.
67. Férida 1992, 246 (and, in general, 227–65).
68. Goethe 1986, 15.
69. Freud to Fliess, 19 February 1899, Freud and Fliess 1954, 277.
70. Freud 1959j, 2:56–57.
71. Freud 1965a, 608; Freud 1959f, 3:65.
72. Freud 1964a, 446.
73. *Ibid.*, 448.
74. Freud 1965a, 362–63.
75. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1996c.
76. Warburg 1999q, 133–42; Warburg 1999b, 193.
77. Goethe 1986, 17.
78. *Ibid.*, 17, 21.
79. *Ibid.*, 20–21.
80. Warburg 1999b, 190–91.
81. Nietzsche 1968b, 519.
82. Cf. Auerbach 1993; Didi-Huberman 1990.
83. Warburg 1999q.
84. Freud 1959f, 3:37–38.
85. Warburg 1999e, 558; Warburg 1992, 173.
86. Wittkower 1977.
87. Freud 1959d.
88. Freud 1965a, 582.
89. Cf. Lacan 2006, 296–97, 310–11, 430–31, 578–79; Lacan 1976, esp. 7–11.
90. Lacan 1973, 16; Lacan 2006, 239–40.
91. Freud 1965a, 571–88.
92. Lacan 1998, 475.
93. Semon 1904; Hering 1905; Semon 1909.
94. Warburg 1888–1905.
95. Warburg 1928–29, 116, note dated 12 March 1929.
96. Warburg 1992, 172, quoted from Warburg 1998a, 251. [Translation modified—Trans.]. *Thiasos* is the name given to the Dionysian procession.
97. Freud 1959i.
98. Freud and Breuer 1957, 8, 15, 7.
99. *Ibid.*, 297.
100. Freud to Fliess, 6 December 1896, Freud and Fliess 1954, 174.
101. Freud 1965d, 62–73.
102. Freud to Fliess, 2 November, 4 and 6 December 1896, Freud and Fliess 1954, 170–71.
103. Freud 1959a, 1:214–16; Freud 1959i, 1:150–52; Freud 1959h, 1:160–61.
104. Freud and Fliess 1954, 173–76, Freud to W. Fliess, 6 December 1896. The *fueros* were age-old privileges that were still honored in certain Spanish provinces.
105. Freud 1959a, 1:192.
106. *Ibid.*, 1:214–15.
107. Freud 1959g, 2:369. On the relationship between the theory of memory and the theory of emotional gestures in Freud, cf. Maslyczyk 1990.
108. Freud and Breuer 1957, 288–94; Freud 1962b.
109. *Ibid.*, 7.

110. Freud 1955b, 13:184.
111. *Ibid.*
112. Lacan 2006, 215, where he discusses the analysis of the unconscious by means of the paradigms of history (censored chapter), of the monument (hysterical symptom), of the archival document (childhood memories), of semantic evolution (stock of meanings), of traditions and legends (mythic imagination), and lastly of "traces" that are always modified and distorted.
113. Warburg 1903, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 143.
114. Warburg 1900.
115. *Tagebuch*, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303.
116. Freud 1959m.
117. Freud 1955a, 18:28. On Freud's critique of Kantian time, cf. Chervet 1997; Press 1997.
118. Freud 1985, 288.
119. Husserl 1964, 48, 52.
120. Draft M, 1897, Freud and Fliess 1954, 202-3.
121. On the difference between Freud's and Husserl's models of time, cf. Lagrange 1988; Därmann 2000.
122. Cf. Lacoste 1992, 47-49; Lacoste 1998.
123. Cf. Le Goff 1988, 55, 169, etc.
124. Freud 1965b, 74.
125. Deleuze 1994, 96-102, 107-9.
126. *Ibid.*, 105, 109.
127. Warburg 2001, 21-22.
128. Freud 1955a, 18:18.
129. Freud 1955b, 13:183-85; Freud 1959l, where, on p. 180, he states that the "discontinuous method of functioning of the system Pcpt.-Cs. lies at the bottom of the appearance of the origin of the concept of time."
130. Freud and Fliess 1954, 384, 347-445 ("Project for a Scientific Psychology").
131. Freud 1965a, 524.
132. Warburg 1999b.
133. Freud and Fliess 1954, 202-7, Draft M.
134. Cf. Laplanche 1997; Flem 1982.
135. Freud 1959a, 11:185 (the citation is from Habakkuk 2:11).
136. Freud 1959e, 5:360.
137. *Ibid.*, 5:361.
138. The model of symmetry in 1907, a model of inclusion—the return of the repressed as a "third time" of repression in the broader sense of the term—[is found] in the metapsychology of 1915. Freud 1959m, 4:84-97.
139. *Ibid.*, 4:89-90, thereafter; Freud 1964a, 354-76 [up to the first ellipsis—Trans.].
140. Lacan 1975c, 215.
141. Freud 1964b, 23:72, 75.
142. *Ibid.*, 23:58.
143. *Ibid.*, 23:69, 70.
144. *Ibid.*, 23:87; Saxl 1931; Saxl 1935; Saxl 1957b.
145. Freud 1964b, 23:94, 101.
146. Cf. Moscovici 1989.
147. Freud 1959m, 4:89.
148. Freud and Breuer 1957, 4.
149. Freud 1965a, 576.
150. Freud 1959n, 4:177.
151. Freud 1959a, 11:187-88.
152. "Project for a Scientific Psychology," Freud and Fliess 1954, 413.
153. Cf. Lacan 1975c, 19, 180, 182; Lacan 2006, 161, 123, 234-24, 684-85, 710-12.
154. Cf. Green 1990; Fédida 1985; Laplanche 1999.
155. Warburg 1999q, fig. 6, fig. 15.
156. Cf. Burckhardt 1853; Riegl 1985.
157. Warburg 1926, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 229-38; Warburg 1929d.
158. Warburg 1995, 7.
159. Warburg 1991, 87.
160. "Project for a scientific psychology," Freud and Fliess 1954, 409-13.
161. Warburg 1999q, 112-35.
162. Bachelard 1952, 111-12.
163. Quoted by Gombrich 1986, 261.
164. Cf. Descamps 1976, 1:438; Leclerc and Tarrête 1994.
165. Cf. Goethe 1971, 196-203.
166. Cf. Cuvier 1804-7, 411; Cuvier 1812, 32-33. See also Hölder 1960, 359-430; Balan 1979, 380-83; Laurent 1987, 77-78. I wish to thank Claudine Cohen for having drawn my attention to the importance of the work in stratigraphy of Orbigny 1849-52, 1:85-92, 110-16, 125-57. On the relationship of fossils, image and impression, cf. Cohen 1994, 66-86; Blanckaert 1999.
167. Richthofen 1886, classified as "General Anthropology," under call number DLF.
168. Call numbers DAA, DAC, and DAD.
169. Quatrefages de Bréau 1884.
170. Cf. Boule 1921; Luquet 1926.
171. Cf. Norden 1924, 165, who also uses the expression. I thank Christopher Ligota for this reference.
172. Freud and Breuer 1957, 34-38.
173. *Ibid.*, 202-3.
174. Warburg 1927a, 37.
175. Freud and Breuer 1957, 202-3. [The English equivalent of the quoted German phrase does not appear in the translation. An equivalent

- can found, however, in Freud's "Some General Remarks on Hysterical Attacks," Freud 1959o, 9:229—Trans.]
176. Cf. David-Ménard 1994, 253.
 177. Cyssau 1995, 223, 271–303.
 178. Orbigny 1849–52, 1:27–34.
 179. Warburg 1900. Cf. Bodar 1991; Contarini 1992, 87–93; Weigel 2000.
 180. Cf. Brandstetter 2000.
 181. Koerner 1997, 36.
 182. Warburg 1900, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 110.
 183. Heine 1998.
 184. *Ibid.*, 405–6.
 185. Taine 1869, 129.
 186. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Visitation* (1485–1490), Florence, Santa Maria Novella.
 187. Warburg, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 107.
 188. *Ibid.*, 107–8.
 189. Cf. Settis 1981, vii–xix; Huber 1993.
 190. Cf. Emmanuel 1896, 48–51, 61, 103, 143, 216, 287, 300, 304, etc.; Weege 1926, 56–98.
 191. Freud 1917, 134–36.
 192. *Ibid.*, 5, translating from Jensen.
 193. Granoff 1976, 381–403.
 194. Rey 1979, 147–84.
 195. Warburg 1929c.
 196. Minutes of 11 December 1907, Freud 1976, 283.
 197. Jones 1955, 2:362; Pontalis 1988.
 198. Warburg 2000, 20–27, 82–89, etc.
 199. *Ibid.*, 24–25.
 200. *Ibid.*, 82–83.
 201. *Ibid.*, 86–87.
 202. Dumézil 1975, 41.
 203. Cf. Nock 1961; Becatti 1971; Bandera Viani 1984; Halm-Tisserant and Siebert 1997; Zusanek and Hoffmann 1998.
 204. Warburg 2000, 128–29; Warburg 1929d.
 205. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 6.
 206. Cf. Herter 1937, col. 1553; Bassan 1998, a regrettable brief discussion.
 207. Cf. Calasso 1994, 125–33.
 208. Freud 1959p, 4:369–70, 376–77, 398–99.
 209. *Ibid.*, 4:389.
 210. Freud 1965a, 585.
 211. Freud 1959m, 4:140–42.
 212. Warburg 1999b, 187–88.
 213. Cf. Freud 1959m, 143; Férida 1995, 221–44; Férida 2000.
 214. Freud 1959m, 4:73, 74. The "successive eruptions of lava" correspond to the "phases of development of the instinct." Freud uses the word *Trieberuption* on the same page: Freud 1959m, 4:73.
 215. Cf. Mann and Cestelli Guidi 1998, 132–41.
 216. Dorsey and Voth 1902; Voth 1903.
 217. Cf. Naber 1988; Raulff 1996.
 218. Warburg 1995, 1–4. It should be noted that Warburg undertook these travels just five years after the defeat of the Native Americans at Wounded Knee.
 219. Warburg to James Mooney, 17 May 1907, quoted by Michaud 2004, 186–87.
 220. According to Michaud 2004, 187–89, Warburg possessed an archive on a 'miracle' which occurred among the Indians of New Mexico in 1895: the earth cracked and opened, allowing a long-buried coffin to resurface.
 221. Warburg 1995, 7.
 222. Warburg 2004a, 304–5.
 223. Cf. Fewkes 1894, 77.
 224. Warburg 2004a, 320. [In this text *ganze Kraft* is translated as "strength"—Trans.]
 225. *Ibid.*, 306.
 226. Warburg 1995, 48.
 227. Cf. Ginzburg 2000, 124–47.
 228. Cf. Di Donato 1999, 41–56. On the comparison between Florentines and Native Americans, see Michaud 1998; Katritzky 2001. On the comparison between Jews and Native Americans, cf. Steinberg 1995, and, for a critique of Steinberg's comparison, Koerner 1997, 30–38.
 229. Warburg 1995, 36.
 230. Warburg 2004a, 295, where the reading of the manuscript remains uncertain.
 231. *Ibid.*, 305; Warburg 1995, 33–35.
 232. Warburg 2004a, 314; Warburg 2004b, 332.
 233. Warburg 1887.
 234. Warburg had acquired a work of the latter devoted to the psychological effects of the war (O. Binswanger 1914), under the call number DII 70.
 235. Cf. Nijinsky 1995; Ostwald 1991, 249–98.
 236. Binswanger to Freud, 8 November 1921, Binswanger and Freud 2003, 155–56.
 237. Cf. Diers 1979; Königseder 1995, 89.
 238. Königseder 1995, 93–96.
 239. Koerner 1997, 30; Steinberg 1995, 70–73.
 240. Cf. Raulff 1998, 64.
 241. Warburg 2004a, 298–99 (list of slides).
 242. Binswanger to Warburg, 14 August 1926, quoted by Raulff 1991b, 60.
 243. Warburg 2004a, 295.
 244. *Ibid.*, 295, 296.
 245. *Ibid.*, 305.
 246. Warburg to Saxl, 26 April 1923, quoted by Raulff 1998, 74. Warburg allowed only four

- people from his inner circle to read his text: his wife, Mary, his son Max, his physician, Heinrich Embden, and Ernst Cassirer, who at the time was working on his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.
247. Cf., respectively, Settis 1993 and Steinberg 1995.
 248. Warburg 2004a, 307, 302, 295.
 249. *Ibid.*, 304.
 250. Cf. Raulff 1998, 74, who, quite correctly, noted the analogy between the most basic element of Warburgian knowledge—the *Nachleben*—and the natural tendency of snakes to constantly move about and to change shape.
 251. Cf. Königseder 1995, 77–81; Spagnolo-Stiff 1999, 249–51.
 252. Cf. Spagnolo-Stiff 1999, 250–69.
 253. Cf. Warburg 1999i; Warnke 1999; McEwan 2001.
 254. Goethe, *Faust*, pt. 2, act 5, quoted as an epigraph by Freud 1965c, [1].
 255. Cf. Chernow 1993, 174–77; Koerner 1997, 38.
 256. Cf. Chernow 1993, 204–6; Koerner 1997, 30.
 257. Warburg 2004a, 307–9.
 258. Cf. Chernow 1993, 258. To Carl Georg Heise, who came to visit him, Warburg said, “You have heard the lion roaring? Just imagine—that was me!” Heise 1947, 42–50.
 259. Cf. Koerner 1997, 34 (and cf. Prinzhorn 1984).
 260. Koerner 1997, 31.
 261. Ludwig Binswanger, quoted by Königseder 1995, 84.
 262. I thank in particular Nicholas Mann, director of the Warburg Institute, for giving me access to these documents, which are still not publicly available.
 263. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch from the years 1919–24, notebook 17, Hamburg 1920, at the end of the volume. [The notebooks cited in nn. 263–70 and 272 are all from these years, which appear to be a subset of the second of the two series of journals (1918–29) listed in the author’s bibliography—Trans.]
 264. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 29, Kreuzlingen 1921, 2854.
 265. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 46 and 47, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3466, 4168.
 266. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 40, Kreuzlingen 1921, 3312, etc.
 267. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 50, Kreuzlingen 1922, which is particularly chaotic.
 268. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 51, Kreuzlingen 1922, 4563, etc.
 269. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 39, Kreuzlingen 1921, 3388 and notebook 46, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3970.
 270. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 33, Kreuzlingen 1921, between 3140 and 3141 and 3167–68.
 271. Cf. Lacan 1975b.
 272. Warburg 1894–1929, Tagebuch, notebook 38, Kreuzlingen 1921, 3274; notebook 39, Kreuzlingen 1921, 284, 3307; notebook 40, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3336; notebook 41, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3349; notebook 42, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3361, 3363; notebook 43, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3682; notebook 44, Kreuzlingen 1922, 3712; 3886; 3888, etc.
 273. Cf. Königseder 1995, 82.
 274. Cf. Chernow 1993, 260.
 275. Cf. Königseder 1995, 89–91.
 276. Cf. Warburg 1999b, 191; Warburg 1999e, 555; Warburg 1999i, 603.
 277. Warburg 1991.
 278. L. Binswanger 1957b, 2, where he corrects Ernest Jones on this point.
 279. Roth 1995, 228–29.
 280. L. Binswanger 1970d, 251 (I am quoting from the German texts as published in L. Binswanger 1992–94).
 281. L. Binswanger 1970e, 193, 200.
 282. L. Binswanger 1970f.
 283. L. Binswanger 1957b, 23–41.
 284. *Ibid.*, 42–57 (where Freud’s visit to Kreuzlingen in 1912 is described).
 285. *Ibid.*, 68, 76.
 286. *Ibid.*, 103; cf. Schur 1972, 315–20.
 287. L. Binswanger 1970c; L. Binswanger 1970e, 250.
 288. L. Binswanger 1971e.
 289. L. Binswanger 1971c, 131; cf. L. Binswanger 1970e, 241–43.
 290. Letters to Aby Warburg, 25 August and 24 November 1924, quoted by Raulff 1991b, 56–57.
 291. L. Binswanger 1928, 24, where the text by Aby Warburg is quoted.
 292. Warburg, letters to Ludwig Binswanger, 1925–27, quoted by Raulff 1991b, 57–58, 64–67.
 293. L. Binswanger 1993b, 88.
 294. Warburg 1999q, 141; cf. Didi-Huberman 1999, 27–31, 86–99.
 295. L. Binswanger 1993b. Cf. Nietzsche 1911, 193, and Nietzsche 1999a, 119, “we dream with pleasure as we understand the *figure* directly; all forms speak to us.”
 296. Foucault 1993, 33.

297. L. Binswanger 1998; L. Binswanger 1993a, 33–63.
298. Warburg 1999j; Warburg 1999l.
299. Tagebuch, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303. Warburg devoted a small section of his library to schizophrenia; it was located between books on Psychopathology, Psychoanalysis, and the Psychology of Genius.
300. L. Binswanger 1957a; L. Binswanger 1987; L. Binswanger 1993a.
301. L. Binswanger 1957b, 2; L. Binswanger 1970e, 252.
302. L. Binswanger 1971d, 61–62 (Warburg probably read this text at Kreuzlingen).
303. L. Binswanger 1971d, 63.
304. Warburg 1999q, 89.
305. L. Binswanger 2000, 11, 29, 33, 77–79, 246–48, etc.
306. *Ibid.*, 239, translation slightly modified by Didi-Huberman.
307. Foucault 1993, 32, emphasis added by Didi-Huberman. Cf. L. Binswanger 1942.
308. L. Binswanger 2000, 217.
309. *Ibid.*, 172, concerning the “schizophrenic style of language as such,” and *passim*.
310. L. Binswanger 1992. Cf., before Binswanger, Reboul-Lachaux 1921.
311. Warburg 1888–1905, 386, note dated 29 March 1899, etc.
312. L. Binswanger 1949, 17, 50 and *passim*.
313. Lacan 1988.
314. *Ibid.*, 5, 4.
315. *Ibid.*, 5.
316. *Ibid.*, 6.
317. *Ibid.* These statements should be seen in connection with the slightly earlier 1932 dissertation on paranoid psychosis, Lacan 1975a [reference provided by the translator—Trans.] and with the later ones in Lacan 2006, 9, “the style is the man himself,” etc. Today, it is probably in the work of Pierre Fédida that one finds the most penetrating insights into this “*stylistique du symptôme*.”
318. Cf. Michaud 1999, 49–50, who relates Warburg’s “seismography” to the poetics of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, according to which the written work in general, whether poetic or scientific, is understood as a “surface of [seismographic] impressions.”
319. Cf. Didi-Huberman 2004.
320. Warburg 1923 (five folios numbered 15 to 19, dated 26 April 1923).
321. Warburg 2004a, 302.
322. *Ibid.*, 296.
323. Schlegel 2009, 37, quoted by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1978, 118.
324. Freud 1959e, 5:371.
325. *Ibid.*, 5:367.
326. Warburg 2004a, 312, 313, 312, 314. [Phrases in italics with slashes are Warburg’s unpunctuated marginalia—Trans.]
327. Warburg 2004a, 311.
328. *Ibid.*, 324–26.
329. Warburg 1928–29, 5, note dated 28 September 1928.
330. Warburg 1929a, 6–7, 14.
331. Clark 1974, 189–90.
332. Cassirer 1979, 17–19.
333. Tagebuch, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303.
334. Tagebuch, 1927–28, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 259; cf. Hoffmann 1992.
335. Cf. Maldiney 1991, 5, 386–87. “[The *pathē mathos* of Aeschylus] designates the psychopathological elements which are rooted in the sphere of tragedy”: Fédida 1992, 19–28.
336. Cf. L. Binswanger 1970f; L. Binswanger 1971c; L. Binswanger 1970b; L. Binswanger 1971a.
337. L. Binswanger 1926. Binswanger evokes this text in a letter to Warburg, 28 December 1925, quoted by Raulff 1991b, 62. The offprint is catalogued under the call number DAC 165.
338. Jaspers 1913, 227.
339. L. Binswanger 1926, 228–29.
340. *Ibid.*, 229.
341. Maldiney 1973, esp. 40.
342. L. Binswanger 1926, 223–25.
343. *Ibid.*, 226.
344. *Ibid.*, 227–28, where he discusses Michelangelo’s *Moses*.
345. L. Binswanger 1970g, 53–54. Cf. Fédida 1970, 17, who writes, “the essential incompleteness of these approaches is the only chance they have of achieving something some day.”
346. Cf. L. Binswanger 1971b.
347. *Ibid.*, 81–82.
348. *Ibid.*, 81.
349. Cf. Buytendijk and Plessner 1925–26, quoted by Saxl 1932, 14; Uexküll 1965; Straus 1935, 318–31.
350. Husserl 1982, 229–41.
351. Stein 1917; Scheler 1913, 1923.
352. Warburg 1999q, 89.
353. *Ibid.*, 118.
354. Warburg 1888–1905.
355. *Ibid.*, 2:3, typescript, 124.

356. *Ibid.*, 2:3, typescript, 125.
357. Warburg 1903-6, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 157.
358. Schlosser 1908, 1-21.
359. Warburg 1913, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 202.
360. Schmarsow 1893. Cf. Schmarsow 1899, 57-59; Schmarsow 1905, 136-37; Schmarsow 1929.
361. Cf. Siebeck 1875. The book can be found in the Warburg library under the call number CIH 1350, although it is not included in the computerized catalogue. Warburg especially annotated the fourth chapter, "Die Apperception durch Verhältniss-Vorstellungen" [Apperception through representations of relationships—Trans.]. Siebeck's theory of empathy should be considered in connection with his interest in dreams, on the one hand, and in music, on the other, cf. Siebeck 1877, 1906.
362. Wölfflin 1976, 3-4.
363. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 96, 143.
364. Berenson 1896, 1-19. Cf. Berenson 1948, 61, 226-27.
365. Cf. Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994.
366. Basch 1896, 250.
367. Basch 1934, 62, 65.
368. Worringer 1907, 42-43, 50-53, 77, 148-49, etc.
369. *Ibid.*, 42 and *passim*.
370. Warburg 1999c, 89; Warburg 2004b, 324. Wind underscored the influence of Robert Vischer on Warburg: Wind 1983a, 108; Carchia 1984, 95-99; Ferretti 1984, 15-24.
371. F. T. Vischer 1846-57. Vischer would reissue and revise his system in F. T. Vischer 1861-73.
372. Cf. R. Vischer 1879; R. Vischer 1886.
373. Cf. Nigro Covre 1977; Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994, 17-18.
374. R. Vischer 1994, 93-95.
375. *Ibid.*, 98-99.
376. *Ibid.*, 102.
377. *Ibid.*, 95-96.
378. *Ibid.*, 102-9, where he distinguishes between four degrees of empathy: *Einfühlung*, *Anfühlung*, *Nachfühlung*, and *Zuführung* [empathy, attentive feeling, responsive feeling, and immediate feeling—Trans.].
379. *Ibid.*, 104.
380. Warburg 2004a, 311-14.
381. R. Vischer 1994, 103.
382. *Ibid.*, 99.
383. *Ibid.*, 115-22. As if to compensate for the audacity of his initial propositions, Vischer concludes his book with two chapters more in conformity with classical aesthetics, in which the "unconscious" gives way to the "ideal," and in which the processes of the intensification of form are denied to the "accessory." (Warburg, as we have seen, was to reach opposite conclusions.)
384. *Ibid.*, 89-93.
385. Scherner 1861.
386. Freud 1965a, 115-19, 166, 257-60, 370, 382-83, 394-95, 437-38, 584-86. Scherner is also quoted by L. Binswanger 1928, 51, 63.
387. R. Vischer 1994, 99-102.
388. *Ibid.*, 108.
389. *Ibid.*, 106, 110-12.
390. Cf. Crozier and Greenhalgh 1992; Caliandro 1999.
391. R. Vischer 1994, 89-93.
392. Kant 1979, 174; Hegel 1995-97, 1:401, 409; etc.
393. F. T. Vischer 1922.
394. Wind 1983b, 26-27; Gombrich 1986, 72-75, who, naturally, takes the opposing position.
395. F. T. Vischer 1922, 420.
396. *Ibid.*, 420-22.
397. *Ibid.*, 422-23.
398. *Ibid.*, 433.
399. Warburg 2000, 132-33, pl. 79; cf. Schoell-Glass 2001.
400. F. T. Vischer 1922, 433.
401. *Ibid.*, 426-34.
402. *Ibid.*, 433-56.
403. *Ibid.*, 428-29.
404. *Ibid.*, 446.
405. Basch 1896, 285.
406. F. T. Vischer 1922, 420; cf. Buschendorf 1998.
407. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 14, 75, 149.
408. Carlyle 1987, 22.
409. Warburg, "Warburgismen," 86 folios.
410. Carlyle 1987, 24.
411. *Ibid.*, 4.
412. *Ibid.*, 145 et *passim*.
413. *Ibid.*, 51. On this notion of a "negative dialectic," cf. Dilthey 1921; Dale 1981.
414. Didi-Huberman 2000, 85-155.
415. Warburg 1999a.
416. Carlyle 1899c; Carlyle 1899a; Carlyle 1899b.
417. Carlyle 1987, 166.
418. *Ibid.*
419. *Ibid.*, 167-68.
420. *Ibid.*, 169.
421. *Ibid.*, 170-71.
422. Baudelaire 1976, 329.
423. Vignoli 1879. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 68-71, criticized by Dal Lago 1984, 80-81.
424. Cf. Sassi 1982, 83-85.

425. Vignoli 1877, 42–68.
426. Vignoli 1879, 63, 71–72, 76–77; Vignoli 1895, 165–206.
427. Vignoli 1879, 18, where he quotes Espinas 1877, and 22.
428. Vignoli 1879, 7, 11–14.
429. Vignoli 1898, 19–44.
430. Vignoli 1879, 210–86.
431. Warburg 2004a, 309.
432. Balzac 1846. Warburg read it in the German translation of 1848 [*Die kleinen Leiden des Ebestandes* (Leipzig: Weber)—Trans.].
433. Balzac 1846, 335.
434. *Ibid.*, 273.
435. Cf. L. Binswanger 2000, 303–5.
436. Cf. Lévy-Bruhl 1926, 181–358. For “the survival of the dead,” see Lévy-Bruhl 1928, 232–60; Lévy-Bruhl 1938.
437. Warburg 1927a, 14, note dated 31 May 1927.
438. Lévy-Bruhl 1926, 13–15.
439. *Ibid.*, 76–77.
440. Lévy-Bruhl 1923, 35–38.
441. Lévy-Bruhl 1983, 57, 58, 60.
442. *Ibid.*, 32–40, 55–62, 172–89. Ten years after Warburg’s death, Lévy-Bruhl attempted to rework the notion of participation. It is not by chance that in the end he determined that the greatest “coherence of the primitive” is to be found in the aesthetic domain. Cf. Lévy-Bruhl 1975.
443. Warburg 1896–1901, 5.
444. *Ibid.*, 5, 30–31, 33, notes dated December 1899 and May 1900.
445. Cf. Bertozzi 1999; Lippincott 1991; Lippincott 2001; Fratucello and Knorr 1998; Ghelardi 1999.
446. Warburg 19991, 599.
447. Warburg, *Tagebuch*, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303; Warburg 1928–29, 12. On Warburgian “psychohistory” as a “saturine discipline,” cf. Roeck 1996.
448. Warburg 2004a, 322.
449. “Missing, Freud *Totem and Taboo*,” Warburg 2004a, 314.
450. Warburg 2004a, 306–7. Rank 1968 had just appeared.
451. Freud 1962c, 85–90 and *passim*.
452. *Ibid.*, 93.
453. Freud 1965c, 327, 329.
454. Warburg 2004a, 295.
455. Saxl 1923. The idea of transforming the private library into an institute dates from 1914.
456. Cassirer 1979, 17.
457. *Ibid.*, 17–18.
458. Cassirer 1923a.
459. Cf. Ferretti 1989; Ferrari 1986; Ferrari 1988; Krois 1995, 11; Paetzold 1995, 68–85.
460. Cf. Jesinghausen-Lauster 1985; Naber 1991.
461. Cf. Grolle 1994.
462. Cassirer 1997.
463. Cassirer 2000, xiii.
464. Krois 1995, 12.
465. D. Cohn 1999, 5. The continuity of the “iconological program” from Warburg through Panofsky, via the philosophical elucidation of the symbolic forms by Cassirer, constitutes the mainstream historiographical approach to this subject. The position has been defended by, among others, Ginzburg 1989b; Klein 1970, 224–25; Argan 1975, 297–303; Eisler 1985; P. Schmidt 1993; Secchi 1996.
466. Cf. Gombrich 1999, 268–82.
467. Cf. Damisch 1992, 168, where Warburg is simultaneously accepted as a precursor of a “structural aesthetics” and rejected on account of his “strictly evolutionist and psychologizing approach.”
468. Warburg 19991, 585.
469. Hoogewerff 1931.
470. Heckscher 1985a; cf. Trottein 1983.
471. Cf. Panofsky 1991, 27–196; Panofsky 1975; Panofsky 1962, 13–15; Cieri Via 1994, 25–134.
472. Cf. Capeillères 1997a, 210–12, 252. The absence of Warburg’s name among Cassirer’s intellectual acknowledgments is significant in this respect: Cassirer 1953a, 69–72.
473. Saxl 1923.
474. Cassirer 1923a, 11.
475. *Ibid.*
476. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
477. *Ibid.*, 15.
478. *Ibid.*, 14; cf. Cassirer 1953a, 93; Cassirer 1953b, 93.
479. Cassirer 1923a, 27.
480. Cassirer 1995a.
481. Cassirer 1944, 228.
482. Cassirer 1923b, 3–26; Cassirer 1953a, 79–80.
483. Cassirer 1953a, 86.
484. *Ibid.*, 79–80, 84.
485. Cassirer 1953b, 1 [ellipsis introduced by the translator—Trans.].
486. Cf. Capeillères 1997b.
487. Cassirer 1953a, 108–9.
488. *Ibid.*, 90–91 [the last phrase does not appear in the English translation—Trans.]. For a critique of the unity of “function,”

- cf. Didi-Huberman 2005, 124–38; Didi-Huberman 1996a.
489. Cassirer 1997, 90–91.
490. Warburg 1999I, 596–97. That is also why, in the classificatory scheme of the Warburg library, the sections devoted to divination and mathematics—as well as to astrology and astronomy—are adjacent.
491. Warburg 1928–29, 8, note dated 21 June 1929.
492. Cf. Novalis 2000; Hegel 1970.
493. Cassirer 1923a, 16–17.
494. Cassirer 2000.
495. Cassirer 1953b, 185.
496. Let us note the recurring and spontaneous character of this ascending temporal order: all of Cassirer's models are oriented in the same direction. Thus, when he speaks of "a simple line," the latter is considered to be *first of all* "expressive" and *then* a "schema"—either geometric or mathematical—as if a childhood of art preceded an "adult" science; cf. *ibid.*, 200. This teleological structure has been acknowledged by Capeillères 1997a, 150–52, who had previously rejected it: Capeillères 1995.
497. Cassirer 1923a, 27–39.
498. Cassirer 1953b, 117–277, 448.
499. *Ibid.*, 92, 75.
500. *Ibid.*, 16–17, 60–63, 71–74, 87, 89–90, 102–3.
501. *Ibid.*, 107.
502. Cassirer 1953a, 105.
503. Cassirer 1953b, 108, 113.
504. *Ibid.*, 233–61.
505. Quoted by Krois 1995, 7.
506. Cassirer 1995c.
507. Cassirer 1923a, 23.
508. Cassirer 1953a, 88.
509. Warburg 1901.
510. Cassirer 1939, 152, where he refers to Wölfflin's categories; Cassirer 1944, 137–70, the chapter on art where Warburg is not once mentioned.
511. Cassirer 1995d; Cassirer 1995e.
512. Cassirer 1953b, 205–77.
513. *Ibid.*, 209.
514. Krois 1999, 532–39.
515. Cassirer 1953b, 191–204.
516. *Ibid.*, 195, 196.
517. *Ibid.*, 202.
518. *Ibid.*, 202.
519. *Ibid.*, 202–3.
520. *Ibid.*, 235, emphasis added by Didi-Huberman. [The word "immediately" does not appear in the English translation—Trans.]
521. Krois 1988, 22; Naumann 1999.
522. On Cassirer's use of these terms, cf. Krois 1999, 539–40.
523. Cf. Gombrich 1986, 285.
524. In 1929, there were about twenty-five thousand photographs in this collection.
525. Foucault 1969, 19.
526. Warburg 2000, pls. 24, 36, 50–51, 59.
527. *Ibid.*, pl. 45.
528. *Ibid.*, pls. B, 6, 22, 23.
529. *Ibid.*, pl. 43.
530. *Ibid.*, pls. 25, 54.
531. *Ibid.*, pls. 4, 5.
532. *Ibid.*, pl. 7.
533. *Ibid.*, pl. 8.
534. *Ibid.*, pls. 55, 77, 79.
535. Mâle 1894, 19. Burckhardt had by then assembled a collection of glass slides for his research on the Renaissance.
536. Cf. Heckscher 1985a, 267.
537. Warburg 1995, 2. Cf. Warburg 2004a, 296–99, 330. In establishing the sequence (*Disposition*) of slides, Warburg, for example, followed the living snakes of the Walpi with the *Laocoon*, and then showed two images of Asclepius (therapeutic serpent)—and Kreuzlingen.
538. Cf. Recht 1995.
539. Warburg 1926, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 229–338.
540. Cf. Fleckner et al. 1993. Warburg organized at least five exhibitions between 1924 and 1929, without counting the lectures which used panels from the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. I thank Uwe Fleckner for this information.
541. Warburg 1998b, 2v, "Anlage des Gesamtausgabe," by Saxl.
542. Saxl 1980a; Saxl 1980c.
543. Cf. Füssel 1979; Bauerle 1988, 7–64; Huisstede 1995; Schoell-Glass 2001.
544. Cf. Wind 1983b, 26; Agamben 1998a, 25–27; Kany 1987, 129–86; Schuller 1993.
545. Gombrich 1986, 285.
546. Accordingly, the current editions of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* are based on three sequences of plates that are termed—perhaps wrongly termed—"complete." Other photographs in Warburg's archives attest to the multiplicity of possible versions (figs. 44, 69, 86, 90). A provisional notebook from 1928 has accordingly been reproduced by Sardo et al. 2000, 8–13.
547. Warburg to Karl Vossler, 12 October 1929, quoted by Schoell-Glass 2001, 187.
548. Warburg 1999I, 597.
549. Agamben 1998a, 27.

550. Cf. Baucle 1988, 91–92, 101–13, etc. Barta-Fliedl and Geissmar-Brandi 1992, 165–70; Barta-Fliedl, Geissmar-Brandi, and Sato 1999, 179–253; Cestelli Guidi and Del Prete 1999.
551. Warburg 1992, 172, translated in Warburg 1998a, 252. [Translation modified—Trans.]
552. Warburg 1905–11.
553. Merleau-Ponty 1960, 202.
554. Cf. Wind 1935; Friman, Jansson, and Souminen 1995.
555. Cf. M. Kemp 1975; Michaud 1999, 57.
556. Gombrich 1986, 6, 303–5.
557. Warburg 1928–29, 14, noted dated 8 April 1929, “2 Bde Texte. Atlas mit etwa 2000 Abb.”
558. Warburg 1927a; Warburg 1927–28; Warburg 1928–29.
559. Warburg 1928–29. A certain number of these have been recorded in Huisstede 1995, 151–52.
560. Warburg 1927–28.
561. Warburg 1929b (26 folios).
562. *Ibid.*, folio 11.
563. Cf. also Warburg 1929f, where one can find these characteristics displayed in an extreme form, since the notebook is almost empty.
564. Baudelaire 1975, 649–63. Baudelaire took the title *Fusées* from Edgar Allan Poe, who had used the word “skyrocketing” in his *Marginalia*.
565. Baudelaire 1975, 667 [section 22, “Skyrocket,” *Intimate Diaries*—Trans.]
566. L. Binswanger 2000, 225–26.
567. *Ibid.*, 227.
568. *Ibid.*, 107–8.
569. *Ibid.*, 257–65.
570. *Ibid.*, 137, 265–70.
571. *Ibid.*, 39–40.
572. *Ibid.*, 270–75, 308.
573. *Ibid.*, 129.
574. *Ibid.*, 86–87, 127, 164–68, 174, 181–89, 202–3.
575. *Ibid.*, 240, 275, 278.
576. *Ibid.*, 112–14, 121–22, 243.
577. *Ibid.*, 303–4.
578. Warburg 1927b, 1.
579. *Ibid.*, 3, where Warburg evokes his youthful theoretical project to correct Lessing (*Korrektur an Lessing*).
580. *Ibid.*, 12.
581. *Ibid.*, 3.
582. *Ibid.*, 5.
583. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1995b, 280–83; Didi-Huberman 2000, 111–27.
584. Warburg 1928–29, 47, 97–98, 116–17.
585. Warburg 1905–11; Warburg 1906–7 (33 folios).
586. Warburg 1992, 172, translated in Warburg 1998a, 250.
587. Warburg 1928–29, 14, note dated 8 April 1929.
588. *Ibid.*, 11, 58, notes dated 19 April and 5 May 1929; Warburg 1929e (49 folios).
589. Warburg 1927a, 9, note dated 30 May 1927; Warburg 1928–29, 70, note dated 8 March 1929; Warburg 1929a.
590. Duchenne de Boulogne 1990; Bourneville and Regnard 1876; Lombroso 1888. We have already noted the great difference between Charcot’s *clinical tables* and what one might call, in this connection, the *critical tables* of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*.
591. Bastian 1887, twenty-five plates. On the pedagogical aspect of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* in relation to German anthropology—Wundt, Lamprecht, etc.—cf. Brosius 1997.
592. Heckscher 1985a, 268–73.
593. Warnke 1980a, 158–64, Dadaist collages; Hofmann 1980, 65–69, collage, ready-made; Kany 1985, 1279–83; Kurt Schwitters; Forster 1991, 29–33; Hannes Meyer, Kurt Schwitters; W. Kemp 1979, Surrealist montages.
594. “[In the *Mnemosyne Atlas*] each of the images is considered less an autonomous reality than a photogram”: Agamben 1995, 65; Michaud 1999, 45–52.
595. Warburg to Robert Zahn, 31 December 1924, Warburg, Korrespondenz.
596. Buchloh 1999, 124. I am citing this version of Buchloh’s study of the Atlas, which is one of among at least three places where he makes this claim.
597. *Ibid.*, 124–34.
598. Warburg 1995, 54.
599. Warburg 1999b, 187.
600. Buchloh 1999, 129, 124, 119.
601. Quoted as an epigraph, *ibid.*, 117.
602. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1997, 16–21; Didi-Huberman 2000, 156–260.
603. Cf. Buchloh 1999, 122–34, where all the citations from Warburg are, moreover, secondhand.
604. Heckscher 1985a, 260. Actually, this is Warburg’s adaptation of one of Cicero’s maxims: “liberae sunt enim nostrae cogitationes.”
605. Warburg 1928–29, undated note.
606. Warburg 2000, pls. 1–2, 78–79.
607. Cf. Glashoff, Neumann, and Deppner 1987.
608. Cf. M. Kemp 1975; Jesinghausen-Lauster 1985, 273–303; Weigel 1992; Didi-Huberman 1995b, 280–303; Didi-Huberman 2000, 85–155; Rampley 1999; Rampley 2001.

609. Warburg 1888–1905, 42, note dated 29 September 1890.
610. Warburg 1999b, 188.
611. *Ibid.*, 189.
612. *Ibid.*, 190.
613. Cf. Yates 1966, undoubtedly the most “Warburgian” study produced under the auspices of the Warburg Institute in London in the post-war period.
614. Warburg to his brother Max, 5 September 1928, quoted by Ghelardi 2001, 184.
615. Gombrich 1986, 13–14n1; Wuttke disputes this attribution: Wuttke 1977, 70.
616. Wuttke 1977, 70–74; Sassi 1982, 86–91, cites other texts of Usener’s, as well as a statement of Dilthey’s according to which “God lies in the individual thing” (*der Gott, der im Einzel-ding steckt*). Cf. also Cristaldi 1980; Parente 1980; Trottein 1983, 34–55; Kany 1985; Mastroianni 2000.
617. Cf. Baden 1962.
618. Heckscher 1985a, 258–59; Heckscher 1985b.
619. Warburg 1999b, 190–97; Warburg 1999f.
620. Warburg 1999f, 287–88.
621. Castelnovo 1993, 42.
622. Cf. Damisch 1971 (Freud, Morelli); Ginzburg 1989a (Warburg, Freud, Morelli, Sherlock Holmes, Galton, Bertillon); Arasse 1992, 10 (Warburg, Morelli). For a critique of these various comparisons, cf. Didi-Huberman 1985, 28–62; Didi-Huberman 2005, 229–71; Didi-Huberman 1998a, 76–98.
623. Cf. Didi-Huberman 1996c.
624. “It is a great error to speak of the affairs of this world in absolute terms, without discrimination, and—so to speak—by rule; for they almost always involve distinctions and exceptions, because circumstances vary, and they can never be subject to one single measure. These distinctions and exceptions are not to be found in books: this must be taught by mature discretion alone,” Francesco Guicciardini, *Ricordi politici e civili*, vol. 6, quoted by Warburg 1999b, 185.
625. Warburg 1999b, 187.
626. Warburg 1999q, 112–42.
627. Warburg 1999n; Warburg 1999i; Warburg 1906–7; Warburg 1999m; Warburg 1999t; Warburg 1999j.
628. Warburg 2001, 12; Warburg 1899, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 103.
629. Warburg 1901, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 94, 152–53, 184, 276.
630. Wind 1983b, 34.
631. Freud 1965d.
632. “Zwei Wahlsprüche: 1. Wir suchen unsere Ignoranz auf und schlagen die, wo wir sie finden. 2. Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail.” Quoted by Wuttke 1977, 68.
633. Warburg 1891–92.
634. Cf. Warnke 1980b, 53–61.
635. Warburg 1999i, 585–86.
636. Panofsky 1962, 12–14 [author’s reference corrected—Trans.].
637. Warburg 1900; Warburg 1928–29, 82, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 287. On the iconographic tradition as a misinterpretation of Warburgian thought, cf. Forster 1976; Agamben 1998a, 27–35; Carchia 1984, 105–8; Holly 1993; Warnke 1994, 130–35; Bredekamp 1995.
638. Warburg 1999i, 585. The word *Auflösung* denotes precisely the act of untying, of unknotting; of disintricating.
639. Cf. Ghelardi 1999, 12.
640. When Gertrud Bing and Ernst Gombrich took up the Atlas project again in 1937, the latter consisted of only isolated images (and not “packets” of them) on a white background. Cf. introduction to Warburg 2000, xiii.
641. Vertov 1972, 18. The first version of this text dates from 1919.
642. Warburg 1928–29, 135. This expression serves as the title for the notes on pages 136–46.
643. “Ikonologie des Zwischenraums. Material zu einer Entwicklungspsychologie der Ursachensetzung.” Warburg 1928–29, 137, note dated 11 April 1929.
644. Warburg 1999o.
645. Benjamin 1989, 561. The word *intermédiaire* appears in French in the original German.
646. Warburg 1999i, 585.
647. Wind 1983b, 29. I am following Wind’s original German, which is closer to Warburg’s vocabulary.
648. Praz 1986.
649. Warburg 1999b, 187.
650. Tagebuch, 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 253, where the “iconology of the interval” is explicitly associated with a “psychology of the oscillation between the positing of causes as images and as signs (*Entwicklungspsychologie des Pendelganges*)”.
651. Warburg 2004a, 323.
652. Warburg 1995, 54.
653. Vignoli 1895, 65–106: “interno ad alcuni intervalli di una serie coordinata de atti psichici.”

654. Freud 1959k, 20:99. Cf. also Freud to Fliess, 16 April 1896, describing "the in-between realm," quoted by Michaud 1999, 43 (*Zwischenreich*).
655. Cf. Herding 1990.
656. Tagebuch, 3 April 1929, quoted by Gombrich 1986, 303.
657. Fédida 1991, 8.
658. Fédida 1969, 13.
659. Sauvanet 2000, 113. On the next page, the author cites a magnificent sentence by Vladimir Nabokov: "Maybe the only thing that hints at a sense of Time is rhythm: not the recurrent beats of the rhythm but the gap between two such beats, the gray gap between black beats: the Tender Interval" [from Nabokov's *Ada*—Trans.]
660. L. Binswanger 1971d. Cf. Minkowski 1933, 22. For a psychoanalytic approach to the interval, cf. Fédida 1977, 139–51; Fédida 1978; Pontalis 1977. For a purely phenomenological approach, cf. Kimura 2000.
661. Warburg 1999s; Warburg 1929c.
662. Forster 1999, 1.
663. Warburg 1928–29, 147–49 et seq.
664. Freud 1959b.
665. Shakespeare 1880, 16.
666. Arendt 1968, 51. These lines conclude an admirable article devoted to Walter Benjamin, which also includes many Warburgian themes (collection, montage, etc.).
667. Fédida 1995, 187–220.
668. Warburg 1928–29, 3, note dated 2 July 1929.
669. Nietzsche 1986, 242, a sentence appearing in a reflection on the *Nachleben der Antike* ["Art of the past and the soul of the present"—Trans.].
670. Freud to Fliess, 26 April 1896, quoted by Schur 1972, 135 (previously unpublished letter).
671. Warburg to Mary Warburg, 15 December 1925, quoted by Gombrich 1999, 281–82.
672. Cf. Heckscher 1985a, 264.
673. Freud to Fliess, 7 January 1894, quoted by Schur 1972, 63.
674. Freud to A. Zweig, 5 March 1939, quoted by Schur 1972, 613.
675. Tagebuch, 26 October 1939, quoted by Bing 1965, 304.
676. Warburg 1999f, 723.
677. *Ibid.*, 724.

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is in fact a reprint of the 1932 edition edited by Gertrud Bing with Fritz Rougemont (Leipzig: Teubner, 1932); *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, vol. 2–1 of *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink (Berlin: Akademie, 2000); *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, vol. 7 of *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Berlin: Akademie, 2001), which was published when this book was nearing completion; and Dieter Wuttke, *Aby M. Warburg-Bibliographie 1866 bis 1995: Werk und Wirkung; Mit Annotationen* (Baden-Baden: V. Koerner, 1998).

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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
UNIVERSITY PARK, PENNSYLVANIA
WWW.PSUPRESS.ORG

ISBN 978-0-271-07208-1



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9 780271 072081

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