

Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images

Christopher D. **Johnson**

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ABY WARBURG'S ATLAS OF IMAGES

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CHRISTOPHER D. JOHNSON

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For Jess, with her heliotropic heart

Mnemosyne (Memory) bore them on Pieria, mingling in love with the father,
Cronus' son—Mnemosyne, the protectress of the hills of Eleuther—as
forgetfulness of evils and relief from anxieties. For the counselor Zeus slept with
her for nine nights, apart from the immortals, going up into the sacred bed; and
when a year had passed, and the seasons had revolved as the months waned, and
many days had been completed, she bore nine maidens—like-minded ones who in
their breasts care for song and have a spirit that knows no sorrow—not far from
snowy Olympus' highest peak.

—Hesiod, *Theogony* 1.53–62

Beside this thoroughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

—Ezra Pound, from “H. S. Mauberley (Life and Contacts)”

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PREFACE

Before us lies a black and white photograph of twenty-four photographic reproductions (see fig. 5). Varying in size, the images are arranged in five uneven rows, provisionally mounted on mats, and fastened more provisionally still to a black background. Although they lack captions, and their styles vary considerably, the images can be easily distinguished as belonging to the European Renaissance. Many will also discern in this second-order tableau of paintings, drawings, sculptures, artifacts, manuscript and book pages, a more or less common theme: the death of Laocoön. Less easily deciphered, however, is the rhyme or reason for this photograph of photographic reproductions. Opaque is why some images are privileged by their relative largeness or central position, and why others appear devalued by their smallness or marginal position.

Confusion is further heightened when we turn to the second photograph (fig. 21), whose seventeen images include one of a woman's head on an ancient coin, another of an advertisement for toilet paper, and another of a female golfer. Indeed, if the first photograph suggests temporal and thematic cohesion, this one, eschewing ordered rows and replete with several empty black spaces, presents, it seems, merely history's flotsam and jetsam.

The conundrum posed by these photographs grows greater still when we learn that they are just two of a sequence of sixty-three photographs, the surviving artifacts of a never-completed, encyclopedic effort to represent the West's cultural legacy, and especially how antiquity's art-historical and cosmological currents flowed through the Renaissance. Undertaken between 1926 and 1929, the atlas of images titled *Mnemosyne* is Aby M. Warburg's nearly wordless account of how and why symbolic images of great pathos persist in Western cultural memory from antiquity to the early twentieth century. Metonymically arranging and rearranging some thousand symbolic, symptomatic images on sixty-three large wooden panels covered with black cloth, which were then placed in loose historical and thematic sequences, Warburg (1866–1929) and his collaborators sought both to express and to comprehend this persistence, its causes and its effects. At once a deeply personal testament, the culmination of decades of research and methodological innovation, as well as a theoretically complex effort to compass the importance of Renaissance art and cosmography for twentieth-century eyes, *Mnemosyne* maps the dynamics of historical memory even as it idealizes what Warburg calls "metaphoric distance." And if his juxtaposition of images and panels self-consciously flirts with anachronism, then this is because Warburg believed that humanity in fact was forever

oscillating between extremes of emotion and reason. The task of his *Kulturwissenschaft* (science of culture) was to graph these oscillations.

The aim of this book, in turn, is not only to adduce texts and contexts to help explicate *Mnemosyne*, but also to show how, by remembering *das Nachleben der Antike* (the afterlife of antiquity), it lends metaphor new historical and epistemological powers. Warburg wanted to make visible a genealogy of expression and gesture together with the *Prozeß* (process) of metaphoric transformation that makes such a genealogy possible. As Warburg figures it, *Mnemosyne* (or as he informally calls it the *Bilderatlas* [atlas of images] or the *Atlas*) is a “savings bank” of classical and Renaissance imagery, a “treasure chest of woe” needing all the hermeneut’s tools to be unlocked. Aiming to placing *ad oculos* the ever-recurring “pathos formulas” shaping humanity’s attempts to reconcile polar forces, *Mnemosyne* treats these in ways that anticipate the “historical metaphors” of E. R. Curtius, who dedicates his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* to Warburg. It likewise spurs us to reflect on the modes and limits of historical consciousness and aesthetic judgment. It invites us to revisit, too, the tensions Erwin Panofsky finds between documents and monuments, to chart anew the tensions between word and image, and to contemplate a road not taken in intellectual history. If Warburg invents what Giorgio Agamben dubs “the nameless science,” the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* finds a concrete analogue in Walter Benjamin’s unfinished *Passagen-Werk*—for it, too, collects history’s artifacts to furnish a now material, now metaphoric archaeology of modernity.

Instead of allegorical ruins, though, this book finds in *Mnemosyne* a novel metaphorology, one that parallels but crucially diverges from Ernst Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms, a philosophy to which Warburg has often been strongly yoked. Warburg’s metaphoric thinking differs significantly from Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms, which would transcend metaphor for more transparent, logical forms of mediation. For Warburg, metaphor is both the means (vehicle) and the aim (tenor) of his “dialectic of the monster,” the name he gives to the cognitive and historical process by which the artist, cosmographer, and critical spectator mediate between numerous polarities—world and self, fear and serenity, past and present, religion and science, magic and reason, the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, ecstasy and melancholy, and, above all, word and image—that they may yield phenomenological knowledge, psychological balance, and, however tenuously, historical understanding. In brief, *Mnemosyne*’s panels show when and how metaphor (or “pathos formula” or “dynamogram”) wins and loses a connection with what Edmund Husserl and Hans Blumenberg term the “lifeworld.”

Borrowing the “atlas” from contemporary scientific and pedagogic practices, and drawing on his earlier studies of Renaissance astrology and humanity’s efforts at *Orientierung* (orientation) in a hostile cosmos, Warburg exploits the cartographic conceit to join cosmography and art history. He presents his *Bilderatlas* as a way of mapping the “Wanderstraßen der Kultur” (roaming streets of culture), thereby self-consciously reproducing the very errancies he finds shaping the spatial and

temporal dynamics of cultural mobility. As cartography, the *Atlas* maps the *translatio* of themes and styles between east and west, north and south. As historical memory, it recalls how these themes and styles originate in antiquity to survive and thrive in the Renaissance and then persist in mutated, often debased forms into the present. Unlike most synoptic thinkers, then, Warburg trades discursive excess for the more immediate metonymies produced by juxtaposed images and heuristic diagrams. He revives the synchrony of seeing and demotes the diachrony of reading. Whereas iconology encourages detailed paraphrase, *Mnemosyne* embraces the concision, ambiguity, and instability of metaphoric expression.

In explicating such notions, this book makes the more general claim that Warburg's visual metaphors creates a mutable space of and for contemplation, a *Denkraum* (thought-space), that still calls for interpretation, not only because of its fragmentary, elliptical qualities, but also because of Warburg's intellectual nomadism, that is, his disdain for disciplinary, conceptual, and chronological boundaries. Warburg was a bold, often elliptical, and thoroughly comparative thinker whose work contains numerous concrete revelations, and whose methods, both early and late, have lasting paradigmatic value. Yet while art historians are indebted to him for cultivating iconographic and iconologic methods of interpretation, in his last years Warburg explored a novel form of combinatory thought that would directly appeal to every viewer's knowledge, intuition, and conscience. While furnishing detailed, objective evidence of metamorphoses over time, the sequences of photographs in *Mnemosyne* function as a living museum of visual metonymies, a latter-day memory palace, in which we can immediately experience antiquity's literal and figurative "afterlife." But that we must attend to Warburg's writing, his intertexts and sources, as well as the words of his collaborators, analogues, antecedents, and critics, to plumb this experience fully is a consequence not only of the imperfection and extreme allusivity of the *Bilderatlas*, but also of how rooted its method and materials are in metaphor's verbal, cognitive process of reconciling the strange and the familiar.

The seven chapters of this book thicken progressively and digressively the description of the *Bilderatlas* and its theoretical implications. Along the way dialogue is solicited with those who inhabited the immediate (e.g., Ernst Gombrich) and tangential (e.g., Walter Benjamin) precincts of the Warburg circle, as well as with more recent efforts to interpret his legacy. Chapter 1 first adduces parallel instances of visual and literary memory to frame *Mnemosyne*; then, after describing the scope and contents of the *Bilderatlas* and adumbrating some of the main issues discussed in the book, I consider Warburg's idiosyncratic terminology in light of the opening panels. Their cosmological content, in turn, leads to a reading of Warburg's 1923 talk on Hopi ritual dances, a talk strongly informed by Jean Paul's thoughts on metaphor. The chapter ends by introducing Warburg's crucial notion of "metaphoric distance" by which he would mediate between the viewer and the things he views. Chapter 2 engages Gombrich's essay "*Icones symbolicae*" and Michael

Baxandall's interpretation of Leon Battista Alberti's debts to the rhetorical tradition to examine the iconology of Warburg's early essays in the context of Italian humanism and Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds*. It then rehearses Warburg's cardinal notion of the *Pathosformel* (pathos formula) and finds analogies with Curtius's notion of literary topoi. Here also the aims and organization of Warburg's famous Library in Hamburg are compared with those of the *Bilderatlas*. Chapter 3 focuses on the central sequence of panels in *Mnemosyne*, where Ghirlandaio's and Mantegna's artistic encounter with antiquity proves pivotal. By adducing material from Warburg's 1929 Hertziana lecture in Rome, which urges a "comparatist perspective," as well as his and Saxl's writing about *Mnemosyne*, I show how these ten panels emblemize the process of finding and losing metaphor. Particular attention is paid to how Warburg imitates the quattrocento technique of grisaille, that is, grayscale painting, in his own presentation of images. I trace, too, how the figure of the "fruit-bearing maiden" becomes the emblem not only of Warburg's account of spatial and historical *translationes*, but also of his more subjective attempts to keep monsters at bay. Chapter 4 begins by contemplating Warburg's affinities with and differences from Panofsky and Hermann Usener in order then to pursue an extended comparison of Cassirer's symbolic forms with Warburg's views on symbol and metaphor, which prove significantly less teleological than those of his friend. While both men make the Renaissance the crucible of their ideas about representation and self-consciousness, we see that only Warburg settles for an "Ikonologie des Zwischenraums" (iconology of the interval), where polar extremes find no lasting synthetic solution. Chapter 5 deepens and complicates the discussion of metaphor by turning to Nietzsche, Blumenberg, and Hegel, who variously describe how metaphor helps us negotiate the conflicting claims of sensuous experience, intuition, and concepts. That the methods in *Mnemosyne* converge with and diverge from these metaphorologies is confirmed by Warburg's scattered writings, where he likewise makes strong epistemological demands on metaphor. Chapter 6 then offers a close reading of Warburg's 1926 lecture on Rembrandt, in which he crystallizes his thinking about the Baroque and "superlatives" in art and lays the groundwork for the final sequence of panels in the *Atlas*. In these panels the notion of "metaphorical distance" is at once realized and ironized, as Warburg contemplates the ambivalent symbolism associated with Mussolini, the Eucharist, and new technology. Finally, chapter 7 traces how Warburg came to view Giordano Bruno's cosmography, imagery, and biography as confirming the central motifs of the *Mnemosyne* project. It details Warburg's and Gertrud Bing's attempts during their 1928–29 sojourn in Italy to explicate Bruno, and then it considers Cassirer's insistence that the interdisciplinary Warburg was the thinker best suited for this task. Such praise, I contend, acquires still greater weight if we ponder Warburg's appropriation of Bruno's cardinal notion of *synderesis*, which signals both an ironic conscience and the faculty of intuition needed to join disparate things in a single vision.

An inimitable form of analogical thought, of personal, cultural, and historical memory, the panels of *Mnemosyne* shock, delight, and instruct—just like the most original, memorable metaphors. But they also make visible the pathos inherent in trying to find some measure of unity in the multiplicity confronting any spectator of history. Exactly how such pathos riddles Warburg's *Mnemosyne*, the following pages are dedicated to solving.

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All numbered references to individual images in the panels (*Tafeln*) of the *Bilderatlas* correspond to those in Aby M. Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas: Mnemosyne*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.1, ed. Martin Warnke with Claudia Brink (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).

All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

MEMORY, METAPHOR, AND
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ATLAS GAZED: *MNEMOSYNE*—ITS ORIGINS, MOTIVES, AND SCOPE

Memory

Mnemosyne mater musarum. Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses. Mnemosyne, who personifies memory, whose pool in Hades complements Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Mnemosyne, who, as Friedrich Hölderlin writes in the first strophe of his gnomic hymn “Mnemosyne” (ca. 1803), allows “the true” to occur despite, or perhaps because of, “time”:

Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren.
.....
... Lang ist
Die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber
Das Wahre.¹ (1–3, 15–17)

1. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke, Briefe, Dokumente* (Munich: Winkler, 1969), 198–199. Composed probably in 1803, “Mnemosyne” was Hölderlin’s last hymn. I quote the *zweite Fassung* of the poem. On the three versions of “Mnemosyne,” see David Constantine, *Hölderlin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 272–273, 276–278. In Greek mythology Mnemosyne is a Titan, the daughter of Uranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth), the mother via Zeus of the nine Muses.

A sign we are, without meaning,
 Without pain we are and have nearly
 Lost our language in foreign lands,

 . . . Though the time
 Be long, truth
 Will come to pass.²

Memory, Hölderlin intimates, sets us an endless, impossible task in part because we are forever shuttling between the familiar and “the foreign.” And if “language” is the principal means by which we remember, as the rich imagery and allusions in the hymn’s three strophes urge, then this is because it is fueled by metaphor whose task, as Aristotle and many others after him have observed, is to exploit our thirst for the “foreign,” that we might see similarities in things initially perceived as being quite dissimilar.

Tellingly, in the last version of this poem—the last hymn he wrote before his *Umnachtung*, or “loss of sanity”³—Hölderlin completely transforms the first strophe, rendering it less abstract, if no more transparent, by replacing “sign,” “language,” and even “time” with concrete images expressing the “law” of change:

Reif sind, in Feuer getaucht, gekochet
 Die Frücht und auf der Erde geprüft und ein Gesetz ist,
 Das alles hineingeht, Schlangen gleich,
 Prophetisch, träumend auf
 Den Hügeln des Himmels.⁴ (1–5)

Ripe are, dipped in fire, cooked,
 The fruits and tried on earth, and it is law,
 Prophetic, that all must enter in,
 Like serpents, dreaming on
 The mounds of Heaven.⁵

If “all” must try the “fruits” of mutability, then each does so differently, no matter the common dream of something more permanent. Because, Hölderlin intimates, we are constantly called to remember ephemeral pleasures and mourn mortality,

2. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 23.

3. In Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2.2, ed. Friedrich Beißner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1951), Beißner notes that there are two *Überschriften* for the *erste Fassung*: “Die Nympe” and “Mnemosyne” (819).

4. Hölderlin, *Werke, Briefe, Dokumente*, 199–200.

5. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1994), 259.

the fragile persistence of memory and the images it furnishes offer tangible proof that human existence derives much of its meaning from the experience, recollection, and thus repetition of this “law” of change. Memory persists even if we can imagine a place and a time, as Wallace Stevens memorably does, “where ripe fruit never falls.”

More particularly, when Hölderlin recalls, in both versions of the hymn’s last strophe,

Am Feigenbaum ist mein
Achilles mir gestorben . . .

By the figtree
My Achilles died . . .⁶

he spurs us not only to ask how and why he has emphatically made the dead Achilles his own (“mein . . . mir”), but also to pose again those questions riddling the history of all imitation of classical models, myths, and gestures. When the classicizing poet or artist remembers, whose memories is he reviving? Does he elect, if you will, to drink of Mnemosyne’s pool, or does he drink unwillingly, unknowingly, having perhaps also drunk of Lethe? What kind of knowledge does he gain by remembering? Is memory a personal daemon, or is her task to give birth to collective, cultural memories? When and how, that is, does the pathos of “my Achilles” become that of “our Achilles”? With his enigmatic yet concrete hymn, with his ambiguous “figtree,” Hölderlin offers no facile answers. He offers instead metaphors, symbols, and figures. His “figtree” may grow in the Turkish countryside around the burial mounds of Achilles and Patrokles, as described in a book that Hölderlin knew by an eighteenth-century English traveler;⁷ or it may refer to Luke 13:6–9, where the keeper of an orchard challenges Jesus’ order to cut down a barren fig tree in hopes that it will bear “the fruit” in the coming year; or, perhaps, it alludes to Mark 11:12–24 or Matthew 21:18–22, where Jesus curses a fig tree barren of fruit (suggesting probably the barren teachings of the Sadducees in the Temple), causing it to wither completely, and where the miraculous effect of his words symbolizes faith’s power; or it may be uprooted from any particular context and symbolize, more generally, the cycle of growth and decay. Or, perhaps, as was his habit, Hölderlin is playing etymologically with Μνημοσύνη, by recalling Achilles’ “wrath,” his “μῆνιν,” which begins the *Iliad*, and how both words have a common proto-Indo-European root

6. Hölderlin, *Hymns and Fragments*, 119. Beißner, “Hölderlins letzte Hymne,” *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 5 (1948/1949), identifies “Am Feigenbaum . . . gestorben” as “der erste Keim der Hymne” in Hölderlin’s composition process (77).

7. See Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2.2:828. The book is Richard Chandler’s *Travels in Asia Minor*. Beißner notes that in ll. 45–48 of the third version Hölderlin suggests that Mnemosyne herself perishes (*Sämtliche Werke*, 829).

in *men-*, meaning “to think, remember, have one’s mind roused.”⁸ Or, as is likely the case, it signifies all of these things, as Hölderlin tries, yet again, to syncretize the Judeo-Christian and classical traditions by placing them in metonymic proximity.

Hölderlin, Pound, and other archaizing poets decry the loss of meaning that comes with the loss of Mnemosyne and the Muses she begets. But they also believe that the mediation of memory, through art and literature, but especially through the vivid, energetic images that art and literature furnish, can constitute an experience different from the experience that occasioned the memory in the first place, and that this second-order experience, for all its vicarious fragility, can be redemptive.

Of course most of us have never possessed, let alone lost, the cultural memory of antiquity that Hölderlin or Pound cultivated. Yet one aspect of their efforts, at least, remains vital, even in these accelerating, amnesiac times: the mediation of memory, be it personal or cultural, still functions metaphorically. Rather than turning to narrative, memory often figures the past with the immediacy of images, images that may be borrowed, say, from Homer or Praxiteles, from the television, the Web, or our own experience. Mnemosyne makes the unfamiliar familiar, the strange less so. A paradoxical creature, even as she would annul temporal and spatial distances, she reminds us how “long” time is.

Time grows both longer and shorter when images of great pathos are involved. It also grows more subjective, more aesthetic. For my part, I remember that morning watching from my rooftop the Twin Towers burn, billowing gray smoke from their crimson wounds into the bluest of skies. I remember closing my eyes after the first tower fell, as if already to test whether, like a phantom limb, it persisted as an image on my eyelids. Then, as I was heading out to see what was to be done and seen, I saw it all on television, and it already had begun to change. Already that afternoon by the Manhattan Bridge with the fire trucks still coming in from Long Island a memory was forming, made at least partially of televised images, and I remember thinking that what I saw on the roof in the morning already had been rewound and framed by what I had seen on the screen, even as I gazed south at the funereal smoke that had usurped the towers.

In the ensuing years, the crush of mediated images has worked to transform that initial experience into a more attenuated, if universal experience. But aside from those ubiquitous images in newspapers, on television, and on the Web, some mediated images have had for me—and I know this to be the case for others as well—particular efficacy in bridging the gap between sensation and reflection, or between what the German phenomenological tradition calls “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*) and “memory” (*Erinnerung*). Meaning is mediated, an event: “. . . Lang ist / Die

8. Leonard Muellner explores the significance of the theme of *mēnis* in *The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 1996). *Mēnis* is often translated as “wrath,” but Muellner contends it refers not to an emotion, but to “a sanction meant to guarantee and maintain the integrity of the world order” (26).

Zeit. Es ereignet sich aber / Das Wahre." To invoke Mnemosyne is still to invoke her children, the appropriating muses, as well.

Reading from his novel *Austerlitz* in October 2001 at the 92nd Street Y in New York City, two months before his death by car crash, W.G. Sebald never recalled the events of the previous month. Nor did the reader who preceded him, Susan Sontag. They didn't have to. Their works, their words, were already uniquely dedicated to the art of memory, to finding ways of expressing what it meant to remember when what was to be remembered defied all conventional narrative art. People were moved to be there and moved by being there partly, I think, for instruction in ways not to forget, for ways to make sense of the images stamped in their memories and the acrid smell still emanating from downtown.

Sontag, of course, had already written directly about the attacks and our responses to them. While her long essay on war photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), would later directly challenge the notion that she had championed in her essays collected in *On Photography* (1977), a notion that had become almost a cultural commonplace: namely that the repeated exposure, the overexposure, to horrific images dulls our sensibilities and abilities to respond to them, either aesthetically or politically. In rejecting the enthusiastic, clichéd embrace of the "society of the spectacle," Sontag would underscore how certain images could still move her (and us): "Certain photographs—emblems of suffering, such as the snapshot of the little boy in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, his hands raised, being herded to the transport to a death camp—can be used like memento mori, as objects of contemplation to deepen one's sense of reality; as secular icons, if you will."⁹

Alternately, Sebald in his novels, or whatever one chooses to call them, had already refined a prose style and narrative technique that allowed the sediments of memory to accrete now ponderously, now vertiginously, such that the reader often could not tell to whom the memories belonged: whether to Sebald, his narrators, his protagonists, or to the texts they read. Indeed, the manner in which the pages of *The Rings of Saturn*, *The Emigrants*, and *Austerlitz* are punctuated now and again by uncaptioned photographs, images that often directly but sometimes obliquely illuminate the content of Sebald's writing, constitutes another form of memory. Like his bricolage of sources, intertexts, and themes, these photographs suggest the heterogeneous, fragmentary character of memory. They also reinforce the notion of Sebald as an encyclopedist who tries to stay time's fugacity by creating solipsistic, melancholy, but self-contained worlds of learning, much like the protagonists in Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"—one of the chief intertexts of *The Rings of Saturn*.

Seen from another perspective, however, the visual immediacy of Sebald's interpolated photographs tends to undermine the dilated claims of historical,

9. Susan Sontag, "Looking at War," in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), 109, 119.

encyclopedic, or even novelistic writing. In *The Rings of Saturn*, after a passage that briefly mentions but does not try to describe the death camp at Bergen-Belsen, Sebald places a photograph, which takes up two pages, of corpses in piles within a thin copse of trees. That this resembles the smaller photograph several pages before of an enormous pile of herring is, rather than being an affront to the memory of the Holocaust's victims, Sebald's indirect but preferred method of arguing that the Shoah and the steep decline of the once-thriving North Atlantic fishing grounds are parts of a larger pattern, which only a new kind of natural history can reveal. More to the point, that this technique is a kind of *ars combinatoria* of images becomes manifest in a passage from *Austerlitz* when the narrator visits the eponymous protagonist at his home in London:

The front room, into which Austerlitz took me first, had nothing in it but a large table, also varnished matt gray, with several dozen photographs lying on it, most of them dating quite a long way back and rather worn at the edges. Some of the pictures were already familiar to me, so to speak: pictures [Aufnahmen] of empty Belgian landscapes, stations and Métro viaducts in Paris, the palm house in the Jardin des Plantes. . . . Austerlitz told me that he sometimes sat here for hours, laying out these photographs or others from his collection the wrong way up, as if playing a game of patience, and that then, one by one, he turned them over, always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw, pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances [die Bilder hin und her und übereinanderschiebe, in eine aus Familienähnlichkeiten sich ergebende Ordnung], or withdrawing them from the game until either there was nothing left but gray tabletop, or he felt exhausted by the constant labor of thinking and remembering [erschöpft von der Denk- und Erinnerungsarbeit] and had to rest on the ottoman. I often lie here until late in the evening, feeling time roll back, said Austerlitz.¹⁰

It is as if Austerlitz's house were a Renaissance memory palace in which "play," surprise, and melancholy successively mark his "Denk- und Erinnerungsarbeit." To arrange and rearrange the photographs against the grisaille background of the table is for him to see anew the past, to recognize by metonymy Wittgensteinian "family resemblances," and thus to see "wie die Zeit sich zurückbiegt in [ihm]." For him, as for Sebald, such remembrance is at once personal and historical. While neither witnessed at first hand the systematic evil most in need of remembrance, both are driven for obvious and inexplicable reasons to invent literal

10. W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2001), 118–119; Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Frankfurt am Main: TV, 2003), 175–176. Richard T. Gray reads this passage as emblematic of the "recombinatory practice" in Sebald's narratives. See Gray, "Sebald's Segues: Performing Narrative Contingency in *The Rings of Saturn*," *Germanic Review* 84.1 (2009): 26–58, esp. 50–51.

and metaphoric ways to memorialize it. So Austerlitz ceaselessly shuffles his photographs, and Sebald writes books in which photographs can directly and indirectly bear witness.

In his 2007 novel, *Falling Man*, Don DeLillo figures the events of September 11 by telling how a handful of New Yorkers coped in the aftermath. But remembering also those who threw themselves from the burning towers to escape the flames and smoke, DeLillo punctuates his narrative by tracking the appearance of a performance artist who, in the months after the attacks, stages, with the help of ropes and a harness, falls from buildings, bridges, and other tall structures, only to remain hanging in the air to the surprise and horror of those on the ground, all of whom either have a memory of people really falling to their deaths or, having heard the stories, can easily imagine it. The novel's taut, circular narrative does not depend on this image; the pathos of the main characters provides motive enough. Still, it is the "Falling Man" that sticks with us:

A man was dangling there, above the street, upside down. He wore a business suit, one leg bent up, arms at his sides. A safety harness was barely visible, emerging from his trousers at the straightened leg and fastened to the decorative rail of the viaduct. . . . Traffic was barely moving now. There were people shouting up at him, outraged at the spectacle, the puppetry of human desperation, a body's last fleet breath and what it held. It held the gaze of the world, she thought. There was the awful openness of it, something we'd not seen, the single falling figure that trails a collective dread, body come down among us all.¹¹

An emblem of our "collective dread," with his body frozen in space, DeLillo's "Falling Man" tests the limits of aestheticizing memory.

Another mediating, memorializing image is Gerhard Richter's 2005 painting *September*. A relatively small canvas—the size of a television screen, Robert Storr suggests—*September* features a grisaille image of the Twin Towers, set atop a cobalt blue background.¹² Stylistically occupying a place somewhere between Richter's abstract paintings and his photorealist ones, it depicts an instantly recognizable moment sometime after the attack on the South Tower. Smoke billows from the tower, filling the top of the canvas with gray and black, but lower down the smoke turns lighter, even brownish and white in places. There are no planes, no falling figures, nor any reds or oranges to suggest flames. Rather, the most arresting motion comes from Richter's horizontal streaking and scraping of the paint. Because of this scraping (apparently with a kitchen knife), the blue layer and the white one of the canvas beneath are revealed throughout, even where the towers still

11. Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 33.

12. Robert Storr, *September: A History Painting by Gerhard Richter* (London: Heni Publishing, 2009), 47.

palimpsestically stand. This horizontal scraping recalls the horizontal violence of the planes against the vertical towers, but more haunting still is how the emergent blue and white anticipate their absence.

Writing about *September*, Storr recounts that Richter, dismayed at his inability to represent the event, almost destroyed the painting, and that only after "he scraped away the hot reds of the explosion and reduced the whole composition to ochre, blue, and gray tints," did he heed friends' entreaties and relent.¹³ The painterly task of transforming the events of 9/11 into art, into something that would be seen, prized, reproduced, and interpreted in its own right had become nearly impossible for Richter. Yet that the canvas indeed survived to become an object for our contemplation powerfully symbolizes art's unique memorializing function, its still vital if tenuous role as Mnemosyne's daughter.

As I have done above, in his book Storr prefaces his personal memories of the 9/11 attacks to a more formal analysis of how Richter's *September* painting tells history. But in still more general terms, terms that speak directly to the preoccupations of this book, Storr quotes from Richter's "Notes 1983":

Art has always been basically about agony, desperation, and helplessness. (I am thinking of Crucifixion narratives, from the Middle Ages to Grünewald; but also of Renaissance portraits, Mondrian and Rembrandt, Donatello and Pollock.) We often neglect this side of things by concentrating on the formal, aesthetic side in isolation. We no longer see content in form . . . the fact is that content does not have form (like a dress that you can change): it is form (which cannot be changed.) Agony, desperation, helplessness cannot be presented except aesthetically, because their source is the wounding of beauty (Perfection).¹⁴

For all its absolutism, Richter's diagnosis of how Western art has made human suffering its principal focus offers a pragmatic hermeneutic lesson: we must not divorce form from content when contemplating images that remember.

Mnemosyne

Begun in 1924, just after his three-year stay in the Kreuzlingen psychiatric clinic where he slowly recovered from a psychotic breakdown in the wake of World War I, and left unfinished at the time of his death in 1929, the *Mnemosyne* project literally and figuratively mapped the final turn, or *tropos*, in Aby Warburg's lifelong

13. The painting is now in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

14. Gerhard Richter, *Gerhard Richter—Writings, 1961–2007*, ed. Dietmar Elger and Hans Ulrich Obrist (New York: D.A.P., 2009), 103; quoted in Storr, *September*, 53–54. Storr juxtaposes Richter's thoughts with Stockhausen's asinine remark calling the 9/11 attacks "the greatest work of art that is possible in the whole cosmos" (35).

study of Renaissance art and cosmology.¹⁵ As it stood, the *Bilderatlas* was a nearly wordless attempt to chart the *Nachleben* of the classical *Gebärdensprache* (language of gestures) in Renaissance art and beyond.¹⁶ But it also tracked the migration of Greek cosmological symbolism through to the moment when Bruno and Kepler tried to reconcile the legacies of classical and astrological thought with the discoveries of early modern astronomy. A utopian project addressed to that chimerical creature the “good European,” the *Atlas* consisted of sixty-three wooden boards, measuring approximately 150 x 200 cm, covered with black cloth.¹⁷ On each of these panels (*Tafeln*) Warburg, using metal clasps, added and removed, arranged and rearranged, black and white photographic reproductions of art-historical or cosmographical images. Here and there he also included maps, reproductions of manuscript pages, and contemporary images drawn from newspapers and magazines. As part of this combinatory process each panel would often then be photographed before another arrangement was attempted. The panels, in turn, were then numbered and ordered to create still larger thematic sequences. And while in these combinatory experiments Warburg was frequently aided and encouraged by his colleagues Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing, in the main he followed his own metonymic, intuitive logic, nurtured by decades of contemplating these same images. Dating from ancient Babylon to Weimar Germany, these symbolic images, when juxtaposed and then placed in sequence, were meant to foster immediate, synoptic insights into the *Nachleben* of pathos-charged images depicting “bewegtes Leben” (life in motion).

15. Peter van Huisstede posits 1924 as the inception date of *Mnemosyne*, though work on it only took off in the summer of 1927. See van Huisstede, “Der *Mnemosyne-Atlas*: Ein Laboratorium der Bildgeschichte,” in Aby M. Warburg: “*Ekstatische Nymphe . . . trauernder Flußgott*”; *Portrait eines Gelehrten*, ed. Robert Galitz and Brita Reimers (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1995), 138–150.

16. Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas: Mnemosyne*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.1, ed. Martin Warnke with Claudia Brink (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000) (hereafter cited as *GS*). The 2003 and 2008 editions of *Der Bilderatlas: Mnemosyne* are not substantially different from the 2000 edition, save that they have some cross-references to entries from a journal Warburg and his collaborators kept from 1926 to 1929. The journal has been published as *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg mit Einträgen von Gertrud Bing und Fritz Saxl*, in *GS*, vol. VII, ed. Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001). The first mention of *Mnemosyne* in the *Tagebuch* (*GS*, VII:19) is on 10/26/1926.

17. As we shall see, Warburg went through numerous possible titles for the project but never quite settled on one. While he favored *Mnemosyne*, he often referred to it by its generic name, the *Bilderatlas*, or, more informally still, as the *Atlas*. In this, I shall follow his example. The phrase “good European” Warburg borrows from Nietzsche, who meant it ironically. See Warburg, “Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara,” in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the Renaissance*, ed. Kurt W. Foster; trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 586 (hereafter cited as *RPA*). E. H. Gombrich also discusses the phrase “good European” in “Aby Warburg: His Aims and His Methods; An Anniversary Lecture,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 62 (1999): 278. Giorgio Agamben writes of the *Atlas*: “Gazing upon it, the ‘good European’ . . . would become conscious of the problematic nature of his own cultural tradition, perhaps succeeding thereby in ‘educating himself’ and in healing his own schizophrenia.” Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 95.

A summa of symbolic images, *Mnemosyne* strove to make the ineffable process of historical change and recurrence immanent and comprehensible.

In the three versions of the *Bilderatlas* for which we have evidence, Warburg drew on some two thousand images. For clarity's sake, however, I shall refer in this book almost exclusively to the "last version," which contains 971 images and is the basis for the 2000 edition of *Mnemosyne*, published as part of Warburg's *Gesammelte Schriften*. The actual panels of this "last version" are no longer extant. Only black and white photographs (18 x 24 cm) of them remain. Further, Warburg's plan had been to complete at least seventy-nine and perhaps as many as two hundred panels. Thus the *Atlas* as we have it is frozen in a provisional state: panels appear without titles; individual images are unidentified; and while some of the photo reproductions are matted, most are not.¹⁸ Fortunately, though, in a notebook titled *Überschriften*, Bing, following Warburg's lead, offers brief headings for each panel, furnishing thereby a kind of conceptual shorthand signposting main subjects and themes.¹⁹ For instance, the headings summarizing the astrological symbolism of panel 22 read: "Spanisch-arabische Praktik. (Alfonso). Hantierung. Kosmisches System als Würfelbrett. Zauberei. Steinmagie" (Spanish-Arabic Practice. (Alfonso). Manipulation. Cosmic System as Dice Table. Sorcery. *Lithomancy*). Such abbreviated, aphoristic indications of what and how we are to interpret resemble the headings of an encyclopedic entry—albeit an encyclopedia consisting entirely of pictures. Or, if you will, the photographs of the panels serve as a set of postmodern grisailles, a belated memory palace, which invites us to contemplate Warburg's syncretic vision of the afterlife of pagan symbolism and cosmography in medieval, Renaissance, and post-Renaissance art and thought.²⁰

The *Bilderatlas* functions cartographically, too, as it explores how meanings are constituted by the movement or *translatio* of themes and styles between east and west, north and south. Transforming the cartographic notion of an "atlas" (which made its first appearance in Mercator's 1595 *Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura*) from his earlier studies of the history of astrology and humanity's efforts at *Orientierung* (orientation) in a hostile cosmos, Warburg makes it serve as a conceit to yoke together cosmographical and art-historical material.²¹ He adapts, that is, the material practices and epistemological claims of

18. *GS*, II.1:vii. As Warnke notes, three series of photos were made; the first on May 15, 1928, of forty-three panels. In the "letztes Version" or "Daedulus Version," contemporary material such as advertisements is largely eliminated.

19. See Gertrud Bing, *WIA*, III.104.1, *Überschriften: Synopsis of Plates* ("last version").

20. In *Likeness and Presence: The History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Hans Belting comments: "Ancient images and symbols in our cultural repertoire were, for Warburg, evidence of the survival of antiquity. However, the continuity of symbols within a discontinuity in their use is a theme that transcends his field of study, the Renaissance" (11). But, as we shall see, the *Atlas* explicitly "transcends" the Renaissance.

21. See Benjamin Buchloh, "'Atlas': The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (1999): 117–145. Buchloh notes: "The term *atlas* has a more familiar ring in the German language, perhaps, than it does in

nineteenth-century atlases, which Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have shown to be crucial for the emergence of scientific objectivity, to map the subjective as well as objective forces that have shaped Western culture.²² And if the *mnemes* of *Mnemosyne* acquire a personal even solipsistic quality at times, then arguably this only increases its exemplarity for twenty-first-century forms of comparatist thought, which also tends, for better or worse, to consider the critic's subjectivity as a combinatory element in the task of interpretation. Neither an "atlas of the impossible" as Foucault dubs Borges's fantastic entry from a "Chinese encyclopedia," nor quite as epistemologically virtuous as the scientific atlases described by Daston and Galison, Warburg's *Atlas* explores a middle way between literature and science as it makes visible patterns claiming both imaginative and referential meaning.²³

More particularly, in presenting the polar forces that have "stamped" the history of Western art and cosmology, the sequences of panels comprising the *Bilderatlas* chart a loose chronological progression.²⁴ While the nondiscursive, frequently digressive character of the *Atlas* frustrates any smooth critical narrative of its themes and contents, nine thematic sequences may still be discerned:

1. panels A, B, C: cosmological-genealogical prologue
2. panels 1, 2, 3: classical cosmology
3. panels 4, 5, 6, 7, 8: classical "pre-stamping" of artistic "expressive values"
4. panels 20, 21, 22, 23, 23a, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28–29: transmission and degradation of Greek astronomical thought in Hellenistic, medieval Arabic, medieval and Renaissance European astrological imagery
5. panels 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 41a, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49: the "afterlife" of classical "expressive values" in Renaissance, mainly late quattrocento art
6. panels 50–51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56: "inversion," ascent, and descent in Renaissance, mainly cinquecento art through to Manet

English. From the end of the sixteenth century it was defined as a book format that compiles and organizes geographical and astronomical knowledge. . . . But later, in the nineteenth century, the term was increasingly deployed in German to identify any tabular display of systematized knowledge" (119).

22. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 26: "Atlases aim to be definitive in every sense of the term: they set the standards of a science in word, image, and deed—how to describe, how to depict, how to see."

23. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xvii.

24. In a late *Tagebuch* entry (GS, VII:543), Warburg indicates he ultimately wanted to have "circa 200 Tafeln (2 Mappen) (circa 5–600 Abbildungen) / 2 Bände Text: I Tafelerklärungen und Dokumente / II Darstellung." The second volume, where the panels were to be, would have been divided into six sections: "(A. Sphaera Barbarica B. Gestus Heroicus) C. Auffahrt zum Olymp. D. Ueberlebende Dämonen) E. Das Holland Rembrandts und die italienische Antike . . . F. Steuernde Energetik: Rad und Zügel / Goethe / Barbados." Notably, this plan shifts the emphasis more toward the cosmographical and away from the art-historical than is the case in the "last version." Dorothee Bauerle uses this sequence to structure her invaluable interpretations of the *Atlas* and its individual panels. See Bauerle, *Gespensgesichten für ganz Erwachsene: Ein Kommentar zu Aby Warburgs Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1988), 67–68.

7. panels 57, 58, 59, 60, 61–64: Virgil, Dürer, Rubens, and the northward *translatio*
8. panels 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75: Baroque excess and Rembrandt's mediation of the same
9. panels 76, 77, 78, 79: final “inversions”: advertisement and transubstantiation

For all this real and apparent heterogeneity in theme and material, at the center of *Mnemosyne* lies Warburg's belief in the concrete expression of “antiquity's afterlife” in Italian Renaissance art (panels 30–49) and in the tangible “process” by which Greek cosmological representations in their path to early modernity were distorted by Hellenistic, medieval Arabic, Italian, and Spanish astrological thought (panels 20 to 28–29; 50–59). Increasingly important in the later panels is also the north-south theme, or the interchange of motifs and styles between the Northern and Southern Renaissances, which in addition to underscoring Dürer's essential role as translator between cultures and styles (panels 57, 58), also encompasses Warburg's interest in the efforts of Rembrandt (panels 72, 73, 74, 75), Rubens (panels 60, 61–64), and even Manet (panel 55) to mediate between the old and new.

The brief introduction that Warburg wrote in his typically dense, abbreviated style for *Mnemosyne*—and that will serve as an indispensable if sometimes cryptic guide in the following pages as I try to reconcile Warburg's theory and practice—identifies three main strands of the “apprehension of antiquity” precipitating the “process of new stylistic formation [Stilbildung]” mapped by the *Atlas*: “die orientalisch-praktische, die nordisch-höfische und die italienisch-humanistische” (the oriental-practical, the northern-courtly, and the Italian-humanist).²⁵ Additionally, fitful attempts to open this “process” up to more recent permutations of *Pathos-formeln* (pathos formulas) are made. For instance, panel 79 conveys Warburg's fascination with how visual representations of contemporary athletes and the Japanese hara-kiri recall classical images, while panel 78 reflects his interest in current events, such as the signing of the 1929 Concordat (in which the papacy renounced all temporal power) and the rise of Italian fascism, whose imagery Warburg described as dangerously without any “metaphoric distance” or mediation.²⁶ In this last respect, the *Atlas* ends on an ironic note, though, as I hope to show, its coda may slyly court transcendence as well.

Like Hölderlin rewriting lines of verse, Austerlitz rearranging his photographs, or Richter adding and subtracting colors, Warburg thus dedicated his last years to constellating and then reconstellating images to plumb the depths and dynamics of historical memory. He believed such constellations could make his *Kulturwissenschaft* (science of culture) comprehensible to all who cared to see.²⁷ In imitation

25. GS, II.1:5.

26. Warburg, WIA, III.102.1.4.1, *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 62.

27. While *Kulturwissenschaft* is conventionally translated as “cultural studies” (and *Bildwissenschaft* and *Literaturwissenschaft*, respectively, as “visual studies” and “literary studies”), I would underscore the unconventional connotations that Warburg and his successors intended and indeed insisted upon by translating it as “science of culture.”

of the quattrocento artists he so admired, Warburg hoped to create “metaphoric distance” for the viewer and for himself, *Distanz* that would mediate between unbridled pathos and constricting abstraction. To this end, he grasped after novel forms of expression: “Diese Geschichte ist märchenhaft to vertellen: Gespenstergeschichte f. ganz Erwachsene” (This history is to be told like a fable: ghost stories for all adults).²⁸

“Hamburger at heart, Jewish by blood, and with a Florentine soul,” Aby Warburg exemplifies all that is most audacious and perilous in early twentieth-century *Geistesgeschichte*.²⁹ Audacious because his abiding intellectual, spiritual thirst for syncretic solutions to the problems posed by the history of art and culture never yields to the strictures (or rigors) of a single system of thought, never embraces the comforts of teleology, and yet continuously tries to expand the compass, the disciplinary boundaries, of its questions. Perilous because his historical inquiries are fueled by a precarious ideal affirming that the polar forces of reason and unreason can be balanced in ways redemptive not only for an individual thinker beset by personal demons, or *monstra* as Warburg came to call them, but also for the culture in which one labors and whose origins, history, and future compel contemplation. Determined to find a middle ground between these poles, and forever grasping after syncretic but not synthetic solutions, Warburg makes *Geistesgeschichte* turn its back on its Hegelian, idealist heritage and become instead a nascent form of *Problemgeschichte* anchored in the contingencies of language, personality, and ethics.³⁰

Fascinated by his biography and keen to explore, copy, and sometimes even perfect his imperfect map of Western history, culture, and thought, scholars since Warburg’s death in 1929 have remembered him with an ever-proliferating series of documents and monuments. As Georges Didi-Huberman movingly asserts: “Warburg is our haunting; he is to art history that which an unredeemed ghost—a *dibbouk*—might be to the place where we live.”³¹ This spectral effect largely results

28. Warburg, WIA, III.102.3.3, *Mnemosyne: Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 3. The phrase “to vertellen” is Plattdeutsch.

29. The epigraph “Amburghese di cuore, ebreo di sangue, d’anima Fiorentino” occurs in Gertrud Bing’s essay “Aby M. Warburg,” *Rivista storica italiana* 72.1 (1960): 113. Inspired by Hegel’s philosophy of history and refined by William Dilthey and his followers, *Geistesgeschichte* is a brand of intellectual history that seeks to capture a period’s *Geist* or “spirit” by attending to all its cultural manifestations within a synthetic, if not often a metaphysical, frame. Tainted by the Nazis, the term and its practice survived the war in diminished form. See Leo Spitzer, “Geistesgeschichte vs. History of Ideas as Applied to Hitlerism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5.2 (1944): 191–203.

30. *Problemgeschichte* is a form of intellectual history focusing on a single “problem” or small constellation of “problems” rather than trying to sketch a broad history of a period’s “spirit.” With Warburg the “problem” is the *Nachleben der Antike*. And since “Nachleben” here is partially metaphoric, the “problem” partially concerns metaphor as well. *Problemgeschichte* tends to reflect on questions about method; as such, it is central to contemporary German intellectual history. See Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi, eds., *Eine Typologie der Formen der Begriffsgeschichte*, Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte, Sonderhefte 7 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2010).

31. Georges Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante: Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 2002), 28.

from the ways that Warburg's lifework is dedicated to tracing how certain pathos-laden topoi from antiquity subsequently appear in Western art and thought. Even as they recur in dramatically disparate media and times, such pathos formulas, Warburg contends, remain the constant artistic means of expressing and thereby mediating intense emotions. (In German, *Pathos* connotes strong feeling rather than signifying something "pathetic.") These *dynamograms*, as he also dubs them, function stylistically and conceptually as metaphors that permit him to find meaning and unity in history's extreme multiplicity. Indeed, the very term *Pathosformel* suggests the negation of the distinction between content and form: the literal pathos of a grieving mother becomes a formula when it appears on a Greek funeral urn, in a quattrocento painting of the Deposition, or in a Hamburg newspaper photograph. Yet notwithstanding this continuity, try as he might, Warburg was never able to persuade himself that writing or, in the case of the *Mnemosyne*, showing the history of pathos formulas guaranteed any (lasting) teleological progress or, in more personal terms, psychological healing.

E. H. Gombrich, who tried but failed to produce a publishable edition of *Mnemosyne* in the late 1930s, eventually wrote Warburg's "intellectual biography" instead.³² Gombrich's idea was that if he could thicken the contexts out of which *Mnemosyne* emerged, the viewer's initial bewilderment would eventually yield to intuition and understanding. In this sense, his voluminous biography serve as an extended gloss of *Mnemosyne*'s emblematic scenes. In the wake of Gombrich's initial attempts, the task of identifying the images in the *Atlas* and glossing them via Warburg's writings was taken up again for an exhibit and volume in 1994.³³ Also, following exhibits of the *Atlas* in Siena in 1998 and Venice in 2004, a group of Italian scholars under the aegis of the online journal *La Rivista di engramma* dedicated a special issue to mapping and interpreting Warburg's project.³⁴ In choosing to divide the *Atlas* into fourteen sequences (*percorsi*), they gamely promote another "possible" interpretation of the *Atlas*, one that forges a strong critical narrative out of Warburg's wordless materials. Most importantly, the 2000, 2003, and 2008 editions of *Der Bilderatlas: Mnemosyne*, prepared by Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink,

32. E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Ironically, one of Edgar Wind's many criticisms of Gombrich's biography is that he overplays Warburg's difficulties with written expression. See Wind, "On a Recent Biography of Warburg," in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). For Wind's own debts to Warburg's *Symbolbegriff*, see Bernard Buschendorf, "Zur Begründung der Kulturwissenschaft: Der Symbolbegriff bei Friedrich Theodor Vischer, Aby Warburg und Edgar Wind," in *Edgar Wind: Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph*, ed. Horst Bredekamp et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 227–248.

33. Marianne Koos et al., eds., *Begleitmaterial zur Ausstellung "Aby M. Warburg, Mnemosyne"* (Hamburg: Dölling and Galitz, 1994). The *Einleitung* to *Mnemosyne*, along with numerous panels from Warburg's *Bilderreihen*, was published in Ilsebill Barta Fliehl and Christoph Geissmar, eds., *Die Beredsamkeit des Leibes: Zur Körpersprache in der Kunst* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1992), 156–173.

34. *La Rivista di engramma* 35 (agosto-settembre 2004), www.engramma.it/engramma_v4/homepage/35/home.html.

include Warburg's hitherto unpublished introduction, identify all the images, add Bing-Warburg's *Überschriften* for each panel, and also begin the Herculean task of linking individual panels with entries to the *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, the journal/logbook that he kept with Saxl and Bing from 1926 to 1929. And yet as invaluable as these efforts have been, inevitably any comprehensive attempt to interpret the *Atlas* and its myriad images, to write the missing subtitles for individual panels, to construct one or several theoretical frames in which to view the images, will inevitably be riddled with gaps and aporias. As Warnke acknowledges, "Warburg did not see each individual image as contextually bound, rather he ascribed to each image a new utterance in each new constellation."³⁵ Nevertheless, he and Brink take the essential heuristic step in interpreting each panel by identifying the individual images-objects and then enumerating them so that they follow "der dargebotenen Sinnentfaltung" (the proffered unfolding of meaning). (And though I do not always follow the logic of their enumeration, its utility for critical analysis and debate is unequivocal. The parenthetical numbers in this book thus correspond to those in the *Gesammelte Schriften* editions of the *Atlas*.) Still, Warnke is careful not to make any absolutist claims for the interpretations implicit in their enumeration: "It may thus be stressed that the sequences offered here are only suggestions how to complete after the fact Warburg's thinking in thematic constants, in opposites, and in sudden associations and insights."³⁶ Or, as Dorothee Bauerle proves in her valiant 1984 monograph, a learned "Versuch" (essay) dedicated to fixing the theoretical importance of the *Bilderatlas* and the meaning of its individual panels, the "Pendelbewegung" (pendular movement) of Warburg's thinking and the fragmentary nature of his project invite the accumulation of theoretical "associations" and Goethean "elective affinities."³⁷ Warburg's predilection for visual metonymy, in brief, inevitably attracts many forms of critical metonymy, whose imperfection likewise can have enormous heuristic value.

Dubbing it a "vast pictorial symphony" lacking a "scherzo and a triumphant finale," Gombrich interprets *Mnemosyne* as an effort in Kantian enlightenment.³⁸ While the analogy is certainly felicitous, the judgment, I think, is suspect, for notwithstanding the indubitable influence of neo-Kantians like Ernst Cassirer and Theobald Ziegler, Warburg implicitly rejects the distinction in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (see §59) between abstract *schemata* and intuitive *symbols*, the latter cast by Kant as "mere expressions for concepts."³⁹ Granted, intriguing parallels could be drawn between the gallery of images in the *Atlas* and Kant's notion of *hypotyposis*,

35. GS, II.1:viii.

36. GS, II.1:ix.

37. Bauerle, *Gespengergeschichten*, 5–9, 67. The phrase "Pendelbewegung" occurs in Saxl's letter to the Teubner Verlag concerning the *Atlas*, which I will discuss in chapter 4. Variations of it appear in many of Warburg's late notebooks.

38. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 283–284.

39. For this neo-Kantian influence, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 55.

or the “presentation [Darstellung], *subjectio sub adspectum*,” which he also terms an *exhibitione*, as the latter retains, when it takes the form of a symbol, a link with the sensible. Yet in pondering the frequently irrational aspects of human expression, Warburg spurns the systematic attempts of (any) philosophy to limit the imagination's scope (*Umfang*). He exploits instead the mutable exhibition space of the *Atlas* to bridge, but not resolve, the conflicting claims of imagination and reason. Unlike Kant, he expresses little wish to construct a vehicle for transcendental reason, even if some of his thoughts about metaphor have a distinctly *a priori* flavor to them. Rather than an achieved or achievable system of thought, Warburg is content to offer a dynamic outline (*Umfang*).

Similarly provocative is how, for all the objective, theoretical depth he ascribes to it, Gombrich insists *Mnemosyne* is ultimately rooted in a “private language,” one symptomatic of Warburg's lifelong struggle to express himself in “discursive language.”⁴⁰ This contrasts, though, with more recent approaches to the *Atlas* that view its fragmentary, elliptical aspects as more indicative of larger cultural crises and less about personal idiosyncrasies. Astonished how its “material expands almost infinitely,” Giorgio Agamben, for example, regards it “as a kind of gigantic condenser that gathered together all the energetic currents that had animated and continued to animate Europe's memory, taking form in its ‘ghosts.’”⁴¹ But however much their interpretations differ, it is telling that both Gombrich and Agamben turn to metaphor to describe the *Mnemosyne* project and its effects on the viewer. This speaks not only to the difficulty of describing Warburg's late efforts in conventional terms, but also to the impossibility of writing about metaphor without resorting to metaphor. Their critical metaphors, in other words, is a telling if unexamined response to the central stylistic, methodological, and cognitive role Warburg assigns to metaphor.

Likewise, it is entirely fitting that Warburg's *Mnemosyne* has come to be seen, especially in Germany, as an undertaking whose scope and methods resemble those of Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* (1937–40). This encyclopedic collection of discursive and visual material about nineteenth-century Paris sought to capture the dynamics of memory, which, spurred by the “dialectical image,” traced a genealogy that ran, as Warburg was wont to say, “vom Wort zum Bild.” In the *Passagen-Werk*, even as history flirts with theology, Benjamin privileges the image over any discursive narrative.⁴² Or as he writes in the more accessible “Über den Begriff

40. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 284–285.

41. Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 96.

42. In an unpublished manuscript belonging to the *Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin, responding to Horkheimer's claim that past events are finished and thus have no afterlife, writes: “Remembrance [Eingedenken] can make of the unfinished something that is finished and, conversely, it can make the finished into something that is unfinished. This is theology. Yet in remembering we gain the knowledge that we must not try to understand history in fundamentally a-theological terms, just as we would not want to write history in straightforwardly theological terms.” Quoted in Rolf Tiedemann, “Historischer Materialismus oder politischer Messianismus,” in *Materialien zu Benjamins Thesen “Über den Begriff der Geschichte”*: Beiträge und Interpretationen, ed. Peter Bulthaupt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 86–89.

der Geschichte" (1940), "The true picture of the past *flits* by. Only as image, which flashes up in an instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again, can the past be held fast." To which he adds later in the essay: "Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a constellation pregnant with tensions [in einer von Spannungen gesättigten Konstellation], it gives that constellation a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad."⁴³

It is in the wake of this "shock" that Benjamin's oft-repeated maxim makes sense: "Geschichte zerfällt in Bilder, nicht in Geschichten" (History breaks down into images, not into stories).⁴⁴ Suspicious of Enlightenment narratives of historical evolution, Benjamin viewed history, be it intellectual, natural, or otherwise, through the prism of such dialectical images, images that help explain historical change without making it a child of reason's progress. "In the *Passagen-Werk* Benjamin was committed to a graphic, concrete representation of truth, in which historical images made visible the philosophical ideas"; he believed that "in fragmentary images the essences appear concretely."⁴⁵ Even more explicitly than Warburg, Benjamin believed that each of these images functioned like a Leibnizian monad potentially expressive of a vast multiplicity of images. Each was a potential encyclopedia possessing great epistemological value.

The notion of the dialectical image is also closely related to what Benjamin idiosyncratically defines as allegory. In his study of the German Baroque *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin's theory of allegory is literally preceded by the belief that critical exegesis and philosophy do not yield "knowledge" (*Erkenntnis*) from the "fragments of thought" but rather "representation" (*Vorstellung*).⁴⁶ And because he first learns to contemplate "extremity" as an end in itself, the "antinomies of allegorical interpretation" can eventually yield a way of salvaging meaning from the Baroque ruins of a "profane world."⁴⁷ Thus whether allegories occur in the plays of Gryphius, Lohenstein, or Calderón, in Parisian streets, *passages*, or Baudelaire's lyrics, they help Benjamin to restore to images their "natural history." In this sense, dialectical images are allegorical because they allow him to inhabit what Warburg called a *Denkraum* (thought-space), one that includes this fallen world and the possibility of a future, redemptive one. Ultimately, though, as an increasingly melancholic Benjamin toiled in his last years on his encyclopedia of Paris past, present, and

43. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 255, 262–263 (translation modified); Benjamin, *Illuminations: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 253, 260.

44. Walter Benjamin, *Konvolut 'N'* ("Erkenntnistheoretisches: Theorie des Fortschritts"), in *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), 1:596.

45. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 65, 77.

46. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), 10; Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne; intr. George Steiner (London: Verso, 1977), 29.

47. Benjamin, *Ursprung*, 193–197; Benjamin, *Origin*, 174–177. See Bainard Cowan, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 109–122.

future, he preferred to let the images and texts he had collected speak for themselves: "Methode dieser Arbeit: literarische Montage. Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen." (Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say—only to show.)⁴⁸

Warburg in the late 1920s could well have uttered these same words as he labored on his picture atlas. He never settled on a final version of *Mnemosyne*; nor did he have the time to supplement its images with the verbal, textual apparatus he hoped to add for publication. It may well be, however, that its method and themes, together with his wariness of all forms of *stasis* and his increasing antipathy to iconological interpretations that tended to verge on allegoresis, also prevented such perfection. Like Benjamin's dialectical images, Warburg's *Pathosformeln* help us to see backward and forward in time. But more than is even the case with Benjamin, Warburg's discovery of the contingent, recursive nature of visual imagery gives full expression to his own pathos as well as that of his materials. Alternately, like the "historical metaphors" catalogued and analyzed by his acquaintance and admirer E. R. Curtius in *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), Warburg's *Pathosformeln* reveal the continuity of imitation and so provide the means for judging the undulations of style. In a 1960 essay evaluating her mentor's life and work, Bing interprets pathos formulas as figurative topoi that like Curtius's literary topoi serve as necessary (because they are historically determined), if also metaphoric, "places" of invention.⁴⁹ This emphasis on process over content also helps explain why Warburg proves less interested than many of his contemporaries in the aesthetics of the image. For him the symbolic image is no mere ornament of style; nor ultimately is it understandable through iconographic methods. Rather, it plays the same originary, constitutive role for thinking, interpretation, and, I dare say, being that Vico, Nietzsche, Blumenberg, Gadamer, and others ascribe to metaphor. Furthermore, just as Benjamin grounds the *Passagen-Werk* in dialectical images, Warburg's metaphoric pathos formulas determine the content and direction of *Mnemosyne*. In this sense, *Mnemosyne* challenges Hegel's description of metaphor as merely a provisional substitute for systematic philosophy. (It also, we shall see, questions Hegel's appropriation of classical art for the needs of "absolute Spirit.") Conversely, Warburg shares Nietzsche's insistence that metaphor, rather than working toward the reification of concepts, should affect the constant renewal of intuition. As a vehicle for intuition and *heuristic*, *Mnemosyne* mimics the syncretic task of metaphor: it, too, furnishes a nonconceptual means of finding unity in multiplicity and of mediating

48. Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, 1:574. Significant, though, is the relative difference of the aesthetic quality of the objects they analyze. Although Warburg is keenly interested in how his own culture reanimates "Pathosformeln" in advertisements, newspapers, and even postage stamps, he mainly focuses on objects produced by learned cosmographers and artists, whereas Benjamin casts a broader net to include all kinds of cultural objects, every sort of *Formulierung*. This and myriad related questions are discussed by Cornelia Zumbusch in *Wissenschaft in Bildern: Symbol und dialektisches Bild in Aby Warburgs Mnemosyne-Atlas und Walter Benjamins Passagen-Werk* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004).

49. Bing, "Aby M. Warburg," 113.

opposites. It, too, implicates an “infinite encyclopedia” of meaning.⁵⁰ Further, it fuses the temporal with the spatial, thereby reconciling what G. E. Lessing conceives of as the *Nacheinander* of literature and the *Nebeneinander* of painting. It produces, in short, an artifact that ensures its own *Nachleben* insofar as no hermeneutic can ever exhaust the metonymic play of the disparate materials it places before our eyes.

Metaphor is method for Warburg. Metaphor’s stereoscopy becomes in his hands the engine for comparing individual images possessing symbolic value; indeed, at times, he makes metaphor synonymous with all forms of comparative analysis, even as his own metaphor-rich language constantly seeks ingenious, heuristic ways of joining word and image.⁵¹ Unlike most forms of allegory, Warburgian metaphor creates conceptual distance and motion without surrendering to more abstract schemas of meaning. Briefly put, whether as a cognitive process or a rhetorical figure, metaphor for Warburg is thoroughly heuristic, an ineluctable *Denkfigur*. Attempting to reconcile historical differences and contingencies via formal similarities, his visual metaphors creates a mutable, utopian space of contemplation. It creates a *Denkraum* that still calls for interpretation, not only because of *Mnemosyne*’s fragmentary, elliptical qualities, but also on account of Warburg’s intellectual nomadism, that is, his scorn for disciplinary, conceptual, and chronological boundaries, as well as, arguably, because of our own fascination with the dynamics of identity and difference. But in still more personal terms, metaphor is what allows him to participate in what he called the “Dialektik des Monstrums” (dialectic of the monster), wherein chthonic and cosmographical forces are ideally mediated by the claims of reason and the contours of form.⁵²

Like the images in Renaissance emblem books, the visual constellations in the *Atlas* assume a voluminous *subscriptio*, an immense network of discourses, including poetry, religion, rhetoric, science, and politics, all of which inform the silent gestures of the images that Warburg (re)presents.⁵³ But the *Atlas* presents a still

50. The phrase “infinite encyclopedia” concerns the semantic potential of what Umberto Eco describes as an “open metaphor” or a metaphor “that allows us to travel along the pathways of semiosis and to penetrate the labyrinths of the encyclopedia.” This is opposed to the mere dictionary necessary for interpreting a symbol. Eco, “The Scandal of Metaphor: Metaphorology and Semiotics,” *Poetics Today* 4.2 (1983): 254.

51. Thus argues Claudia Wedepohl in “‘Wort und Bild’: Aby Warburg als Sprachbildner,” in *Ekstatische Kunst—Besonnenes Wort: Aby Warburg und die Denkräume der Ekphrasis*, ed. Peter Kofler (Bozen: Sturzflüge, 2009), 23–46. Wedepohl traces how and why Warburg’s language relies on and exploits metaphor’s resources not just to forge key concepts, but also to narrow the gap between visual and verbal expression. Warburg develops “eine eigene, neuartige Ausdrucksweise, deren spezifische Merkmale vor allem die pointierende syntaktische und terminologische Verdichtung sowie ein hoher Grad an Anschaulichkeit sind” (ibid., 24).

52. On this “dialectic,” see Davide Stimilli, *Einleitung* to Aby M. Warburg, “*Per monstra ad sphaeram*”: *Stern Glaube und Bilddeutung: Vortrag in Gedenken an Franz Boll und andere Schriften 1923 bis 1925*, ed. Davide Stimilli with Claudia Wedepohl (Munich and Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2008), 26. See also Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 303; Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante*, 284–306.

53. For how Warburg’s practice of iconology, esp. its engagement with social, cultural-material, and political questions, has influenced more recent art historians, see Michael Diers, “Warburg and

more unique hermeneutic challenge, for its status as an achieved work, however fragile or illusory this may be, depends on our willingness to “read” it along with Warburg’s published and unpublished writings. Especially crucial are the *Tagebuch* and the various notebooks that he filled with his gnomic, heavily metaphoric prose during the years he worked on the *Atlas*. With its many diagrams, penchant for aphorism and neologism, and constant resort to metaphor—with its brevity, obscurity, ability to surprise, and potential to instruct—such writing confirms the extent to which Warburg not only shunned conventional forms of academic discourse but was exploring, too, a form of thought that troubled the distinction between word and image. Spurning the fruits of teleology and the lure of systematicity, Warburg had to experience the metaphoric *Prozess* itself, with all its pathos.

Opening Panels

In undertaking Warburg’s “intellectual biography,” Gombrich warns of the necessity of quoting at length his writing in the original, for here, too, style and substance, form and content, are inextricably linked.⁵⁴ With the reader’s indulgence, I shall often follow Gombrich’s lead in this, especially since Warburg’s inimitable prose confirms, sometimes directly but more often indirectly, the many roles he assigns to metaphor. (And of course to translate his prose into English is already a crucial first step toward parsing its meanings.) Indeed, if, as I have suggested, metaphor’s discursivity is far greater than the symbol’s—since metaphor exploits much more the resources and categories furnished by language and literary history—then to interpret the dynamics of Warburg’s metaphors in all its richness, originality, and obscurity requires not only that we read his writings closely but also that we compare them with accounts by other voices of what metaphor can do.

An obvious place to begin such close reading is the descriptive subtitle given to *Mnemosyne* in the *Einleitung* (1929): *Bilderreihe zur Untersuchung der Funktion vorgeprägter antiker Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens in der Kunst der europäischen Renaissance* (Series of Images for the Investigation of the Function of Previously Stamped Classical Expressive Values in the Depiction of Life in Motion in European Renaissance Art). Though but one (rather ponderous) permutation among the numerous descriptive titles he contemplates in the *Tagebuch*, notebooks, and letters, it deserves attention, since the key terms here have multiple, often idiosyncratic connotations.

To begin with, the adjective “vorgeprägter” is characteristic of Warburg’s catachrestic reliance on the verb, *vorprägen*, and elsewhere on its substantives,

the Warburgian Tradition of Cultural History,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 59–73. In *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), James Elkins reads perspective as a form of metaphor (1–44).

54. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 14–18.

Vorprägung, *Ausprägung*, and simply *Prägung*. In the first instance a technical term describing the process of stamping or embossing metal, *Prägung* in Warburg's hands is consistently used to figure the fundamental artistic act by which originary events, expressive gestures, and volatile passions are transformed into aesthetic forms such that they are available for imitation and transmission. Thus it is an act mediating between the phenomenal and ontological realms, between the extremes of *fluxis* and *stasis*. A *Prägung* resembles how metaphor combines the proper and the improper, and then from such combinations forges new, surprising meanings. *Vorprägen* may also have temporal connotations; it can be translated as "to anticipate" as well as "to pre-stamp." In one of his notebooks, Warburg writes: "Der Atlas ist das Libretto f. d. Commedia dell' Arte. Inventar der ausserpersönl. Vorprägung." (The Atlas is the libretto for the Commedia dell' Arte. Inventory of impersonal, pre-stamping.)⁵⁵ Gombrich usually translates *Prägung* as "coinage"; yet, as we shall see below, Warburg ingeniously employs the terms *Münze* (coin) and *münzen* (to coin) when he wishes. Indeed, such coin metaphors has the curious effect of folding his figurative language into influential critical discourses about the currency of metaphor, such as Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" and, proleptically, Derrida's "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." But more on this later.

Possessing similar semantic wealth is the phrase "bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens." "Bewegtes Leben" (life in motion or animated life) refers to those dynamic human gestures accompanying the most extreme human emotions, such as grief, joy, anger, and elation, and which are captured momentarily by artists, writers, and festivals as pathos formulas. The formal "Darstellung" (representation) of these gestures always remains something of a compromise, sometimes even a betrayal, of the emotions precipitating them. In this respect, the "Darstellung bewegten Lebens" contains both the unparalleled dynamism and the restraining decorum of an apt, lively metaphor.

Another key term is "Ausdruckswerte" (expressive values). These concern less aesthetic values than visual art's capacity to serve as a repository or "Sparbank für energetische Ausdruckswerte" (savings bank for energetic expressive values).⁵⁶ Simply put, Warburg regards such "values" as timeless psychological truths giving art its ethical and spiritual worth. He thus interrogates Alexandrian astrological calendars not primarily for their place in the history of science, nor does he scrutinize quattrocento painting for its aesthetic values; rather, he looks for how they formally express great emotion and feeling.⁵⁷ And while contemporaries write of

55. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 142. See also, for example, *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 36: "Die Gebärdensprachlichen Höchstwerte des Ausdrucks erhalten gelten als antike Prägung."

56. Reflecting on a day spent in Rome, Warburg in *Allgemeine Ideen* writes: "Tätigkeitsbericht / der Römischen . . . Sparbank für energetische Ausdruckswerte" (fol. 55).

57. In "From Aby Warburg to E. H. Gombrich: A Problem of Method," in *Myths, Emblems, Clues*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), Carlo Ginzburg stresses Warburg's "relative indifference" to "aesthetic appreciation" (30).

rhetorical and musical *Ausdruckswerte*, and Cassirer explores the *Ausdrucksfunktion* in his philosophy of symbolic forms, Warburg may also have in mind Charles Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), a book that for Warburg was a timely revelation, because of its scientific, evolutionary approach to the problem of expression (and, perhaps, because of its striking illustrations showing the morphology of facial expressions).⁵⁸ All of which is to say that, given how Warburg's intertextual and intratextual debts frequently and, truth be told, obscurely inform his characteristic linguistic play and concision, any interpretation of the *Atlas* must, in addition to describing and contextualizing the art-historical and cosmographic materials presented there, attend closely to its scant but crucial semantic elements.

Like Pliny's *Historia naturalis* and many early Renaissance encyclopedias, the *Atlas* begins with cosmology. While the first three panels are simply labeled A, B, and C, the more discursive headings from the *Überschriften* notebook clarify that at stake is the theme of cosmological "harmony" or how humanity has historically represented its "relations" to the cosmos. In making anthropomorphism, the macrocosmic-microcosmic analogy, and scientific abstraction and manipulation the opening notes of *Mnemosyne*, Warburg foregrounds the dual processes of *Orientierung* (orientation) and *Entdämonisierung* (de-demonization). These are the now-historical, now-cognitive processes that Warburg makes the key elements in his interpretation of the history of astrology and astronomy.

Already in these first three panels we begin to see how the cartographical conceit of the *Atlas* might produce quick insight into complex historical and cultural phenomena, though in a manner that surely aims to provoke further questioning (and further inspection) of materials and method.⁵⁹ Indeed, it seems that Warburg is toying with the idea(l) of progress by imitating and subverting the tripartite motion dear to the dialectical tradition. The way that maps, diagrams, and calendars dominate these three initial cosmographical panels creates the impression that Warburg views humanity as slowly, but progressively finding the objective means of liberating itself from anthropomorphic, subjective views of the cosmos. Such an impression, however, proves illusory, or at the very least in need of radical revision.

The portentous heading for panel A (fig. 1) is structured in triads: "Verschiedene Systeme von Relationen, in die der Mensch eingestellt ist, kosmisch, irdisch, genealogisch. Ineinsetzung aller dieser Relationen im magischen Denken, denn Sonderung von Abstammung, Geburtsort und kosmischer Situation setzt schon eine Denkleistung voraus. 1) Orientierung; 2) Austausch; 3) soziale Einordnung."

58. "At last a book which helps me," writes Warburg in his diary (quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 72). For a contemporary parallel, see Wilhelm Schneider, *Ausdruckswerte der deutschen Sprache: Eine Stilkunde* (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1931).

59. For the central role of the "cartographical impulse" in Renaissance culture, see Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

(Different systems of relations, cosmic, earthly, genealogical, in which humanity is placed. The harmonizing of all these relations in magical thinking, because the separation of heritage, birthplace, and cosmic situation already presumes an achievement of thought. 1) orientation; 2) exchange; 3) social classification.)⁶⁰ The panel proper consists of three vertically arranged photographs: on top, a 1684 Dutch star chart in the form of traditional mythological (zoomorphic and anthropomorphic) figures; below this, a map of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, made per Warburg's instructions and tracing the *Wanderstraßen* of "cultural exchange between north and south, east and west" (more specifically, the migration of astrological ideas and images from the Near East to northern Europe); and on the bottom, a family tree of the Medicis and Tornabuonis.⁶¹ Thus our gaze shifts from a cosmological, synchronic system of "relations" to two diachronic ones, wherein, as Claudia Wedepohl observes, humanity finds other metaphoric and material ways to overcome the "demonic."⁶² The cartographic metaphor governing the *Atlas* is in this way immediately given historical and personal meaning: the genealogical "relations" in the third image will be instrumental in producing the Renaissance art Warburg prizes, while his beloved metaphor of "*Wanderstraßen*" figures his own attempts to bring together the cosmological and art-historical strands of his thought as much as it does the geographic paths by which images may have historically traveled. But this juxtaposition of maps also indicates that "magical thinking," in the guise of the originary human "*Denkleistung*" comparing dissimilar things, provides the theoretical basis for the analogy between "cosmic, earthly, [and] genealogical" perspectives. As our gaze moves from the universal to the specific, we apprehend how Warburg remakes and refines "magical thinking" as metaphor.

Focusing on cosmology, panel B (fig. 2) is glossed: "Verschiedene Grade der Abtragung des kosmischen Systems auf den Menschen. Harmonikale Entsprechung. Später Reduktion der Harmonie auf die abstrakte Geometrie statt auf die kosmisch bedingte (Leonardo)." (Various degrees of transferring the cosmic system to humanity. Harmonic correspondence. Later reduction of the harmony to abstract geometry instead of to cosmically conditional [geometry] [Leonardo].)⁶³ Juxtaposed

60. GS, II.1:8.

61. GS, II.1:8–9. Warnke and Brink label the second image "Die 'Wanderstraßenkarte' des Kulturaustausches zwischen Norden-Süden, Osten-Westen." Aby M. Warburg and Fritz Saxl, *Wanderstraßen der Kultur: Die Aby Warburg-Fritz Saxl Korrespondenz 1920 bis 1929*, ed. Dorothea McEwan (Munich and Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2004), documents Warburg's engagement of the cartographer Wilhelm Gundel to provide this map. For how the "Metapher des Weges" shapes Warburg's earlier thought and eventually his synchronic efforts to bring together his art-historical and cosmological concerns in the *Atlas*, see Claudia Wedepohl, "Ideengeographie: Ein Versuch zu Aby Warburgs 'Wanderstraßen der Kultur,'" in *Entgrenzte Räume: Kulturelle Transfers um 1900 und in der Gegenwart*, ed. Helga Mitterbauer and Katharina Scherke (Vienna: Passagen, 2005), 227–251.

62. Wedepohl, "Ideengeographie," 239.

63. GS, II.1:10.

here are medieval and early Renaissance representations of analogic relations between humanity and the cosmos. These include a twelfth-century manuscript page from Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber divinorum operum* (no. 1), the so-called zodiac man from the *Trés riches heures du Duc de Berry* (no. 3), a 1499 barber's bloodletting chart locating the signs of the zodiac on the human body (no. 6), Leonardo's Vitruvian man (no. 7), and two iatrochemical images from a 1533 edition of Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (nos. 9¹, 9²). As a sequence, then, the panel indicates how this "harmonic correspondence" shifts from being based in astrological worldviews to one grounded mainly in geometric abstraction. It seems, at least momentarily, to locate Warburg's own analogical thinking in Renaissance habits of thought, wherein the microcosmic-macrocosmic analogy governs both analysis and synthesis. The panel's images are analogous insofar as they share not only visual resemblances but are informed by the same epistemology. But then, as with Foucault's account of epistemological "rupture" in the early seventeenth century, the panel indicates a shift toward a mathematical ideal and away from an *episteme* based on resemblance.⁶⁴ This does not mean, however, that Warburg himself ever abandons the latter as his method's engine. As Gombrich underscores in his gloss of this panel, the fundamental principle of comparison in the *Atlas* remains analogy, or "das bildhafte Gleichnis":

"Man never grasps how anthropomorphic he is." (Goethe) That every representation of the cosmos works with analogy and equivalence [Gleichnis und Gleichsetzung] is known. . . . It can only be noted which orienting meaning [welche orientierende Bedeutung] pertains to the fact at hand; for in the representation of the unity of the macrocosmos and microcosmos, the entire universe is classified as a unity in light of a uniform structure [einheitlichen Gebilde], the human organism. The conception of a uniform, lawful proportionality, which governs the universe, is rooted here. The role of the microcosmos idea in the development of science appears to verify this view. On the panel are several types of visualization of this analogy illustrating the possibilities and intrinsic danger of this symbolic image. One misunderstanding is preventable: these images are not to be perceived as a historical progression, but rather as a systematic sequence, on one end of which stands pictorial, primitive thought [bildhaft primitiven Denken], on the other end, the achieved thought-space [gewonnene Denkraum]. Certainly, the Renaissance achieves and epitomizes at once, in its disassociation from the Middle Ages, yet again the process of humanity's development. How the classical pre-stamping [Vorprägung] enters to assist and to resolve in the "business of orientation" is *Mnemosyne's* object.⁶⁵

64. Though, as many have observed, this account may be more fiction than fact. See Ian Maclean, "Foucault's Renaissance Episteme Reassessed: An Aristotelian Counterblast," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998): 149–166.

65. Gombrich, WIA, III.109.5.1, *Geburtstagsatlas*.

Notwithstanding Gombrich's panoptic, synthetic approach, the Goethe quote reminds us that the "business of orientation" for Warburg is generally a messy, often anachronistic, even atavistic affair. For all the claims of scientific progress and conceptual "unity" in Gombrich's gloss, the presence of the astrological remains undiminished in the panel. That two woodcuts from the chief work by the alternately enthusiastic and skeptical Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1534) dominate the panel's bottom row signals the dangers of simply applying linguistic syntax to analyze the *Atlas*. It also emblemizes the contradictory tensions between scientific and mythological discourses there.⁶⁶ And that Leonardo's vision of man's perfect proportionality with the cosmos is juxtaposed to Agrippa's hermetic imagery and texts argues that the emerging preeminence of geometric symbolism at the start of the sixteenth century did not necessarily lead to the establishment of a permanently viable *Denkraum*. As will be the case with many other panels, panel B's visual syntax disrupts a linear narrative of Enlightenment progress.

Dramatically headlined "Entwicklung der Marsvorstellung. Loslösung von der anthropomorphistischen Auffassung Bild—harmonikales System—Zeichen" (Development of the representation of Mars. Detachment from the anthropomorphizing conception image—harmonic system—sign), panel C (fig. 3) would also seem to mark the end of the anthropomorphic-astrological worldview and the advent of the mathematical "sign" as the new epistemological marker. A closer inspection of its seven images, however, tells another story. In the upper left corner appears the image (no. 1) of Kepler's five regular, Neoplatonic solids from the *Mysterium cosmographicum* (1621, but first published in 1595). Then, just below it, we find a diagram of Mars's orbit (no. 2) based on Kepler's *Astronomia nova* (1609); this leads, after the insertion of a twentieth-century depiction of the planets' paths (no. 3, taken from the 1905 Brockhaus *Konversations-Lexikon*)—as if insisting just how far astronomy had come—to an image (no. 4), in the upper right corner, from a 1475 German calendar-almanac depicting the mythological children of Mars, some dressed as knights in armor, representing celestial constellations. Highlighting Perseus's mythological role as an avatar of flight, Bing-Warburg annotate this last image in the *Überschriften* as "Die Kinder des Planeten Mars, links Perseus, halb als Sternbild, halb als europäischer Krieger aufgefaßt." (The children of the planet Mars, on the left Perseus, conceived partly as constellation, partly as European warrior.) Beneath this, though, are three newspaper images from 1929 (nos. 5¹, 5², and 5³) of the Zeppelin in flight, as if confirming humanity's technological mastery of nature, a theme that had already begun to fascinate Warburg in the 1890s. But what remains ambiguous is whether such mastery is more apparent than real;

66. Agrippa wrote *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, an influential account of magic and hermetic thought, and *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium*, a sweeping polemic against epistemological certainty. On Agrippa and Renaissance analogy more generally, see Brian Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580–1660," in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 95–164.

whether it eclipses here the claims of Kepler's Neoplatonic science, or the fears and hopes that for decades Warburg associated with the figure of Perseus. Indeed, the last image (no. 5³), a front page from the newspaper *Hamburg Illustrierte*, is itself a montage of sorts that shows the Zeppelin hovering ominously over a New York City skyscraper. This, I would argue on the basis of material I shall discuss below, may be interpreted as indicating how human audacity, in the form of limit-defying buildings and airships, rashly annuls the real and metaphoric "distance" Warburg prizes in art and cultivates in his own thinking. Curiously, though, the headline ignores the Zeppelin to announce another technological annihilation of distance: "Telegraphierte Bilder H. Z. eröffnet Station für Bildtelegraphie." (Telegraphed pictures—*Hamburg Illustrierte* opens office for picture telegraphy.) For all the historical distance traversed in panel C, its last image emphasizes a new way of magically annulling time (and geographical distance) to vaunt the immediacy of "Bilder."⁶⁷ In this respect, it is synchronous with the astrological, anthropomorphic image just above it, which also presumes to figure the cosmos as if no metaphoric "distance" existed between us and the world.

Claude Imbert has argued that these three initial panels have a "syntagmatic function" that, like a grammatical primer, trains the viewer how to read the subsequent panels.⁶⁸ And while a historical progression toward greater enlightenment may plausibly be ascribed to these panels, one is also instructed, I think, in the conceptual difficulties of keeping the cosmos (i.e., science and thus, too, the contemplative life) separate from the somatic sphere (i.e., the emotions and the active life). These opening panels initiate viewers into Warburg's curious metonymic logic whereby the juxtaposition of cosmological, astrological, and latromathematical imagery from different epochs strives to create the all-important cognitive space for reflection on and intuition about the historical changes in humanity's relation to the cosmos. Yet they also confirm that the phenomenology of history must be paramount in any *Bildwissenschaft*. In this regard, Warburg had more in common with Renaissance painters than with contemporary montage-makers, especially the surrealists, who largely denied the image's historical and cultural roots.⁶⁹

In 1937 Gombrich prepared an abbreviated version of the *Atlas* for Warburg's brother, Max. He selected twenty-four panels and rearranged slightly the position of images on each panel, neatening thereby Warburg's original presentation. Below the images were added captions, which generally identify artist, subject, and sometimes medium. In the short exegetical texts accompanying individual panels, Gombrich stresses certain themes and details. But most notably, his introduction,

67. See Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 249–250, on *Distanz* in panel C.

68. Claude Imbert, "Aby Warburg: Between Kant and Boas; From Aesthetics to the Anthropology of Images," *Qui Parle* 16.1 (2006): 3.

69. Though a contemporary of the early surrealists, Warburg did not believe that the most effective images and metaphors were aleatory or disjunctive; instead, for him, the image has fixed, predictable historical roots.

“Zur *Mnemosyne*: Zur Erkenntnistheorie und Praxis der Symbolsetzung” (“On *Mnemosyne*: On the Epistemology and Practice of Symbolization”), situates Warburg’s cardinal ambition of creating a viable *Denkraum* within a decidedly Kantian theoretical frame:

The concept *Orientation* has a very general character for Warburg in connection with Kant’s essay, “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?” For him it is the umbrella term for every conscious, human establishment of relation [Überbegriff für jede bewusste Beziehungnahme] as an individual with the environment in either a narrower or broader sense. First, by virtue that a human being constitutes an environment placing signs [Zeichensetzung]—if he is able to distance his “I” from this “not I.” This process of distantiation [Distanzierungsprozess], which separates the realm of consciousness from the external world and allocates to each his immanent conformity to natural laws, is for him the essential agent and goal of philogenesis as it is likewise of ontogenesis. Warburg dubs “thought-space” this achieved distance from the environment [diese gewonnene Distanz zur Umwelt], and the creation of thought-space [Denkraumschöpfung] the constitutive act of every ontogenetic and philogenetic development. Placing signs [Zeichensetzung] is what inaugurates this creation of thought-space. Misuse or misrecognition of the sign-function [is] the danger that culture repeatedly threatened and threatens. Because the originary sign, the image like the name, hides within it the danger of hypostasis. The magic of images like the fetishizing of names is such a thought-space destroying short-circuit of thought [denkraumzerstörender Kurzschluß des Denkens] in which the orientating function of the likeness goes missing: sign and signified become blurred in the magical picture of the world with its fear-inducing unity.⁷⁰

As trenchant a description of *Mnemosyne*’s theoretical aims as this is—and Gombrich has played a crucial role in highlighting the importance of notions such as *Denkraum*, *Orientierung*, and *Distanzierung*—again, we should be wary of conflating Warburg’s project tout court with Kant’s. To begin with, the methodological and cognitive roles Warburg assigns to metaphor ignore the limited, exemplifying function Kant ascribes to symbols.⁷¹ This “Distanzierungsprozess” is not just a historical and cognitive one; as the means of negotiating the gaps between past and present, self and world, it is a specifically metaphorical one as well. Secondly, the quantity and quality of irrational, engrammatic, or “Dionysian” material that the *Atlas* maps within its *Denkraum* resist transcendental reason. Indeed, another

70. Gombrich, *Geburtstagsatlas*. This effectively paraphrases and interprets material found in Warburg’s *Einleitung zu Mnemosyne*. Though “Zeichensetzung” typically means “punctuation,” the second and last paragraphs in “Zur Erkenntnistheorie und Praxis der Symbolsetzung” indicate that Gombrich has in mind a broader semiotic task.

71. On Kant’s notion of the symbol, see Cathy Caruth, “The Force of Examples: Kant’s Symbols,” *Yale French Studies* 74 (1988): 17–37.

favorite mantra of Warburg's, one that goes a long way toward explaining what he means by *Distanzierung*, first appears on the cover of the 1901 *Fragmente* notebook: "Motto: 'Du lebst und tust mir nichts'—Ahnung von der Entfernung—Distanzierung als Grundprinzip." (Motto: "You live and do me no harm"—Presentiment of distance—Distantiation as basic principle.)⁷² This "Grundprinzip" prescribes that he remain both near and distant from the perilous phenomena, or what Gombrich calls "the originary signs," out of which art and astrology forge their abstractions. Likewise, when in a 1929 notebook entry Warburg refers to the *Atlas* as offering a "Kritik der reinen Unvernunft," he playfully spurns Kantian critique.⁷³ In short, both the metonymic technique and the volatile content of the *Atlas* resist the kind of subtle, philosophical appropriation suggested by Gombrich.

Yet also debatable is Philippe-Alain Michaud's interpretation of *Mnemosyne* as occupying the interstices between art history and cinema.⁷⁴ Keen to extract Warburg from the clutches of an Enlightenment *episteme* and the positivism of nineteenth-century natural sciences, Michaud sees *Mnemosyne*'s aesthetics as closer to Godard's than Kant's.⁷⁵ With its "syntax entirely cinematic in inspiration," the *Atlas* demotes the agency of the art historian, who becomes instead a "seismograph." (In a text I will discuss in chapter 5, Warburg calls Burckhardt and Nietzsche "seismographs.") Thus Michaud urges: "The author is less the master of his words than he is a receptive surface, a photosensitive plate on which texts or images surging up from the past reveal themselves."⁷⁶ As much as this interpretation differs from Gombrich's, it likewise is rooted in the *écriture* of Warburg's unpublished writings: "That Warburg conceived of *Mnemosyne* topographically, beyond the montage of maps on the preliminary panel of the atlas, appears to be suggested in the enigmatic phrase, "iconology of the intervals," which he used in his journal of 1929. This iconology is based not on the meaning of his figures . . . but on the interrelationships between the figures in their complex, autonomous arrangement, which cannot be reduced to discourse."⁷⁷

Championing a Warburg who comes to disdain iconological "meaning," Michaud deciphers these *Zwischenräume* (intervals) by turning to cinematic techniques and film theory. But as his own book eloquently demonstrates, cinema is also a language. Again, whether the interpreter of Warburg's *Bilderatlas* looks for analogues in cinema, surrealist montage, or, say, in Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1962–2006), a "total art work" that constantly erases the borders between painting, photography, film, history, and autobiography, it is impossible to apprehend

72. This is quoted and discussed briefly in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 71.

73. Warburg, WIA, III.102.5.3, *Grisaille, Mantegna*, fol. 8.

74. Phillipe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

75. *Ibid.*, 260.

76. *Ibid.*, 257–260.

77. *Ibid.*, 252.

the ingenious scope of Warburg's epic project in visual memory if it is divorced from discursive sources and rhetorical tropes.⁷⁸

Prototypes and Test Runs

The genesis of the *Bilderreihe* method may be said to occur in the extraordinary presentation that Warburg gave on April 21, 1923, at the Kreuzlingen sanatorium, when he was still a patient there. Based on materials gathered on his trip to the American Southwest in 1896 to observe Hopi rituals, the Kreuzlingen talk was prompted by his need to prove to himself and his psychiatrist, Ludwig Binswanger, that he had sufficiently recovered his mental equilibrium to return to Hamburg and continue his scholarship. The talk, one might say, was a test of Warburg's sanity.

Suffering from depression and possibly schizophrenia, deeply disturbed by the irrationality of the Great War, leery of the possible chaos that would accompany a revolution, Warburg stayed in various sanatoriums from November 1918 to October 1920, before remaining for more than three years in Kreuzlingen under Binswanger's care.⁷⁹ As for the nonmedical causes of his breakdown, Warburg elliptically explains to his family around the same time he composes the talk on the Hopi: "Erkenntnis, Aufklärung, Gesetz im kulturgeschichtlichen Verlauf durch Einbeziehung der unvernünftigen Triebhaftigkeit in die Untersuchung des geschichtlichen Verlaufs war dann das Ziel meiner Arbeit. . . . *Per mo[n]stra ad astra*: Vor die Idee haben die Götter das Ungeheuer gesetzt. Der Krieg von 1914–1918 hatte mir in vernichtender Weise die Wahrheit entschleierte, dass der entfesselte elementare Mensch der unüberwindliche Herrscher dieser Welt ist." (The goal[s] of my work [were] then knowledge, enlightenment, [and the] law of cultural-historical development, through inclusion of the irrational drives in the investigation of historical development. . . . *Per mo[n]stra ad astra*: the gods have placed the monster on the path to the Idea. The 1914–1918 War had confronted me with the devastating truth that unchained, elemental man is this world's unconquerable ruler.)⁸⁰

Now, though, Warburg felt he could try again to reconcile the irrational forces of "primitive thought" with the Enlightenment ideals that might help him regain his mental equilibrium. As such, the Kreuzlingen talk was an exercise in (personal) memory as well as comparative and symbolic thought.⁸¹ With their ability to

78. See Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, ed. Helmut Friedel (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006), 17. On why Richter "invents another form of atlas-album" and how this "enables us to experience the very assemblage of *kinema*, to inhabit the filmic *emotion*," see Guiliiana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), 342.

79. See Warburg and Saxl, "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," 13, 39. Binswanger later endeavored to reconcile existential philosophy and psychotherapy.

80. Quoted in the introduction to *RPA*, 25, 67–68. The letter is dated 12/26/1923 (WIA, FC 1).

81. See Aby M. Warburg, *Schlangeritual: Ein Reisebericht*, ed. Ulrich Raulff (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1988); Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) (hereafter cited as *Images*).

join the sub- and superlunary realms through dance and visual art, and therefore to propitiate angry gods, the Hopis had shown Warburg the way to the "Idea," or how to accomplish the *translatio* "*Per mo[n]stra ad astra*" (or "*per monstra ad sphaeram*," as he phrases it in his 1925 lecture memorializing the life and work of his friend the historian of astrology and astronomy Franz Boll).⁸² While excusing his talk's provisional character, he thus does not hesitate to juxtapose his own psychological struggles and "the psychic life of the Indians": "The few weeks I have had at my disposal have not given me the chance to revive and work through my old memories in such a way that I might offer you a solid introduction into the psychic life of the Indians. . . . To us, this synchrony of fantastic magic and sober purposiveness appears as a symptom of a cleavage [Uns erscheint dieses Nebeneinander von fantastischer Magie und nüchternem Zwecktun als Symptom der Zerspaltung]; for the Indians this is not schitzoid but, rather, a liberating experience [ein befreiendes Erlebnis] of the boundless communicability between man and environment."⁸³

Accompanied by some forty-eight slides, many of which were photographs Warburg himself took of the Pueblo Indians, the text that has come to be called *Schlangenritual* remained unpublished, at his request, during his lifetime.⁸⁴ Rich in intratextual and intertextual associations, the manuscript begins with an epigraph, playing on the book-of-the-world metaphor: "Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern, / Athens-Oraibi, alles Vettern." (It is to leaf through an old book, / Athens-Oraibi, all cousins.) This couplet refashions verses from Goethe's *Faust II*—"Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern, / Vom Harz bis Hellas immer Vettern" (It is to leaf through an old book, / From Harz to Hellas always cousins)—verses that had served as the epigraph for Warburg's last and arguably most accomplished essay, "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten" (Pagan-Antique Prophecy in the Age of Luther). There he describes how the reemergence of Hellenistic astrological

82. See Warburg, "*Per monstra ad sphaeram*," 21–22.

83. Warburg, *Images*, 1–2; Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 10. Raulff comments: "[Warburg] hielt einen Vortrag über den Inbegriff des Schreckens selbst, die Schlange. Er machte das Symbol für die äußerste Bedrohung menschlicher Rationalität zum Prüfstein seiner eigenen Ratio" (Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 83).

84. Raulff's title follows that of W. F. Mainland, who loosely translated the text as "A Lecture on Serpent Ritual," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2.4 (1939): 277–292. Steinberg follows Warburg's own title, "Bilder aus dem Gebiet der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord-Amerika." He quotes Warburg as dismissively calling the talk "the gruesome convulsions of a decapitated frog," but as possibly having value "as a document in the history of symbolic practice" (Warburg, *Images*, vii). For further commentary, see Sigrid Weigel, "Aby Warburg's *Schlangenritual*: Reading Culture and Reading Written Texts," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 133–153; also Cora Bender, Thomas Hensel, and Erhard Schüttelpelz, eds., *Schlangenritual: Der Transfer der Wissensformen vom Tsu'ti'kive der Hopi bis zu Aby Warburgs Kreuzlinger Vortrag* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007). In addition to a more accurate German text of the Kreuzlingen talk, based on comparing various manuscripts and their many variations, two other texts, one from 1897, the other from 1923, associated with the "indianischer Reise" have been published in Aby Warburg, *Werke in einem Band: Auf der Grundlage der Manuskripte und Handexemplare*, ed. Martin Trempl, Sigrid Weigel, and Perdita Ladwig (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 508–523, 567–600.

thought during the German Reformation helped precipitate the destruction of the “Denkraum—zwischen Mensch und Objekt” (thought-space—between man and object).⁸⁵ But by now replacing “Harz” with “Oraibi,” the name of the Hopi pueblo in northern Arizona where he witnessed some of the rituals described in the talk, Warburg expands his nascent cultural-historical map of change and repetition, forging thereby another analogical-thematic link.⁸⁶ Thus even if, as David Freedberg argues, Warburg rashly ignores important aspects of Hopi culture, the larger, cross-cultural patterns he discovers (or invents) are undeniably striking.⁸⁷ Indeed, in perceiving Hopi magical practices as fueling the same universalism and “Nebeneinander” informing his readings of European cultural history, he did not need to travel back in time to observe “magic” in action. He needed only to effect a spatial *translatio*:

The synchrony [Nebeneinander] of logical civilization and fantastic, magical causation show the Pueblo Indians’ peculiar condition of hybridity and transition. They are clearly no longer primitive, merely tactile humans [Sie sind keine wirklich primitiven Greifmenschen mehr], for whom no action directed toward the future can exist; but neither are they technologically secure Europeans, for whom future events are expected to be organically or mechanically determined. They stand in between [in der Mitte] magic and logos, and their instrument of orientation is the symbol. Between a culture of touch and a culture of thought is the culture of symbolic connection [Zwischen Greifmenschen und Denkmenschen steht der symbolisch verknüpfende Mensch]. And for this stage of symbolic thought and conduct, the dances of the Pueblo Indians are exemplary.⁸⁸

As a *Kulturwissenschaftler* or, less charitably, an intellectual tourist, Warburg—though aware of recent anthropologic-ethnographic research on the Hopis and keen to learn the native languages—quickly, too quickly, proceeds to interpret this “Mitte.” Along the way, he discovers in Hopi ritual significant analogues of cultural practices in preclassical Greece, medieval Germany, and his own technological age. The Hopis danced with live serpents to cause rain and lightning, the latter symbolically depicted on their pottery as serpents descending from the clouds.⁸⁹ This

85. Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Horst Bredekamp and Michael Diers (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), I.2:487–558; RPA, 597–698.

86. Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 9.

87. See David Freedberg, “Pathos a Oraibi: Ciò che Warburg non vide,” in *Lo Sguardo di Giano: Aby Warburg fra tempo e memoria*, ed. Claudia Cieri Via and Pietro Montani (Turin: Nino Aragno, 2004), 569–611. See Steinberg, who describes Warburg as participating in “two directions of modern cultural anthropology” (Warburg, *Images*, 60–61).

88. Warburg, *Images*, 17 (translation modified); Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 25.

89. Curiously, Warburg himself does not witness the snake dance but asks his auditors to accept “a few photographs” as evidence for his conclusions (*Images*, 35).

resembles, Warburg tells us, abruptly returning to more familiar imagery if more remote times, the “orgiastic cult of Dionysius,” as well as the serpentine images of the Laocoön sculpture, a “symbol of ancient suffering” and indicative of “the hopeless, tragic pessimism of antiquity.”⁹⁰ But just as the Hopis with their dances and imagery manage to find formal, artistic solutions to mediate the literal and chthonic dangers of the rattlesnake, the classical Greeks achieve a “humane, transfigured beauty” with the figure of Asclepius, who serenely “carries a serpent coiling around his healing staff as a symbol” of immortality.⁹¹

The Kreuzlingen talk insists, too, that this process of transfiguration and, for that matter, the interpretation of this process can never be completed; instead, they form what Warburg dubs “ein Passionsweg” (a path of suffering).⁹² Immediately after sounding this agonistic note, he turns in the talk’s closing section to an image of Asclepius standing atop a scorpion from a thirteenth-century Spanish astrological calendar and regrets how “the cosmological imagination . . . has completely deprived him of the real.” Translated now into the zodiac, the figure of Asclepius becomes “a mathematical border sign and a fetish bearer,” emblemizing how in “ancient astrology mathematics and magic neatly converge.” In this respect, Asclepius resembles the fate of the snake-figure, a fate that, as we shall see, is also “exemplary” of the dynamics of cultural and historical change animating the *Atlas*:

The serpent figure in the heavens . . . is used as a mathematical outline [wird zur mathematischen Umfangsbestimmung gebraucht]; the points of luminosity are linked together by way of an earthly image, in order to render comprehensible the infinity [die Unendlichkeit] we cannot comprehend at all without some such outline [Umfang] of orientation. . . . The evolution of culture toward the age of reason is marked in the same measure as the tangible, coarse texture of life fades into mathematical abstraction [wie sich eben die greifbare derbe Lebensfülle zum mathematischen Zeichen entfärbt].⁹³

Here the key notion of “Umfangsbestimmung” (determination of contour or scope) is tied directly to mathematical thinking’s development. To compass or to sketch the contour (*Umfang*) of a thing is to find the necessary means of mediating via abstract figures between self and “infinity.”⁹⁴ It also marks the phase in

90. Warburg, *Images*, 38–39.

91. *Ibid.*, 42.

92. In *Mnemosyne als Programm: Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Andacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987), Roland Kany cites Warburg’s *Ringbuchblatt* from 4/18/1923: “Der Weg zum Logos ist für alle Erdenbewohner ein Passionsweg” (160). Still, Kany interprets Warburg’s thought as ultimately progressing from myth toward reason (162).

93. Warburg, *Images*, 44 (translation modified); Warburg, *Schlangeritual*, 50.

94. See Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 151, on *Umfangsbestimmung*, its classificatory function, and its constitutive role in forming the symbol.

all cultures, Warburg suggests, when rational thought is able to transform experience's messy multiplicity, or "die greifbare derbe Lebensfülle," into signs. Yet for all this transformation's salutary consequences, something vital is lost, be it the color of experience or the unalloyed brilliance of the stars. Because its connections with sensuous experience have been constricted, the serpent becomes increasingly hieroglyphic, even as its astronomical content becomes available to mathematics. Still, when untethered from specific cultural contexts, the serpent becomes more pliable for Warburg's associative thinking. With the aid of sundry images (which were shown as slides), he ponders another dizzying metonymic sequence: first, his surprise discovery in a Protestant church in northern Germany of an image of Moses commanding the Israelites in the desert to erect a brazen serpent idol to protect them from snakebites reminds him of Laocoön and Asclepius, even as it shows the "indestructibility of the memory of the serpent cult"; second, how "the serpent on the tree in Paradise" dominates biblical notions of sin and redemption; and, third, how "the image of serpent devotion becomes paradigmatic in typological representations for the Crucifixion itself."⁹⁵ Such metonymy and typology thus eventually yield a rather optimistic (if eventually untenable) theory of the symbol and historical change: "If religion signifies bonding, then the symptom of evolution away from this primal state is the spiritualization of the bond between humans and alien beings, so that man no longer identifies directly with the masked symbol but, rather, generates that bond through thought alone, progressing to a systematic linguistic mythology. The will to devotional zeal is an embodied form of the donning of a mask. In the process that we call cultural progress, the being exacting this devotion gradually loses its monstrous concreteness, and, in the end, becomes a spiritualized, invisible symbol."⁹⁶

While the notion that the cultivation of visual symbols will eventually produce "a systematic linguistic mythology" resembles one of the chief claims of Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms, Warburg specifies here another philosophical frame. In stating that the "serpent deserves its own chapter in the philosophy of 'as if,'" he alludes to Hans Vaihinger's *Philosophie des Als Ob* (1911), which exerted significant philosophical influence on his embryonic, evolving metaphorology (one distinct from that of the usual suspects, Vischer, Vignoli, and Usener).⁹⁷ Humanity, Warburg insists pace Vaihinger, is ultimately unable to bear the *Unmittelbarkeit* (immediacy) of its relations with nature. We require the mediation of symbols with their *Umfangsbestimmung*, even though over time such symbols repeatedly verge toward

95. Warburg, *Images*, 44–48.

96. *Ibid.*, 48–49.

97. *Ibid.*, 50. In *Philosophie des Als Ob* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1911), the neo-Kantian Vaihinger develops his "principle of fictionalism," which argues that since we can never truly know the world's underlying reality, humans methodically, necessarily, construct systems of thought that try to correspond with our perception of reality. We think and write, therefore, "as if" these schemas or models actually matched the world. In practice, such models permit the progress and success of science.

the other extreme of sterile abstraction.⁹⁸ Consequently, the teleological optimism of Warburg's symbol theory is fragile, easily undermined—especially by his own train of thoughts. While he claims in one breath that “replacement of mythological causation by the technological removes the fears felt by primitive humanity,” thus explaining how the serpent ritual is meant to protect against lightning, in the next he adds: “Whether this liberation from the mythological world view is of genuine help in providing adequate answers to the enigmas of existence is quite another matter.”⁹⁹

Such ambiguity is pointedly reflected in Warburg's account of a curious experiment conducted with Hopi children using the German fairy tale “Hans-Guck-in-die-Luft” (Hans-Gape-at-the-Sky). After telling the children the fable, a teacher (prompted by Warburg) handed out pencil and paper and asked them to draw lightning, whereupon two out of the fourteen children rendered it not “realistically” but “as the indestructible symbol of the arrow-tongued serpent.” This universal persistence of the symbolic clearly pleases Warburg even as he pleads: “We, however, do not want our imagination to fall under the spell of the serpent image, which leads to the primitive beings of the underworld.”¹⁰⁰ Instead of welcoming a *katabasis*, he echoes Plato and urges humanity to emerge from the cave. Indeed, insofar as all symbols are necessarily imperfect and so demand to be recollected, if they are to provide access to more lasting truths, Warburg belongs to the same Neoplatonic tradition as Poliziano, Botticelli, and the other late quattrocento figures he so admired.

All the more startling, then, is how the talk's last paragraphs scuttle the idea(l) of progress. Musing on some lines by Goethe, Warburg first argues that our ability to see and thus to know is grounded in our common, sensuous relation to nature.¹⁰¹ Then he swiftly adumbrates the universal, historical development of all cultures from a “sense-based interaction to its transcendence,” that is, “von triebhaft-magischer Annäherung zur vergeistigenden Distanzierung” (from instinctual, magical rapprochement to a spiritualized distantiation).¹⁰² But as soon as this “Distanzierung” occurs, a process that Warburg will later explicitly associate with the dynamism of metaphor, it quickly vanishes. Turning to a photograph he took in San Francisco of an old man with a beard and top hat, who is walking past an electric pole and a neoclassical building, he wittily remarks about this “Uncle Sam”: “Above his top hat runs an electric wire. In this copper serpent of Edison's,

98. See Warburg, *Images*, 49.

99. Warburg, *Images*, 50.

100. *Ibid.*, 51.

101. “Heraufbringen zum Licht ist die Aufgabe nicht bloß der amerikanischen Schule, sondern der Menschheit überhaupt” (Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 57). The Goethe citation is “Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft / Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken.” (From *Xenien*; the verse continues: “Läg nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft, / Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken?”)

102. Warburg, *Images*, 52–53 (translation modified); Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 57.

he has wrested lightning from nature.”¹⁰³ Here, anticipating the method of the *Atlas*, an intuitive leap and a metonymic image effectively replace a (sustained) discursive argument.

We also see here, as we shall see again with the *Atlas*, how the loss of the “Denkraum” is Warburg’s greatest fear. The Kreuzlingen talk concludes:

Natural forces are no longer seen in anthropomorphic or biomorphic guise [Umfang], but rather as infinite waves obedient to the human touch. With these waves, the culture of the machine age destroys what the natural sciences, born of myth, so arduously achieved: the space for devotion, which evolved in turn into the space required for reflection [den Andachtsraum, der sich in den Denkraum verwandelte].

The modern Prometheus and the modern Icarus, Franklin and Wright brothers, who invented the dirigible airplane, are precisely those ominous destroyers of the sense of distance [jene verhängnisvollen Ferngefühl-Zerstörer], who threaten to lead the planet back into chaos.

Telegram and telephone destroy the cosmos. Mythical and symbolic thinking battle to form spiritual bonds between humanity and the surrounding world, shaping distance into the space required for devotion and reflection: the distance killed by the instantaneous electric connection [Das mythische und das symbolische Denken schaffen im Kampf um die vergeistigte Anknüpfung zwischen Mensch und Umwelt den Raum als Andachtsraum oder Denkraum, den die elektrische Augenblicksverknüpfung mordet].¹⁰⁴

A potent mix of cultural criticism, anthropology, iconology, and intellectual history, this passage diagnoses a period in Western culture that succeeds the efforts of Kepler and Bruno, with their “natural sciences, born of myth.” Technology and its American avatars are cast as “jene verhängnisvollen Ferngefühl-Zerstörer,” for they abolish symbolic mediation as well as that afforded by time and space. “Die vergeistigte Anknüpfung” becomes a lethal “Augenblicksverknüpfung.” Once abstracted and made into “infinite waves,” nature no longer affords an “Andachtsraum oder Denkraum.”¹⁰⁵ For the “cosmos” (in ancient Greek, *cosmos* could mean simply “order”) becomes “chaos” when speed is valued over the “spiritual bonds between humanity and the surrounding world.”

103. Warburg, *Images*, 53. Steinberg comments: “The synchrony, or at least the ambiguity, of magic and technology stand in for the ambiguity of paganism and rationality. This ambiguity holds within an individual cultural context (the Hopi, Sassetti’s Florence, Luther’s Reformation) as well as comparatively” (ibid., 100).

104. Warburg, *Images*, 54 (translation modified); Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 59.

105. Steinberg (Warburg, *Images*, 68–69) cites “Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten” where Warburg promotes the “Denkraum der Besonnenheit” as the Renaissance’s epistemological ideal. In “Luther’s Birthday: Aby Warburg, Albrecht Dürer, and Early Modern Media in the Age of Modern War,” *Daphnis* 37.1–2 (2008): 79–110, Jane O. Newman shows how Warburg’s historical research is colored by his despair about World War I.

In this last respect, Warburg anticipates the “shock” accompanying Benjamin’s “dialectical image,” even as he indulges in a certain nostalgia for a time and place when mediation between self and world was the task of art.¹⁰⁶ His study of the Hopis (like his later witnessing of Mussolini’s rise, during his last sojourn in Italy) teaches Warburg that the psychological and symbolic *Distanz* between himself and the demonic or magical was at once real, unstable, and recursive. In the Kreuzlingen talk he seems to discover that the polarity of magic and technology parallels that of paganism and rationality. Rather than promising “progress,” modernity and technology here endanger symbolic thought. If we recall, then, the zeppelins in panel C of the *Atlas*, it becomes clear just how “ominous” these images are meant to be, especially the last one, in which the skyscraper usurps the sky while the “dirigible airplane” threatens those on the ground.¹⁰⁷ For all their nostalgia, these images are also prophetic, as the bombings of Guernica, London, Dresden, and Hiroshima will confirm.

Interpreting the *Schlangenritual* manuscript, Michael Steinberg offers first a metaphor, then a question: “The serpent is Warburg. The serpent is the site of the uncanny and the ambiguous. It is transmitted through Western culture, through the Hebrew and Christian Bibles and Greek mythology into the syncretism of medieval and early modern manifestations through the rationalizations of modernity. The road to Enlightenment deepens the uncanny and the ambiguous. . . . Must the visual image itself be reclaimed from the censorship of Lessing, restored from the claim of sophrosyne to the shock of Virgil’s words?”¹⁰⁸ In fact, in the *Atlas*, Warburg subtly turns several times (in panels 6, 41, and 44) to visual representations (as sculpture, painting, engraving, and manuscript illustration) of the Laocoön scene in the *Aeneid* to show “the shock of Virgil’s words.” Yet even as we perceive in these panels the historical *translatio* of this pathos formula, we look forward to panel 61–64 (fig. 15), “Neptun als dienender ‘servierender Gott.’ Quos ego tandem. ‘Virgil’” (Neptune as a conducting, “serving God.” Whom I now. “Virgil”), which is dedicated to images, most notably by Rubens, showing how the maritime god acts to moderate nature’s fury against humanity.¹⁰⁹ Unable to protect his priest from Minerva’s fury, Neptune now defends his charges, the exiled Trojans, from a vio-

106. See Steinberg’s remarks in Warburg, *Images*, 98.

107. Compare this with Warburg’s brief essay “Airship and Submarine in the Medieval Imagination” (1913), in *RPA*, 333–338.

108. Warburg, *Images*, 102.

109. The Virgil tag, which Warburg misquotes, comes from the episode in which Neptune, realizing that his favorite, Aeneas, is endangered by a storm at sea fomented by Juno’s wrath, addresses the winds: “Tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri? / iam caelum terramque meo sine numine, venti, / miscere et tantas audetis tollere moles? Quos ego—! sed motos praestat componere fluctus.” (Does trust in your birth move you so? Winds, do you dare now to mix earth with sky without my say, to raise such heights? Whom I—but it is better first to calm the moving waves! *Aen.* 1.132–135.) Here the pathos in the *Pathosformel* is neatly emblemized by the rhetorical figure of aposiopesis, or when one stops in mid-sentence to express wonder, outrage, etc.

lent storm, thus exemplifying the ambiguities inherent in any attempt to mediate nature's forces.

More to the point, already in the Kreuzlingen talk, Warburg plots an intertextual path toward a vision of metaphor as the chief vehicle for expressing the “uncanny and ambiguous.” Discussing one of the Hopi dances, Warburg observes: “Anyone familiar with ancient tragedy will see here the duality of tragic chorus and satyr play, ‘grafted onto a single stem.’”¹¹⁰ The quoted phrase comes from Jean Paul’s *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804), a literary-philosophical attempt to reconcile classical and romantic poetics, via lengthy reflections on irony and wit (*Witz*).¹¹¹ This is no tangential gesture for Warburg, for three years earlier he made Jean Paul’s thoughts on metaphor the conceptual linchpin of his essay on Luther and astrology. There Warburg charts for the first time the ahistorical “polarity” that will shape much of his later thought:

Logik, die den *Denkraum*—zwischen Mensch und Objekt—durch begrifflich *sondernde Bezeichnung schafft*, und *Magie*, die eben diesen *Denkraum* durch abergläubisch *zusammenziehende*—ideelle oder praktische—*Verknüpfung* vom Mensch und Objekt wieder *zerstört*, beobachten wir im weissagenden Denken der Astrologie noch als einheitlich primitives Gerät, mit dem der Astrologe messen und zugleich zaubern kann. Die Epoche, wo Logik und Magie wie Tropus und Metapher (nach den Worten Jean Pauls) “auf einem Stamme geimpfet blühten,” ist eigentlich zeitlos, und in der kulturwissenschaftlichen Darstellung solcher Polarität liegen bisher ungehobene Erkenntniswerte zu einer vertieften positiven Kritik einer Geschichtsschreibung, deren Entwicklungslehre rein zeitbegrifflich bedingt ist.

Logic, which *creates* the *thought-space*—between man and object—by a conceptually *special designation*, and *Magic*, which *destroys* again this very *thought-space* through a superstitious—theoretical or practical—association between man and object, these we observe in the divinatory thought of astrology as a single, primitive tool with which the astrologer can at once measure and work magic. That age when logic and magic like trope and metaphor (according to the words of Jean Paul) “blossomed grafted to a single stem,” is actually timeless, and in the cultural-scientific representation of such polarity lies hitherto debased epistemological values for a more profoundly positive critique of a historiography whose theory of development is conceived merely in temporal terms.¹¹²

110. Warburg, *Images*, 34.

111. There Jean Paul writes that he “will den Witz durch das Finden der Ähnlichkeiten ganz von dem Scharfsinne, als dem Finder der Unähnlichkeiten, wegstellen.” Paul, *Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1959–1963), 5:170.

112. Warburg, “Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten,” GS, I.2:491–492; Warburg, “Pagan-Antique Prophecy in Words and Images in the Age of Luther,” *RPA*, 599 (translation modified).

In rejecting both positivist and historicist approaches to "Geschichtsschreibung," Warburg aims to make visible "hitherto debased epistemological values," even if those values threaten the viability of his prized *Denkraum*. If magic threatens to destroy the logical space where humanity finds mediation between itself and the world, then at least he can say that this destruction is part of a "timeless" dialectic, one that is not limited, the Kreuzlingen talk insists, to occidental culture. The means or "tool" of this destruction, as the full entry by Jean Paul (which Warburg cites in a footnote) makes manifest, is a particular species of visual metaphor:

Doppelzweig des Bildlichen Witzes

Der bildliche Witz kann entweder den Körper beseelen, oder den Geist verkörpern.

Ursprünglich, wo der Mensch noch mit der Welt auf einem Stamme geimpfet blühte, war dieser Doppel-Tropus noch keiner; jener verglich nicht Unähnlichkeiten, sondern verkündigte Gleichheit; die Metaphern waren, wie bei Kindern, nur abgedrungene Synonymen des Leibes und Geistes. Wie im Schreiben Bilderschrift früher war als Buchstabenschrift, so war im Sprechen die Metapher, sofern sie Verhältnisse und nicht Gegenstände bezeichnet, das frühere Wort, welches sich erst allmählich zum eigentlichen Ausdruck entfärben mußte. Das tropische Beseelen und Beleiben fiel noch in Eins zusammen, weil noch Ich und Welt verschmolz. Daher ist jede Sprache in Rücksicht geistiger Beziehungen ein Wörterbuch erblasseter Metaphern.

Dichotomy of Visual Wit

Pictorial wit can either spiritualize the body, or corporealize the spirit.

Originally, where man with the world still blossomed grafted to a single stem, this double-trope was still none at all; man did not compare dissimilar things but rather proclaimed identity; metaphors were, as is the case with children, merely forcibly displaced synonyms of bodies and minds. As in writing, ideograms came before letters, so metaphor, in so far as it designated relations and not objects, was the earliest word, which gradually had to be made into a proper, colorless expression. Tropological ensoulment and embodiment still coincided as one, because self and world still coalesced. Thus every language is, in view of mental-spiritual relations, a dictionary of faded metaphors.¹¹³

Ideally, "pictorial wit," with its marvelous, chiasmic effect on body and mind (*Geist*), maintains "Unähnlichkeiten" (dissimilarities), thereby preserving the *Denkraum*'s viability. But in Jean Paul's tale of origins this wit takes the form of fluid

113. GS, I.2:491–492.

metaphors that establish relations but not fixed boundaries, or what Warburg will call the *Umfänge* (contours) between things, or between self and world. Metaphor making is at once the foundational conceptual and spiritual act in the evolution of human “expression.” And Warburg, as a latecomer determined to read the “Wörterbuch erblasseter Metaphern,” whether written in the American Southwest, Reformation Germany, or Renaissance Florence, tries always to recall this slippage between body and *Geist*, between “ideogram” (or image) and “alphabet” (or discourse). Indeed, arguably the greatest epistemological value of his *Bilderreihen* is how they make this “dictionary” visible again even while they help him manipulate the *Denkraum* where contemplation of historical change and conceptual polarity may take place.

Starting with a *Theoriefragment*, begun in 1896, through to the *Tagebuch* entries made during his last months, Warburg faithfully returns to Jean Paul’s metaphor of the grafted tree to help him make sense of metaphor’s persistent dynamism. Tellingly, the former, known as *Symbolismus aufgefaßt als primäre Umfangsbestimmung*, even contains a diagram of Jean Paul’s tree.¹¹⁴ Interpreting this text in light of Warburg’s larger œuvre, Cornelia Zumbusch sees the “Pendelbewegung” between the two terms *trope* and *metaphor* as constitutive.¹¹⁵ *Metaphor*, she affirms, coincides with *Magie* and *Dynamik*, while *trope* equals *Logik* and *Statik*.¹¹⁶ Above all, Zumbusch focuses on the role the symbol assumes in Warburg’s thinking as the cardinal form of perception mediating between the senses and ideas.¹¹⁷ I wonder, however, if this reading does not freeze the development, such as it is, of Warburg’s thinking at too early a stage in his intellectual career. As we already saw and shall see again presently, metaphor, just like the more logical “trope,” can furnish “differences,” “distance,” and thus also the analytic distinctions and perspectives necessary to make sense of those periods in human history when “relations” between humans and their immediate environment were paramount. In short, a crucial question remains: if the symbol is essentially a *Prozess*, then what is the “process” inherent in metaphor and, specifically, the “process” by which Warburg in his late thinking begins to embrace metaphor over symbol?

Upon Warburg’s return from Kreuzlingen in 1924, Saxl, drawing on a technique he had experimented with years earlier, presented Warburg with “a photographic exhibition on screens displaying the material of his past research” as a

114. Warburg, WIA, III.45.1.2.1, *Symbolismus aufgefaßt als primäre Umfangsbestimmung*. The text runs almost forty folio pages. A transcription appears in Frauke Berndt and Heinz J. Drügh, eds., *Symbol: Grundlagentexte aus Ästhetik, Poetik und Kulturwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 75–91. All quotations are from this edition.

115. Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 243–244; see also 253–254.

116. Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 244. She subsequently links Jean Paul’s image with Kant’s two “Vermögen Sinnlichkeit und Verstand” (faculties of sense and understanding).

117. See Zumbusch’s discussion of Warburg’s treatment of the symbol as “Prozeß” in the *Symbolismus* text (*Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 238).

way of encouraging him to resume his labors.¹¹⁸ While this seems to have planted the seed for what would eventually become the *Mnemosyne* project, more concrete insights into the methods, aims, and themes animating *Mnemosyne* can be gleaned from documentary evidence belonging to *Bilderreihen* that Warburg (usually with Saxl's help) devised for his lectures and for exhibitions mounted by the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (hereafter K.B.W. or the Library). Because these first *Bilderreihen* tend to draw on the same paradigmatic material explored in Warburg's essays, notebooks, seminars, and ultimately the *Bilderatlas*, by attending to them we learn to read and interpret his visual syntax.

At the same time as the initial work on the *Atlas*, in 1927 Warburg and Saxl planned a *Bilderreihe* for an exhibit on astrology that was to take place in Hamburg's remarkable Wasserturm, which was also to be the future home of the city's planetarium.¹¹⁹ Warburg placed great importance on the project, as he hoped that it would present to the general public his and Saxl's vision of how contemporary astronomy, and so the scientific worldview more generally, were grounded in the transformations of astrological worldviews that began in Greek antiquity, then migrated to places like Babylon and Egypt, and finally reached their moment of crisis and resolution in the late Renaissance with figures like Kepler and Bruno. To promote the effectiveness of the *Bilderreihe* technique, Warburg even traveled to Scharbeutz to meet with Albert Einstein, who sat on the board of the Hanover Planetarium. According to Warburg's account of the meeting, Einstein was quite impressed, especially with the material concerning magic and astrology. As Dorothea McEwan relates in her edition of the Warburg-Saxl correspondence, "That the mathematician was convinced of the meaning of the image-series, and that he found them 'instantly enlightening' [zur "Augenblicksaufklärung"] in a self-evident manner, not only delighted Warburg, but it was proof to him that his ideas would be a smashing success [von durchschlagender Wirkung]."¹²⁰ Gaining confidence that this method of presenting ideas could

118. Gombrich, "Warburg Centenary Lecture," in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects*, ed. Richard Woodfield (Amsterdam: OPA, 2001), 50.

119. But it was only in April 1930, after Warburg's death, that the exhibition was installed in the Wasserturm, with its neoclassical portico and commanding tower. Six panels remain from the exhibit, including one entitled *Christianisierung des Sternglaubens*. See Warburg and Saxl, "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," 77–79, 115–116, 233; also Uwe Fleckner et al., eds., *Aby M. Warburg: Bildersammlung zur Geschichte von Sternglaube und Sternkunde im Hamburger Planetarium* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1993).

120. Warburg and Saxl, "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," 78. See GS, VII:342, where Warburg quotes from a laudatory letter by Einstein, who remarks about people's credulity about astrological motifs. For a fascinating account of Warburg's visit to Einstein in the context of a larger discussion of Galileo's aesthetics and Kepler's promotion of elliptical planetary orbits, see Horst Bredekamp, "Gazing Hands and Blind Spots: Galileo as Draftsman," in *Galileo in Context*, ed. Jürgen Renn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 153–192. Bredekamp recounts how Einstein, while delighted by Warburg's pictures and presentation, balked at the aesthetic and astrological significance of the Keplerian ellipse (185). See also Bredekamp, "'4 Stunden Fahrt: 4 Stunden Rede'; Aby Warburg besucht Albert Einstein," in *Einstein on the Beach: Der Physiker als Phänomen*, ed. Michael Hagner (Frankfurt am Main: FTV, 2005), 165–182.

persuade spectators not steeped in the same arcane materials as the researchers at the K.B.W., Warburg pressed ahead with the Planetarium project despite bureaucratic foot-dragging.

Another *Bilderreihe*, which compared the medieval and Renaissance reception of Ovidian representations of the gods, accompanied a 1927 exhibition at the K.B.W., inaugurated with a lecture by Max Dietmar Henkel.¹²¹ Here, characteristically, Warburg invidiously juxtaposed versions of *Ovid moralis  e* with later versions of divine metamorphoses in which the mythological tradition's more pathos-laden aspects are expressed within the formal language of gesture imitated from classical art. These panels were given simple, thematic titles such as "Lament" or "Triumph," and there was an attempt to identify most of the images as well as the editions of Ovid and related intertexts, which had been taken from the Library, opened to the relevant pages, and then displayed at the foot of the panels.¹²² In this manner, literary and literary-critical materials immediately supplemented the purely visual *Geb  rdensprache* depicted in the panels. The Ovid exhibition underscores, too, the crucial role poetry plays in Warburg's vision of the intersection of the arts. Indeed, his fascination with Ovid persists in the *Atlas*, where, for example, in the *Einleitung*, playing with the metaphors of ascent and descent, he compares the *raptus in caelum* discernible in Hellenistic symbols for the constellations with "Ovidian fables that transform humans back into *hyle* and figure [versinnbildlichen] the *raptus ad inferos*."¹²³ Yet such metamorphoses, for all their dynamism, also signal the potential dangers of eschewing the *Mitte* (the middle or mean), and therefore are seen as threatening the attainment of *Besonnenheit*, or what Warburg reaching back to Plato glosses as *sophrosyne*.¹²⁴ This, notwithstanding the fact, as we saw in his interpretation of Jean Paul, that without such transformation the metaphoric *Denkraum* so prized by Warburg could not be constituted in the first place, no matter how unstable or ephemeral it might ultimately prove.

At about the same time as the Ovid exhibition was mounted, Warburg writes in a notebook: "Ovid-Vergil das—durch den Text seelendramatisch erf  llte Dynamogramm = Pathosformel." (Ovid-Virgil: the dynamogram = pathos formula that, through the text, is filled up with the soul's drama.)¹²⁵ Here the written word, as exemplified by the poet of transformations and the ambivalent *vates* of empire, confirms the universality of the *Pathosformeln*, that they are not just expressions limited to the visual arts, and that metamorphosis and temporal *translatio* are integral to

121. See Warburg, "Editorische Vorbemerkungen," *GS*, II.1:vii nn. 3–4, for details about the Ovid *Bilderreihe*.

122. See *GS*, II.1:xi.

123. *GS*, II.1:5. For more on *raptus*, see also *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 53. Ovid is the chief intertext for panels 33 and 35 of the *Atlas*.

124. In *Aby Warburg*, 253, Gombrich suggests a connection between metaphor and the search for a *Mitte*.

125. *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 21.

the “process” of metaphor insofar as it tames monsters and reconciles the human and divine.

Likewise, early in 1929, Warburg reworks a favorite motto to signal metaphor's broad, instrumental role: “Per monstra ad sphaeram. . . . Vom monströsen mythologischen Phobos zur über unhuman(istisch)en Tragik zur metaphorischen Distanz. . . . Metamorphose—Metempsychose—das “wie” der metaphorischen Distanz.” (*Per monstra ad sphaeram*. . . . From monstrous, mythological phobos to super-unhuman(istic) tragedy to metaphoric distance. . . . metamorphosis—metempsychosis—the “how” of metaphoric distance.)¹²⁶ Here the phrase “das ‘wie’ der metaphorischen Distanz” (and, as we shall see below, its cognate, “das *Wie* der Metapher”) is crucial to an understanding of Warburg's notion of metaphor and, more generally, the method and aims of the *Atlas*. And though I am translating *wie* as “how” here to stress the instrumental aspect of metaphor inasmuch as it suggests an implicit comparison, it could also be rendered more figuratively as “way”—thus “the ‘way’ of metaphoric distance.” At once the means and the object of Warburg's critical project, “das ‘wie’ der metaphorischen Distanz” is the fruit of a dialectical journey that begins with the experience of monstrosity, then contemplates the solutions offered by Apollonian tragedy, but finally settles for the process of transformation itself as the locus of meaning. In casting here Ovidian “metamorphosis” and Pythagorean “metempsychosis” as equivalents to the achievement of “metaphoric distance,” Warburg indicates two cardinal, fateful historical models for his own method of straddling the old and new, the familiar and strange.

126. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 59.

AD OCULOS: WAYS OF SEEING, READING, AND COLLECTING

The Rhetoric of Italian Renaissance Painting

The eclecticism encountered in the previous chapter—the history of cosmology, Hopi ritual, Ovidian metamorphosis, and so on—would seem to discourage any attempt to tie Warburg to a single period or method. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for doing so. Warburg roots his *Kulturwissenschaft* in the Renaissance. And it is in the Renaissance, but especially late quattrocento Florence, that he discerns most clearly the ability to create metaphoric distance, an ability he would exercise in every intellectual arena he enters.

In this respect, Warburg has numerous allies, as metaphor was central to humanist hermeneutics. Contemplating *De laboribus Herculis* (On the Labors of Hercules), a poetics by the Florentine humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), Ernesto Grassi stresses the poet's unrivaled power to find (*invenire*) and to interpret similitudes (*similitudines*) that make sense of the historicity of being.¹ Not just the “very essence of poetic language,” metaphor is the means by which Salutati charts a humanist *scientia* (knowledge) able to skirt the pitfalls of abstract idealism and systematic philosophy. “Each work,” Grassi writes, “becomes thus a metaphor of

1. Ernesto Grassi, *The Primordial Metaphor*, trans. Laura Pietropaolo and Manuela Scarci (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies in Collaboration with the Italian Academy, 1994), 11.

the urgent appeal of originary reality, which we can identify only through the passionate experience of the Muse, characteristic of an essentially humanist tradition, and not by virtue of the *ratio*.”²

By attending in this manner to the rhetorical philosophy of Italian humanists such as Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, Grassi also reanimates Giambattista Vico's eighteenth-century critique of Cartesian metaphysics and method.³ A belated fruit of Renaissance humanism, Vico's *New Science* (1725) conceives of primitive humanity as having an instinctive “poetic wisdom” that evolves through the use of metaphors, symbols, and myths to more abstract, analytical forms of thought. Metaphoric language can thus be said to construct how we come to see the world and ourselves. The true (*verum*) and the made (*factum*) are interchangeable for Vico.⁴ As such, he urges philosophy to study how languages evolve in different cultures that we might understand how notions of truth may also differ. In brief, metaphor for Vico and Viconians like Grassi is the originary act of signification and interpretation. It finds *similitudines* in phenomenal difference. It precedes conceptual thought and indeed forms the very basis for concept formation.

Because of the way it draws on the multiplicity of things and the rich semantic heritage of words, metaphor confirms that we are linguistic, historical, and thoroughly contingent beings. This is why Grassi insists that his teacher Heidegger's notion of truth as “unconcealment” (*aletheia*) should be historically grounded in the classical and Renaissance art of rhetoric. More particularly, hermeneutics should be rooted in metaphorology: “The metaphor is . . . the original form of the interpretative act itself, which raises itself from the particular to the general through representation in an image, but, of course, always with regard to its importance for human beings.”⁵ By emphasizing how human *ingenium* (“wit,” but also, more generally, the “faculty of invention”) mines language to find a metaphoric “representation in an image” that might lead readers to contemplate more “general” truths, Grassi revisits questions that vexed Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and their Renaissance descendants. He traces, that is, a genealogy of Renaissance humanist rhetorical philosophy, which, he contends, ought to be contemporary philosophy's genealogy as well. Thus, for instance, in discussing how and why the Florentine philologist, philosopher, and poet Angelo Poliziano (1454–94) rejects “Plato as the representative of the primacy of a priori thought” in favor of “the view that wisdom [sapientia] comes from the use of things,” he stresses how rhetoric that would lead

2. Grassi, *Primordial Metaphor*, 14.

3. Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, trans. Timothy W. Crusius (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).

4. First formulated in *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia* (1710), the *verum-factum* principle (“verum et factum convertuntur”) informs Vico's masterwork, the *Scienza Nuova*, where philology compasses the *certum*, and philosophy the *verum*.

5. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, 7.

to philosophic insight depends on the “primacy of historical thought.”⁶ Conversely, noting how German idealism, as exemplified by Hegel, dismisses metaphor’s “philosophical importance,” Grassi decries how the sensuous, particular, immediate, but also historical aspects of reality are devalued. To remedy this, he traces a counter-tradition privileging the metaphoric image. While this tradition may well begin with Cicero, its most refined expression occurs, Grassi argues, in quattrocento Italian culture—where Giotto’s successors fervently imitate and outdo classical models in their attempts to depict the human form, its gestures, and its movements.

Warburg also makes Poliziano an exemplary figure: beginning with his dissertation on Botticelli, where he ponders how Poliziano’s humanist verse informs the depiction of human figures in paintings such as *Primavera*, up to his last attempts to interpret Ghirlandaio’s frescoes in *Mnemosyne*, where Ghirlandaio’s portrait of Poliziano is one of many signposted instances of “Selbst-Gefühl” (self-awareness). Poliziano, in short, furnishes Warburg with symbolic details even as he himself is transformed into something of a symbol, one of numerous combinatory elements in Warburg’s larger comparatist vision of Renaissance expression, a vision that aspires to be a belated form of humanism conceived as a *Kulturwissenschaft*.

“Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail.” (God hides in the details.) As Warburg’s most memorable motto, regrettably, this phrase has often been used as something of a blunt instrument to interpret all his œuvre.⁷ Indeed, though he continued to find divinity or, as Erwin Panofsky will put it, “symbolic values” in details during his last years, the motto in fact describes more accurately his earlier iconological method than how the *Bilderreihe* technique enables him to find larger, synchronic, ultimately ethical patterns of meaning.⁸ Briefly put, Warburg’s famous *Denksprach* signals more a theory of the symbol than a theory of metaphor.⁹ This will become evident if we first consider some of his earlier texts on Ghirlandaio and Botticelli. By proceeding in this way, not only will the ground be better prepared for a close interpretation of the *Atlas*, which, with its panoptic, silent sweep of images, can seem frozen in an idiosyncratic formalism, but we will also become familiar with some of the specific art-historical objects and the broader cultural questions that compel Warburg throughout his career.

In the preface to his 1902 essay, “Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie,” Warburg places himself in the intellectual-historical shadow of Jacob

6. Ibid., 92. Discussing the 1492 lecture “Lamia,” Grassi stresses that when Poliziano calls himself a *grammaticus* it indicates a reliance “not on *ratio* but on the Muses” (53).

7. Though in *Aby M. Warburgs Methode als Anregung und Aufgabe* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990), Dieter Wuttke convincingly considers the broad methodological and hermeneutic implications of Warburg’s mantra.

8. The seminar “Die Bedeutung der Antike für den stilistischen Wandel in der italienischen Kunst der Frührenaissance,” WIA, III.95.1, given at the University of Hamburg in the winter semester of 1925–26, was subtitled “Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail.”

9. But Kany insists on Warburg’s importance as a historian, not a theorist (*Mnemosyne als Programm*, 132). For an even more skeptical take on Warburg’s eclectic theorizing, see Richard Woodfield, “Warburg’s ‘Method,’” in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg’s Projects*, 259–293.

Burckhardt's immensely influential scholarship on Italian Renaissance culture. Yet he also immediately regrets that Burckhardt never tried to integrate his studies of the "psychology of the individual in society" with his various observations on the riches of Italian visual art.¹⁰ Such a comprehensive view is hinted at, Warburg believes, in Burckhardt's posthumously published *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien*. One of these supplements thus inspires Warburg to focus on the figure of Francesco Sassetti, a wealthy Florentine merchant, who in order to memorialize himself and his family commissions Domenico Ghirlandaio (1440–94) and his workshop to paint a series of frescoes (1479–86) in the Sassetti Chapel in the Church of Santa Trinità. Keener here to discuss the patron than the painter, Warburg discovers—by examining documents associated with Sassetti and Lorenzo de' Medici (Sassetti's sovereign and sometime associate), and then reading them in the light of various monuments, including but not limited to Ghirlandaio's frescoes—first a "type," then an individual:

The citizen of Medicean Florence united the wholly dissimilar characters of the idealist—whether mediævally Christian, or romantically chivalrous, or classically Neoplatonic—and the worldly, practical, pagan Etruscan merchant. Elemental yet harmonious in his vitality, this enigmatic creature joyfully accepted every psychic impulse as an extension of his mental range [seelische Schwingung als Erweiterung seines geistigen Umfanges], to be developed and exploited at leisure. He rejected the pedantic straitjacket of "either-or" in every field, not because he failed to appreciate contrasts in all their starkness, but because he considered them to be reconcilable. Thus now the enthusiastic but concentrated strength of the fresh, bold experiment exudes artistic balancing acts [den künstlerischen Ausgleichserzeugnissen] between Church and World, between classical antiquity and Christian present. Francesco Sassetti is just such a type [Typus] of the honest and thoughtful bourgeois living in an age of transition who accepts the new without heroics and without abandoning the old. The portraits on the wall of his chapel reflect his own, indomitable will to live [unbeirrten Daseinswillen], which the painter's hand obeys by manifesting to the eye the miracle of an ephemeral human face, captured and held fast for its own sake.¹¹

A scion of a famous Hamburg banking family, Warburg could almost be describing himself here, for he came to regard himself as an analogous "type," as someone able to balance conflicting, "dissimilar" forces and extremes. He, too, strove to accept "every psychic impulse as an extension of his mental range."

But that Warburg's career was more than a prolonged *psychomachia* is confirmed by another "type" that riddles his thinking from beginning to end. The theme of

10. Warburg, "Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie," *RPA*, 186; Warburg, "Bildnis-kunst und florentinisches Bürgertum," *GS*, I.1:93.

11. *RPA*, 190–191 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:100–101.

the “nymph,” as Warburg himself, Gombrich, Agamben, and others have insisted, proves to be a figure, a symbol, a topos, a “type,” and arguably even a “paradigm” crucial to understanding both the content and method of the intellectual project culminating in the *Bilderatlas*.¹² In “Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie” Warburg briefly indicates how “die Nymphe” vividly emerges from an occasional poem by Poliziano to grace one of the Renaissance’s most famous paintings and become for him “a universal type of the female form in motion”:

Even Poliziano, professor of Greek and classical philologist though he was, had his literary roots in the vernacular world. As the author of lively Italian dance and love lyrics, he was later prevailed on to follow Pulci in turning his hand to a courtly occasional poem in commemoration of another chivalric Medici occasion. In the *Giostra*, his celebrated poem on the tournament held by Giuliano in honor of Simonetta Vespucci in 1475, Poliziano captures his ephemeral theme with grace, freshness, and immediacy, while taking classical Latin models as his source. This wonderfully subtle interaction between popular spirit and classical grace gives rise to the “nymph” who later became a universal, ornamental type of the female form in motion, as depicted by Botticelli in the maidens who dance, or flee from a suitor, in his *Spring*.¹³

That this “nymph” found an afterlife in the verse and painting of the Florentine Renaissance is perhaps less surprising than the synchronic importance Warburg ascribes to her in his thinking. Already in his dissertation, “Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*: An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance” (1893), she becomes a crucible for Warburg’s meditations on myth, imitation, the commerce between the various arts, and, most importantly, the nature of the symbol. There Warburg, “for purposes of comparison” with just one stylistic aspect of Botticelli’s paintings, adduces myriad literary intertexts, including Ovid’s *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, poems by Horace, Lucretius, Claudian, and Lorenzo de’ Medici, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the *Homeric Hymns to Aphrodite*, and Poliziano’s tragedy *Orfeo*.¹⁴ Asserting that “the most difficult problem in all art . . . is that of capturing images of life in motion,” Warburg then considers how Botticelli manipulates “the surface mobility of inanimate accessory forms, draperies and hair” to depict his figures and to confront and partially mediate the demands made by the classical legacy.¹⁵ Ultimately, though, Botticelli is judged to be not

12. For the nymph as “paradigm,” see Giorgio Agamben, “What Is a Paradigm?” in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D’Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 9–32; also Agamben, *Ninfe* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2007).

13. *RPA*, 201 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:112.

14. Specifically, he would show how Botticelli, with Poliziano’s help, draws on Ovid’s description of Flora (*Fasti* 5.193ff.) and Daphne (*Metamorphoses* 1.497–554) to help portray mutability and mobility.

15. Warburg, “Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*,” *RPA*, 141. The full title of the dissertation is “Sandro Botticellis ‘Geburt der Venus’ und ‘Frühling’: Eine Untersuchung über die Vorstellungen von der Antike in der italienischen Frührenaissance.” See *GS*, I.1:1–61. In “Aby M. Warburgs

entirely successful in solving this problem, as his painting, Warburg concludes, conforms to what Winckelmann will describe as an aesthetic ideal of "stille[r] Größe" (serene grandeur). Botticelli fails to heed his "humanist advisor," Poliziano, and balks at fully exploring the aesthetic and psychological possibilities of expressing "inner emotion" via "images of life in motion."¹⁶ Thus in what will later become one of his principal intellectual concerns, Warburg seeks to discover here the dynamics of how this *translatio* of images is or is not accomplished, and why, despite history's undulations, such a *translatio* might signal a recursive and therefore universal phenomenon.¹⁷ Thus even at his career's outset the problem of metaphoric expression, as grounded in Renaissance humanism, takes center stage.

As if trying to mimic the recursivity of these mobile, metaphoric images, Warburg's scattered writings tend almost obsessively to return to the same materials and themes. In addition to an 1898 essay, "Sandro Botticelli"—which I will discuss below—he thickens considerably his description of Sassetti, Ghirlandaio, and their milieu in his 1907 essay, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunction to His Sons." Here Warburg first reads Sassetti's balancing act of the contemplative and active life, "the Christian-ascetic and antique-heroic," as emblemized, quite literally, by an *impresa* depicting *fortuna* as a "naked woman, standing in a ship and acting as its mast, gripping the yard in her left hand and the lower end of a swelling sail in her right."¹⁸ This ambiguous image is found in Giovanni Rucellai's *Zibaldone*, a commonplace book syncretizing aspects of Marsilio Ficino's Christian Neoplatonism with various classical sources promoting less redemptive views of fate. Yet in Warburg's metonymic train of thought, such allegoresis and the prospect of a "new equilibrium" that it might afford are complicated by one of the Sassetti's family emblems featured in the funeral sculpture of Santa Trinità: a centaur wielding David's sling. After learnedly adducing various pagan sources for the first part of this image, Warburg confronts the main theoretical problem that will trouble nearly all of his writings and unfinished projects:

Here, at the point where unbridled pagan exuberance breaks in, lies the crucial test of our hypothesis of psychological balance [Ausgleichspsychologie]: for Francesco built his chapel in his own lifetime, and primarily in honor of his name saint. It is just not possible to suppose that so strong a personality would have admitted this wild, pagan horde to his own Christian tomb out of some purely aesthetic delight in their formal qualities. If he chose to proceed to his eternal rest with a fresco of pious Christian lamentation for the hallowed passing of his name saint above him, and with a relief of

Kulturwissenschaft," *Historische Zeitschrift* 256.1 (1993): 1–30, Wuttke contends the main principles of Warburg's mature *Kulturwissenschaft* already operate in the Botticelli dissertation.

16. *RPA*, 89, 122.

17. While describing a "translation" in space or time, *translatio* is also the Latin term for "metaphor."

18. Warburg, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunction to His Sons," *RPA*, 241; Warburg, "Francesco Sassetti's letztwillige Verfügung," *GS*, I.1:146.

frenzied pagan keening for the wrathful hunter of Calydon beneath him, then the respectful historian can only ask: How did Francesco Sassetti attempt to reconcile the pagan histrionics of the sarcophagus with a traditional, medieval view of the world?¹⁹

By way of a provisional answer, Warburg first gives a brief iconographic description of the larger scheme of images decorating the chapel's walls and ceiling, and then of Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1485), the painting that was placed behind the altar of the chapel, which is just to the right of the church's main altar. But before we consider Warburg's interpretation of the *Adoration* or the solution to the conundrum he sketches here and how that solution, motivated by his "Ausgleichspsychologie," structures, literally and metaphorically, almost all his later thinking, especially in the *Atlas*, a brief excursus is needed on what I would call the painter's rhetoric of motion.

In "Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*," Warburg hits upon a "criterion" that will mediate much of what he sees in images throughout his career. Meditating on just how closely Botticelli's Venus with her wind-blown hair resembles Poliziano's verse description of her in the *Giostra*, Warburg finds that "die Behandlung des bewegten Beiwerks" (the treatment of the accessory form in motion) in the painting exemplifies both Botticelli's stylistic mastery and how the artist forges *das Nachleben der Antike*.²⁰ Indeed, this animation of ornamental details comes to have for Warburg, I would argue, the actuality and energy of a good metaphor. Thus he cites a passage describing how to represent pleasingly "movements in hair, locks, boughs, leafy fronds, and garments" from *Della Pictura* (1435), Leon Battista Alberti's influential treatise.²¹ Telling is how Alberti's description further animates such movements:

Volgansi in uno giro quasi volendo anodarsi et ondeggino in aria simile alle fiamme, parte quasi come serpe si tessano fra li altri, parte crescendo in quà et parte in là. Così i rami ora in alto si torcano, ora in giù, ora in fuori, ora in dentro, parte si contorciano come funi. A medesimo ancora le pieghe facciano; et nascano le pieghe come al troncho dell' albero i suo' rami.

Hair should twist as if trying to break loose from its ties and rippling in the air like flames, some of it weaving in and out like vipers in a nest, some swelling here, some there. Branches should twist upward, then downward, outward and then inward, contorting like ropes. Folds should do the same: folds should grow like branches from the trunk of a tree.²²

19. RPA, 245–247 (translation modified); GS, I.1:155.

20. RPA, 95, 104 (translation modified); GS, I.1:10, 19.

21. RPA, 95–96. Leonardo and Dürer read the manuscript, which was first printed in a 1540 Latin version in Basel.

22. Though Warburg cites this passage in "Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*," 96, I cite the English translation in Leon Battista Alberti, *Il Nuovo "De Pictura" di Leon Battista Alberti / The New "De Pictura" of Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. and trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (Rome: Edizioni Kappa, 2006), 222–223. Sinisgalli establishes the priority of the vernacular over Latin version of the treatise.

Ingeniously confusing the inanimate and animate with his similes—just as Cicero and Quintilian recommend a good metaphorist should do—Alberti proves the difficulty of writing about certain aspects of painting without leaning on simile, metaphor, and the literary tradition. In particular, this passage recalls Ovid's description of Europa's garments as she is carried away on the back of Jove, who has transformed himself into a bull: "tremulae sinuantur flamine vestes" (her fluttering clothes twist in the wind) (*Met.* 2.875). Summarizing Alberti's advice that the cause of the winds should also be shown (he suggests the painter may want to include "the face of a Zephyr or of an Auster that blows among the clouds"), Warburg highlights Alberti's "compromise between anthropomorphic imagination and analogical reflection."²³ This is to say that even as Alberti values what rhetoricians call decorum, and literary theorists verisimilitude, he urges painters toward bold metaphoric invention. In a passage (in the Latin version) just before the one Warburg quotes and interprets, Alberti offers this more general advice:

Let one assign . . . to each one, according to the condition, the appropriate movements of the body in compliance with those motions of the mind [motus animi], that you wish to express. It is necessary, then, that, in limbs the most important symptoms of great emotions of the mind are present [Tum denique maximarum animi perturbationum, maximae in membris significationes, adsint necesse est]. And surely, this procedure concerning the movements is completely common to every living being. In fact, it is not appropriate [non enim convenit] that an ox with a plough uses those movements which Bucephalus, Alexander's thoroughbred horse [used]. But we will appropriately [perapte] paint the celebrated daughter of Inachus who was transformed into a cow, while she was running perhaps, with the head up, feet raised and tail twisted.²⁴

This last, bizarre image imaginatively condenses lines from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.568–621) where the water-nymph, Io, flees from Jupiter, who then catches her, rapes her, and later changes her into a heifer to conceal the object of his desire from Juno, his jealous wife. Thus not only is Alberti's notional image an ingenious transformation of a literary narrative; it is also meant to exemplify the manner by which a painter expresses the "great emotions of the mind" via "the appropriate movements of the body." A painter is able to do this because the limbs, as Alberti asserts, are where the "most important symptoms [significationes]" of such emotions lodge.

Aside from their historical and conceptual importance, Alberti's terms and ideas deserve our attention because they reappear in a barely transformed manner in Warburg's analysis of how certain recurring "images of life in motion" serve as

23. *RPA*, 96.

24. I am quoting from the 1540 Latin text in Alberti, *Il Nuovo "De Pictura,"* 221–222.

the most appropriate vehicles for mediating strong emotions, becoming thereby *Ausdruckswerte* possessing universal cultural, psychological, and phenomenological meaning. Put another way, if Alberti in the early fifteenth century reads Ovid to help him describe how images conveying great emotion should decorously function, then Warburg in the early twentieth century turns to Alberti and Ovid to help him map the metaphoric function of *Pathosformeln*—those dynamic recursive images, topoi, or forms that have from Homer to Mussolini helped humanity reconcile or alienate the forces of reason and unreason.

Another help in narrowing the gap between Alberti's notion of decorum and Warburg's approach to metaphor is Michael Baxandall's still unrivaled *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450*. Tracing cognitive and linguistic debts in Alberti's art criticism to the rhetorical tradition, Baxandall notes that terms like *gracilis* and *vehemens*, which Renaissance humanists employ to describe the virtues and vices of a painter's style, depend on the "intersensory metaphor," which narrows the formal and material gaps between the verbal and visual arts.²⁵ It is indeed the linguistic common ground between art criticism and literary criticism that forges the very possibility of comparison between media.²⁶ Whether Brunetti is interpreting Ghiberti's bronze doors designed for the Florentine Baptistery or Alberti is discussing Giotto's art, catachresis is more the rule than the exception. Preferring abstract terms and metaphor to mere description of a painting's subject matter or *res*, humanist art criticism self-consciously cultivates "an extravagantly abnormal use of speech."²⁷ The exempla of beauty, decorum, and stylistic excellence are thus not only rhetorical-literary ones, modeled largely on Ciceronian eloquence, but such eloquence is an anachronistic ideal resurrected with great labor and pride by the *umanisti* in disdain of quotidian speech.

Yet for all this dependence on the alien *technē* of rhetoric and its figurative resources, Alberti, so Baxandall argues, is able to achieve real analytic rigor in his interpretation of painting. Considering Alberti's metaphor of *compositio* for the arrangement of elements in a painting, Baxandall comments: "Alberti is treating the art of Giotto as if it were a periodic sentence by Cicero or Leonardo Brunetti, and with his powerful new model he could put painting through an astonishingly

25. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 17; Baxandall continues: "This habit of metaphor—both the established repertory of the ancient terms and the institution as such—was potentially one of the humanists' most effective critical resources. . . . Much of Alberti's accomplishment in his treatise *De pictura* depends on it."

26. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 26.

27. *Ibid.*, 45–46. While demonstrating that the humanists' language strove to be "*accurate et eleganter*," Baxandall concludes that they preferred *verba* over *res* in their art criticism. Michael Ann Holly, in *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), revises Baxandall's thesis: "The *compositio* of a work of art . . . is continually at work in the present, laboring to shape the written structure of its own historical reception" (178).

firm functional analysis.”²⁸ And because Alberti also mines, mainly in book 1, the practical lessons of Euclidean geometry, he is able to gain new insights into what we might call the phenomenology of perception, both the painter's and the spectator's. In this sense, his criticism is at once formal and empirical. His analysis of how the “significationes” of Io's emotions should be expressed depends on formalist notions of decorum and license inherited from rhetoricians and geometers even as it is clearly fueled by vivid experiences with mobile, mutable things in the world. This complex duality, I shall argue in the next chapter, is manifest as well in Warburg's evolving thinking in his last years about Renaissance art and cosmology, as metaphor, along with its cousins metonymy and catachresis, increasingly informs his prose while serving, too, as his hermeneutic ideal.

The genesis of this ideal occurs in Warburg's attempts to understand the indebtedness to classical forms and motifs in a painting like Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 23). This altarpiece, surrounded by twelve frescoes and the actual tombs of Sassetti and his wife, serves as the focal point for a *Denkraum* in which sundry forms of *translatio* are accomplished—in space (between images, observer and observed, east and west, north and south, earth and sky) and time (between antiquity and the Renaissance, Warburg and his classical and Renaissance models, and us and Warburg and his classical and Renaissance models). How the numerous thematic and metaphoric elements in this tempera painting may be said to function as parts in the larger scheme of the Sassetti Chapel is largely beyond this book's scope, although I shall comment on some of the chapel's frescoes in chapter 4. What I am concerned with here, however, is the manner in which the painting's rhetorical qualities, its *copia* (eloquent abundance) and *varietas* (variety), help to balance competing forces and themes, a feat that Warburg in his last years will characterize as winning “metaphoric distance.”

Giorgio Vasari (d. 1574) briefly comments on the *Adoration*: “[Ghirlandaio] painted with his own hand a panel in tempera: it contains a Nativity of Christ that will astonish every intelligent person, in which he drew a portrait of himself and painted several heads for the shepherds which are considered truly sublime works.”²⁹ Though scholars now differ on whether Ghirlandaio portrays himself as one of the three shepherds (and whether Sassetti is the model for another one), the painting's diverse, syncretic elements offer numerous opportunities for iconographic exegesis. In sum, the tools of both verbal and visual criticism are needed to interpret the *Adoration*. Containing three different inscriptions (two in the painting proper, one on the frame), the painting is already something of a verbal artifact, a document inviting philological as well as art-historical interpretations.

28. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 131; see also 134–135.

29. Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 212.

To begin with, a genuflecting Mary, whose pious if somewhat melancholic figure dominates the painting's left foreground, wears a purple dress whose lower folds form a large circular space on which the Christ child lies. This circle, symbolic of paradise and salvation through the redemption of Christ, assumes a rhetorical form in the frame's inscription, which reads: "IPSUM QUEM GENVIT ADORAVIT MARIA" (Mary adored the same one whom she bore).³⁰ A theological commonplace, this paradox is, in turn, ingeniously echoed by the inscription on the gray sarcophagus (adorned with garlands, thus punning on the name Ghirlandaio, or "garland maker") in the center of the painting, out of which an ox and donkey, patristic symbols of the Jews and the Gentiles, respectively, appear to feed: "ENSE CADENS SOLYMO POMPEI FULVI[US]/ AUGUR/ NUMEN AIT QUAE ME CONTEG[IT] URNA DABIT" (Falling to the sword in Jerusalem, Fulvius, augur of Pompey, said the tomb that contains me will yield a god). Probably composed by the humanist Bartholomaeus Fontius (ca. 1446–1513), on the basis of Flavius Josephus's account of Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, this prophecy would transform death into supernatural life even as it straddles the Roman, Hebraic, and Christian worldviews. In this typological, synchronic manner, sarcophagus becomes crib, even as its grisaille yields to the vivid colors and "divine" faces surrounding it. Moreover, the sarcophagus within the painting is complemented by the two actual tombs in the chapel—thus giving the painting further allegorical weight. Similarly, the two gray columns behind the tomb, which support a humble straw roof over the makeshift manger, appear to be the ruins of the Roman Temple of Peace (*ara pacis*), which was predicted to endure until a virgin should give birth to a child. (Hence it collapsed on the night of Christ's birth.) The sarcophagus, in short, emblemizes a new order of things. Arguably, this is why its horizontal lines point toward the approaching procession, coming from the upper left corner of the painting, of the Three Kings, who, however, significantly pass through a Roman triumphal arch, also in grisaille, inscribed with the words "GN[EO] POMPEO MAGNO HIRCANUS PONT[IFEX] P[OSUIT]" (The priest Hircanus erected the arch in honor of Gnaeus Pompey the Great). The spatial *translatio* of the procession thus becomes a historical and spiritual one as well, wherein pagan triumph is marginalized, mediated, and supplanted by the humble but metaphysical scene dominating the painting.³¹ Similarly, that Rome and Jerusalem (the Dome of the

30. See Ronald G. Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio und die Malerei der Florentiner Renaissance* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2000), 274. My interpretation of the *Adoration* is indebted to Kecks and to Jeanne K. Cadogan's *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). See also Enrica Cassarino, *La Capella Sassetti nella chiesa di Santa Trinità* (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi, 1996).

31. See Fritz Saxl, "The Classical Inscription in Renaissance Art and Politics: Bartholomaeus Fontius; Liber monumentorum Romanae urbis et aliorum locorum," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4.1/2 (1940–41): 19–46. Saxl notes: "If the first inscription on the picture indicated the triumph of paganism over Judaism, the second signifies the victory of Christianity over the heathen world" (28).

Rock is barely discernible in the background) are the two cities, respectively, in the painting's center and right recesses confirms how Ghirlandaio converts pagan and Old Testament legacies into new artistic and spiritual riches. Finally, that Joseph, who occupies the very center of the painting, directs his searching gaze to some place above and outside the painting, indicates either that he should be seen as contemplating the metaphysical paradox inscribed on the frame (which concerns him personally as well as spiritually), or that he should be interpreted as musing on the four Sibyls in the ceiling frescoes, and hence also on the Virgilian prophecy in the fourth *Eclogue* of a miraculous child who would herald a new golden age.³²

There are numerous other symbolic elements operating in the *Adoration*, some of them playing etymologically on the "stones" lurking in the Sassetti name. Such symbolism, though, forms but the surface of a larger historical dynamic exemplified by Sassetti. Deepening his thesis that Sassetti aimed above all "to achieve balance" in the chapel, Warburg interprets the *Adoration* by focusing on how the pagan elements within and surrounding the painting are given vivid expression yet are contained by "the solid conceptual architecture of medieval Christianity."³³ And while the 1907 essay casts Sassetti and not Ghirlandaio as the hero of this achievement, in later years Warburg came increasingly to focus on how the *Adoration* reacted to and remade Hugo van der Goes's Portinari altarpiece, which was painted in Brussels but transported to Florence in 1483 by another Florentine banker who had commissioned it, where it served as the immediate model for Ghirlandaio to imitate and outbid. Thus much of the realism in the faces of the shepherds and depiction of the objects in Ghirlandaio's painting is ascribed to van der Goes's influence, while the classicizing elements, such as the arch and various inscriptions, have been seen by critics, Warburg included, as reacting to the extremes of the northern style. In a 1927–28 seminar offered at the University of Hamburg, Warburg characterizes the relation between the two paintings with the word "nebeneinander"—a term borrowed from Lessing's analysis of how elements spatially, metonymically create meaning in a painting, as opposed to the temporal *nacheinander* of literature with its dependence on syntax and narrative.³⁴ Such "contiguity" or metonymy for

32. See Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio und die Malerei*, 275. Cadogan contends that "the adoration of the new-born child by the Virgin and the shepherds, visualizes the prophecies of the sibyls, shown both outside the chapel above the entrance arch and in the vault, and of David, also depicted to the left of the entrance, of the coming of the savior" (*Domenico Ghirlandaio*, 253).

33. *RPA*, 249.

34. "Wenn nun aber die Malerei, vermöge ihrer Zeichen oder der Mittel ihrer Nachahmung, die sie nur im Raume verbinden kann, der Zeit gänzlich entsagen muss: so können fortschreitende Handlungen, als fortschreitend, unter ihre Gegenstände nicht gehören, sondern sie muß sich mit Handlungen neben einander, oder mit bloßen Körpern, die durch ihre Stellungen eine Handlung vermuten lassen, begnügen. Die Poesie hingegen—"; "Der Dichter, der die Elemente der Schönheit nur nacheinander zeigen könnte, enthält sich daher der Schilderung körperlicher Schönheit, als Schönheit, gänzlich." G. E. Lessing, *Laoköon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, in *Kunsttheoretische und kunsthistorische Schriften*, in *Werke* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1974), 6:102, 129.

Warburg, therefore, is more synchronic than diachronic, more formal than causal. Just as the “balance” of pagan and Judaic elements with Christian ones speaks to the artist’s attempt to solve not only the “problem . . . of capturing images of life in motion,” but also the problem of imitating antiquity without flaunting Christian orthodoxy, the spatial *translatio* of a Flemish painting to Florence emblemizes the process by which larger, recursive, and thus more universal forces struggle to find expression in European art. As Michael Steinberg observes, reading the *Schlanger-ritual* text, “Distance in space and time still separates epochs, but the images placed in dialogue overcome that distance just enough to posit associations that burst the myth of a grand, linear narrative with premeasured increments of cultural and temporal distance.”³⁵

With this said, the difficulties of distinguishing here between metonymy and metaphor or, in the analysis of the *Adoration*, between symbol, allegory, and metaphor are considerable. Nonetheless, they need to be addressed, especially as Warburg tends to swing back and forth in his preference for the term *metaphor* or *symbol*, while in practice he often argues by metonymy in order to unfold what has been plausibly taken as an allegorical vision of history and culture. Iconography can illuminate the symbolic meanings of the goldfinch and the pebbles in Ghirlandajo’s *Adoration*. It can also teach us what hierarchy we should ascribe to the objects and events depicted in the painting such that, for example, we could sublimate the procession of the Three Kings through the Roman triumphal arch into the symbolic, eternal circle formed by Mary’s dress. But both iconography, which generally pursues the task of interpretation by thickening various discursive contexts informing an artwork, and iconology, which would decipher the larger symbolic meanings of an artwork, often employ the tropes of rhetoric with maddening degrees of imprecision.

Gombrich on Metaphor

Recognizing this muddle and determined to offer a remedy, Gombrich offers the programmatic essay “*Icones Symbolicae*: Philosophies of Symbolism and the Bearing on Art” (1972, though an earlier version appeared in 1948). An investigation of the fertile but ambiguous relations between word and image, “*Icones Symbolicae*” is first of all an important chapter in comparative metaphorology; but it serves, too, as an implicit warning to Warburg’s readers not to lose sight of historical contexts and terminology when savoring the fruits of works such as *Mnemosyne*, which, as I have suggested, often tempts us to read it like a book of emblems.

Gombrich’s more concrete aim here is to demonstrate how *impres*e (heraldic devices usually including words and images) were interpreted in the Renaissance in

35. Warburg, *Images*, 98.

ways that contemporary art criticism's "rational analysis" may ignore.³⁶ To this end, he traces "three ordinary functions of images" that "may be present in one concrete image; thus a motif in a painting by Hieronymus Bosch may *represent* a broken vessel, *symbolize* the sin of gluttony and *express* an unconscious sexual fantasy on the part of the artist but to us the three levels of meaning remain quite distinct."³⁷ After further historicizing such images, Gombrich asserts:

For where there is no clear gulf separating the material, visible world from the sphere of spirit and of spirits, not only the various meanings of the word "representation" may become blurred but the whole relationship between image and symbol assumes a different aspect. . . . Warburg described as "*Denkraumverlust*" this tendency of the human mind to confuse the sign with the thing signified, the name and its bearers, the literal and the metaphorical, the image and its prototype. . . . Our language, in fact, favours this twilight region between the literal and the metaphorical.³⁸

Yet if this *Denkraum*, "this twilight region," is where the artist and emblem-maker invent, then, as Gombrich well knew, Warburg also constantly regrets the "loss" of this "thought-space," which he also dubs the *Zwischenraum* and *Wunschaum*. Confusion, superstition, and stultifying abstraction may result when the stringencies of language, the tyrannies of taste, the thirst for power, and ideological, methodological, or systematic certainty become supreme. Characteristically casting his thinking in spatial terms, Warburg often describes the "loss" of this space as essentially tragic, for it forecloses the possibility of an "Ikonologie des Zwischenraums," of an "Entwicklungspsychologie des Pendelganges zwischen bildhafter und zeichenmäßiger Ursachensetzung" (developmental psychology of the pendular motion between pictorial and semiotic induction).³⁹

But again, Gombrich would explicate here how in the Renaissance and, more particularly, in Renaissance emblematics, the image can at once be psychologically vivid, aesthetically pleasing, and pedagogically useful. Thus it is all the more important, he notes, to reject Benedetto Croce's separation of rhetoric from art-historical analysis.⁴⁰ Aside from the mnemonic value of emblematic images, in going beyond the one-to-one correspondence between word and thing, they achieve what a single discursive act ordinarily cannot: the simultaneous production

36. Ernst Gombrich, "*Icones Symbolicae*," in *Gombrich on the Renaissance*, vol. 2, *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon Press, 1985), 124.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 125. The quote is from Warburg's "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten," *GS*, I:2:487–558.

39. In the *Tagebuch*, Warburg writes: "Ikonologie des Zwischenraums. Kunsthistorisches Material zu einer Entwicklungspsychologie des Pendelganges zwischen bildhafter und zeichenmäßiger Ursachensetzung" (*GS*, VII:434–435).

40. Gombrich, "*Icones Symbolicae*," 129.

of various, conflicting meanings in one intuitive gesture.⁴¹ To historicize such intuition Gombrich rehearses classical ideas about metaphor: how Aristotle praises metaphor for its *energeia*, or its ability to actualize abstractions in vivid images; and how Cicero recommends it for its skill in furnishing names for things, feelings, and ideas when ordinary language fails to do so (i.e., catachresis). Then Gombrich distinguishes between the symbol as “conventional code” and metaphor whose terms are “not reversible” and hence produce meanings that demand significant hermeneutic labor.⁴² For him, the symbol is essentially a “sign” and thus has very little art-historical value. Regarding metaphor, though, he delineates two kinds: the first corresponds roughly to Aristotelian metaphor, which cultivates “a method of visual definition” for a concept or an emotion, while the second, “mystical” species of metaphor undertakes the expression of subjective even hermetic truths rather than easily intuited, objective representations of a thing or idea.⁴³

To illustrate this distinction Gombrich traces how Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1593), “the standard encyclopaedia of Personifications,” effectively follows Aristotelian tradition in applying the four causes (material, efficient, formal, and final) to find many different symbolic, didactically successful ways of representing, of making visible, a single concept, such as Friendship (*Amicitia*) or Strength (*Fortezza*).⁴⁴ That Ripa mainly uses the human figure as the source for metaphoric “accidents” to represent abstract attributes makes perfect sense, Gombrich argues, given how our familiarity with the body nicely mediates the strangeness of the abstract concepts that Ripa wishes to give concrete, visual form. As Ripa writes in his *Proemio*,

Leaving aside then that part of the image of which the orator makes use, and of which Aristotle treats in the third book of his *Rhetoric*, I will talk only about that which pertains to painters, or about those who, whether by means of color or by another visible means, can represent some visible thing different from the part of the image (that Aristotle discusses), and in conformity with another thing. (I will talk of it) because, just as this persuades many times by means of the eyes, that other thing moves the will by means of the word, and because this concerns things like metaphors, things that lie beyond humanity, but which are conjoined to us, and are therefore termed essential.⁴⁵

But creating such “illustrated metaphors,” I would add, is a philological as well as a rhetorical and material undertaking.⁴⁶ Ripa’s entry for *Mondo*, for instance, relies

41. In this regard, Gombrich discusses Da Vinci and the “accumulation of attributes to the point of monstrosity” (“*Icones Symbolicae*,” 138). Renaissance neoclassicism, he asserts, cuts down on the number of attributes, even as it strengthens the humanist basis for personifying the gods.

42. Gombrich, “The Aims and Limits of Iconology,” in *Gombrich on the Renaissance*, 13.

43. *Ibid.*, 13. He later casts the “free-floating symbol” as equivalent to “metaphor” (20).

44. Gombrich, “*Icones Symbolicae*,” 139–143.

45. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, overe descrizione di diverse imagini cavate dall’ antichità, e di propria invention* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970), iii.

46. The term is Gombrich’s; see “*Icones Symbolicae*,” 143.

on Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (1360), Piero Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica, sive de sacris Aegyptiorum* (1567), and verses by Silius Italicus to depict the "world" as the satyr Pan, a metaphor that plays on the etymology of the Greek *to pan* (all that is, the universe) and the mythological figure whose attributes include a "faccia rossa, & infocata" (fiery, red face), which signifies "quel foco puro, che sta sopra gli altri Elementi, in confine delle celesti sfere" (that pure fire, which is above the other elements, in the realm of the celestial sphere).⁴⁷ Just as his contemporaries, Kepler and Bruno, heavily mine classical mythology, philosophy, and literature to forge their cosmographies, Ripa ransacks Greek mythology and the riches of humanist philology to provide painters with the means to make the elements visible and persuasive. But he would also give painters a language by which they can contemplate their efforts.

Dissatisfied, however, with the ultimately ornamental function he sees Ripa (and Aristotle) ascribing to metaphor, Gombrich, leaning on Cicero's judgment that metaphor is mainly catachrestic, interprets Neoplatonic symbolism in terms of metaphor's ability to be "a permanent and continuous process" whereby hermetic and inexpressible truths are expressed.⁴⁸ Significantly, he also invokes Warburg's notion of the astrologer's *Schlitterlogik* (a neologism that translates literally as "sledding-logic," and so suggests a slippery, shifting, even sophistic logic) to characterize Ficino's comparison of how vibrations from a plucked lute string make neighboring strings sound with how an amulet once engraved with astral imagery causes a sympathetic reaction from the stars above.⁴⁹ Despite such illogic, Gombrich argues that this species of metaphor, as the means of forming concepts, is the rule rather than the exception. Citing metaphorologists ranging from Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius to Emanuele Tesauro, Vico, and Benjamin Whorf, Gombrich contends it is such metaphor rather than ordinary language that creates the "categories" enabling us to form concepts.⁵⁰ But of course this ability to forge unity or synthesis out of multiplicity goes by various names; Kant, for instance, ascribes to the schema and therefore also the symbol an analogous task of mediating between the sensible and the abstract, while Warburg, as we shall see, inherits aspects of this Kantian tradition and makes *Umfangsbestimmung* the fundamental hermeneutic act of the painter, art historian, and, indeed, any thinker who would achieve a *translatio* between the many and the one.

For Gombrich, metaphor in the visual arts produces a unique cognitive effect:

It is precisely because our world is comparatively stabilized by language that a fresh metaphor can be felt to be so illuminating. We almost have the feeling it gave us a

47. Ripa, *Iconologia*, 330.

48. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 166.

49. *Ibid.*, 173.

50. This line of argument is not at all unique to Gombrich. As we shall see, Cassirer, Nietzsche, Blumenberg, and Hegel variously argue that metaphor making precedes concept formation.

fresh insight into the structure of the world by piercing the veil of ordinary speech. It is this experience, so it seems, that underlies the illumination of which we hear in the literature on *imprese*. . . . The linear character of language makes it hard to hold in mind a description such as “the wife of a nephew of my father-in-law” and to make sure that it means the same as “the wife of my first wife’s cousin” but draw a diagram and the identity can be seen at a glance.⁵¹

Informed by metaphor, diagrammatic thinking trumps discursive language in its ability to furnish a single syncretic intuition. Such intuition, I shall argue in chapter 6, becomes the intellectual but also ethical engine of Warburg’s increasingly elliptical yet often diagrammatic form of writing in his last years, writing sublimated but not erased in *Mnemosyne*.

Aside from such affinities, though, Warburg’s use of and ideas about metaphor starkly diverge from what Gombrich describes here. Far less interested in the metaphors that painters and emblem-makers inscribe into their works and that, accordingly, can be deciphered through iconological readings, Warburg instead focuses on second-degree metaphors, or metaphors indicating the artist’s (and cosmographer’s) relation to antiquity, myth, nature, emotion, reason, and other such “forces,” and thus metaphors also describing his own critical task. Moreover, as we shall see, Warburg’s pathos-laden thoughts on metaphor differ crucially from the systematic, progressive theory of symbolic forms fashioned by Ernst Cassirer, his colleague and friend. This is why focusing on metaphor rather than on the symbol is the most promising, if admittedly circuitous, route to interpreting Warburg’s achievements, not only because such an approach attends to Warburg’s oblique directions, but also because the notion of *translatio* possesses temporal, spatial, and cognitive dimensions missing in most accounts of the symbol.⁵² Metaphor, moreover, hews to the all-important principle of decorum, whereas the symbol, lacking an obvious rhetorical function, need not. In “Aims and Limits of Iconology,” Gombrich labels “the dominant consideration of the whole classical tradition, the notion of decorum.”⁵³ In this sense, Warburgian metaphor is rather conservative, notwithstanding its enormous intellectual ambitions.⁵⁴ It is, pace Gombrich, Aristotelian,

51. Gombrich, “*Icones Symbolicae*,” 167. Also: “The emblem seemed to offer an escape from the limitations of discursive speech.”

52. Kany specifies: “Warburg hat seine Gedanken zum Symbolbegriff in biologistisch-psychologischen Theorien formuliert” (*Mnemosyne als Programm*, 149). He also traces Warburg’s debts to Vignoli, F.T. Vischer, Robert Vischer, Alfred Biese, and Hermann Usener, all of whom are indebted to Vico. But in doing so he ignores how Vico prefers “metaphor” to “symbol.” I will discuss Usener in chapter 4.

53. Gombrich, “Aims and Limits of Iconology,” 7. Milton famously calls decorum that “grand masterpiece to observe.”

54. Perhaps, I am neglecting Warburg’s preference for the word “symbol” (above all in his earlier work); but in doing so I am also following Gombrich’s lead and Baxandall’s cue concerning Italian humanists who borrow terms and ideas from the rhetorical tradition to describe what occurs when artists and critics work with visual images.

as it aims at a “method of visual definition”; yet it is also “mystical,” insofar as it makes idiosyncratic claims about the universal, eternal nature of things. Guided by the mediating “‘wie’ der metaphorischen Distanz,” Warburg dedicates his entire intellectual career to mapping new ways of linking words and images, a career that takes him from Botticelli’s paintings, to the kivas of northern New Mexico, to the quattrocento churches of Florence, to the astronomical almanacs of northern Europe, to the edge of sanity and back again, and finally to the pages of Giordano Bruno and a return journey to Italy.

In his early essays and lectures, Warburg creates the foundations for the science of iconology, which will later be refined and practiced by Panofsky, Gombrich, Saxl, and others. Yet by the time he commences *Mnemosyne* he has abandoned the relatively narrow approach to the interpretation of symbolic images fostered by iconology’s focus on establishing “intrinsic” or stable meanings. Instead, Warburg labors to interpret images and their symbolism as a form of metaphor and metonymy that places meanings constantly in motion, even as he invents what Agamben dubs “the nameless science” of images, a science that thrives in “intervals” between disciplines and within the hermeneutic circle that for Warburg becomes “a spiral that continually broadens its turns.”⁵⁵ To understand better this “nameless science” and the tensions it produces in Warburg’s œuvre between explication and implication, representation and expression, iconography and iconology, is not enough: a metaphorology is needed.

Metaphor and Pathos Formula

To place *ad oculos*, “before the eyes,” is the principal cognitive and rhetorical task Aristotle ascribes to metaphor, defined in the *Poetics* (1457b) as “a movement [epiphora] of an alien [allotrios] name from either genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or by analogy.”⁵⁶ In the *Rhetoric* (1410b), Aristotle claims that urbanity (*asteia*) and actualization (*energeia*) of style and thought are best realized by metaphor, the trope whose unique power of “bringing-before-the-eyes [pro ommaton poiein]” naturally pleases the auditor-spectator-reader and thus facilitates learning.⁵⁷ When a successful metaphor permits such visualization, the “surprise” of discovery is experienced. Metaphor satisfies a natural thirst and admiration for the foreign and exotic. However, metaphor possesses also a fundamental cognitive virtue: “Metaphors should be transferred from things that are related but not obviously so, as in philosophy, too, it is characteristic of a well-directed mind

55. Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 90, 96.

56. All citations from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* are from Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

57. See also Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b.

to observe the likeness even in things very different."⁵⁸ Eloquent poets, orators, and philosophers use metaphor to bring before the eyes a pleasing but surprising comparison of things at once similar but different, in order to produce knowledge quickly.⁵⁹ Still, as Gombrich notes and Paul Ricœur demonstrates at length in *The Rule of Metaphor*, subsequent metaphorology has often moved beyond Aristotle's visual model based on the simple substitution of one term for another (i.e., a "lion" for "Achilles"), in favor of metaphor as a more "mystical," less easily intuited, more subjective, and thus more cognitively dissonant representation of a thing or idea.⁶⁰

As its etymology suggests, to write about metaphor is to rely on the metaphors of space. Translating the Greek *meta-pherein* as *translatio*, Quintilian calls metaphor the "commonest [frequentissimus] and far the most beautiful [pulcherrimus] of Tropes." A metaphor occurs when "a noun or a verb is 'transferred' from a place in which it is 'proper' to a place in which either there is no 'proper' word or the 'transferred' term is better than the 'proper' one."⁶¹ Negotiating "place" and propriety, metaphor plays an essential aesthetic and semantic role: "It adds to the resources [copiam] of language by exchanges or borrowings to supply its deficiencies, and (hardest task of all) it ensures that nothing goes without a name."⁶² Here Quintilian conflates the task of catachresis, of providing a word or expression for something that lacks one, with that of metaphor. But catachresis has often been confused with *audacia* or an overly bold or far-fetched metaphor.⁶³ This confusion, Patricia Parker remarks, institutes a startling dynamic: "The violent intrusions of catachresis and the possibility of transferences that, unwilling, subvert the very model of the controlling subject, are the gothic underside of the mastery of metaphor, the uncanny other of its will to control."⁶⁴

Keenly desirous of such "control" and always wary of this "gothic underside," Warburg describes metaphor less as a trope and more as a theoretical stance toward

58. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1412a. But see also 1404b: "To deviate [from prevailing usage] makes language seem more elevated; for people feel the same in regard to style [lexis] as they do in regard to strangers [tous xenous] compared with citizens. As a result, one should make the language unfamiliar [xenin], for people are admirers of what is far off [aponton], and what is marvelous is sweet." In the *Topica* (108b) Aristotle describes the utility of the examination of likenesses: "It is by induction of particulars on the basis of similarities that we infer the universal."

59. "Knowledge results more from contrast but is quicker in [the] brief form [of metaphor]" (*Rhetoric* 1412b).

60. See Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), esp. 9–43.

61. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education (Institutio oratoria)*, trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.6.5. In this context the verb *pherein*, "to bear, carry," becomes itself a metaphor reanimating the notion of movement in and through space. See Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 17–18.

62. Quint. *Inst.* 8.6.5.

63. Patricia Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 60–73. Quintilian discusses the relation between *abusio* and metaphor at *Inst.* 8.6.35.

64. Parker, "Metaphor and Catachresis," 73.

the world (cosmos), art, and self-consciousness. While metaphor vividly fuels his numerous, often aphoristic, sometimes cryptic efforts to give an account of the content, form, and aims of *Mnemosyne*, it also ultimately constitutes the intellectual idea(l) that Warburg fervently seeks to discover in his subject matter. In particular, the metaphoric ability he finds in certain currents of Renaissance art and cosmography to compass difference while still giving expression to a single intuition is the same metahistorical and metarhetorical ability he aspires to in his novel version of intellectual history.

Metaphor for Warburg describes how artist and thinker create *Distanz*, that cognitive, psychological, historically self-conscious stance by which extreme emotion and scientific detachment, the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, the ecstatic nymph and saturnine thinker, can coexist long enough for the spectator to recognize how certain formal, artistic, yet also contingent expressions of human experience repeat and transform themselves throughout history. These expressions or *Pathosformeln*, with their fusion of content and form, Warburg casts as paradigmatic, combinatory elements in his *Kulturwissenschaft*. As the basic vocabulary of emotion, these “Ur-worte leidenschaftlicher Dynamik” (originary words of a pathos-laden dynamic) are shaped and reshaped in myriad discourses and formal techniques of representation. These Goethean “Ur-worte” fuel Warburg’s pioneering efforts in iconology;⁶⁵ but again, as he labored on *Mnemosyne*, his iconology of pathos formulas begins to yield to a new metaphorology.

Warburg first adumbrates what he means by a *Pathosformel* in a brief 1905 essay on Dürer’s drawing the *Death of Orpheus*, in which the Nuremberg artist imitates another drawing by an unknown artist associated with Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1431–1506). (Tellingly, the essay’s argument rests partially on a set of images that were published together with the essay—many of which will resurface in the *Atlas*.) Wishing to move his readers beyond Winckelmann’s Apollonianism, Warburg compares Dürer’s drawing to an image on a Greek vase and declares: “Die typische pathetische Gebärdensprache der antiken Kunst, wie sie Griechenland für dieselbe tragische Szene ausgeprägt hatte, greift mithin hier unmittelbar stilbildend ein.” (Classical art’s typical pathos-laden language of gestures, as Greece had stamped it for the same tragic scene, intervenes here in a way that is directly, stylistically formative.)⁶⁶ Through such stamping the tragic survives as a stylistic force in the formal but still “pathos-laden language of gesture.” This *Nachleben* is a historical *translatio* signaling at once a process of internalization and externalization,

65. “Ur-worte” alludes to Goethe’s poem “Ur-worte, Orphisch.” More than a thirst for transcendental forms, it was Warburg’s abiding interest in anthropology, linguistics, and all forms of historical morphology that fueled his fascination with the question of origins. Still, Agamben suggests, the search for the “original” is also linked to Warburg’s hope of achieving “speculative purity” (“Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 102).

66. Warburg, “Dürer und die italienische Antike,” *GS*, I.2:446. For an alternate English translation, see Warburg, “Dürer and Italian Antiquity,” *RPA*, 553.

of giving external form to the internal psychic “engrams” that Warburg, adapting Richard Semon’s theory of the engram as a “memory trace,” takes as constants in human experience.⁶⁷ As Agamben interprets them, engrams “are the crystallization of an energetic charge and an emotional experience that survive as an inheritance transmitted by social memory and that, like electricity condensed in a Leyden jar, become effective only through contact with the ‘selective will’ of a particular period.”⁶⁸ Yet whether Warburg really equates *engram* with *symbol*, as Gombrich asserts, is doubtful; rather, memory’s *engram* corresponds much more closely with metaphor’s *energeia*.⁶⁹

In tracing the migration of this engrammatic pathos formula from south to north, from Mantegna’s workshop to Dürer’s imagination, from literature to visual art and back again, Warburg points to a woodcut from a 1497 edition of Ovid, Poliziano’s 1471 Ovidian drama, *Orfeo*, and other instances of “Dionysian frenzy” to show “how with such lively force this same archaeologically authentic pathos formula, which goes back to a representation of Orpheus or Pentheus, had been naturalized in artistic circles.” Like that of his Italian counterparts, Dürer’s mastery of form permits him to express, and so in a certain sense contain and understand, the most powerful, liveliest of passions. Here *pathos* = emotion and *formula* = abstraction, and by fusing them Warburg not only skirts an empty formalism but also finds the means to express extreme *affectus*. Pathos formulas are recurring forms of representation that mediate between the desire for the absolute and the pure contingency of sensuous experience. Thus Warburg unequivocally asserts “that Orpheus’ death was not merely a purely studio motif of formal interest, but was rather, actually in spirit and following the words of pagan antiquity, a passionately and knowingly felt experience [leidenschaftlich und verständnisvoll nachgefühlt es Erlebnis] from the dark mystery play of Dionysian legend.”⁷⁰ Here subjective “Erlebnis” is balanced by objective form such that Dürer narrows the gap, achieves a historical *translatio*, between antiquity and his own time. Further, that Dürer is said

67. In *Grundbegriffe* I, Warburg writes: “Ausdruckswerte maximaler Prägung (im Sinn der Ruhe oder Bewegung) die durch vorgeprägte antikisierende Engramme sind” (fol. 27). Richard Semon (1859–1918) wrote two books on memory, *Die Mneme* (1904) and *Die mnemischen Empfindungen* (1908). In “Portrait of Melancholy (Benjamin, Warburg, Panofsky),” in *Benjamin’s Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Gerhard Richter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), Beatrice Hanssen compares Benjamin’s debts to Semon to those that help form Warburg’s theory of the “prophylactic memory image” (183). See Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 176–177, on Semon’s “Gedächtnisphilosophie.”

68. Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 94.

69. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 243. But Kany equates “Energie,” symbols, and pathos formulas (*Mnemosyne als Programm*, 168).

70. GS, I.2:446. In *Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg: Symbol, Art, and History*, trans. Richard Pierce (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), Silvia Ferretti comments that for Warburg the image “is the focal point out of which radiate those ‘energy tensions’ that animate history is the distant past, where the Pathosformel—those gestures of terror or passion in which people sought a bulwark against the mysterious power of the irrational—were created as a permanent patrimony of humanity” (2).

to reject the arrival of the "Baroque language of gesture," ascribed to Leonardo and Michelangelo, is emblematic of Warburg's nascent map of historical change.⁷¹ Warburg casts the northern artist as a mediator between the excess or "superlatives" expressed by the Laocoön statue unearthed in 1506 in Rome and a classical ideal of form able decorously to represent pathos. But why the advent of what has come to be called the Baroque troubled Warburg so much more than it did Dürer, who by Warburg's own account was anxious to adapt to the "new" style, is a question that must be postponed until we have a better sense of the "values" that Warburg's art history cultivated. Likewise, an explication of Warburg's curious use of the word "superlatives" and its importance for his conception of metaphor will have to wait until we have a better understanding of the latter and its pragmatic consequences.

Some twenty years after the essay on Dürer, wrestling with his *Bilderatlas*, Warburg effectively leaves the iconographic path that his successors, Panofsky, Gombrich, and Wittkower, will later follow in his name. He chooses instead to convert his *Pathosformeln* into "dynamograms"—metaphors infused with Bacchic, emotive energy that also, remarkably, obey the grammar of form. When translated into the Renaissance and beyond, these serve as markers for him to map the *Denkraum* in which the belated spectator can discover historical meaning, achieve perspective, and win that spiritual *Ausgleich* for which he yearns. This attempt at *Orientierung* was, Gombrich observes, no mere intellectual or historicist exercise; it demanded Warburg's own "exaltation and awe in front of this fateful process."⁷² That any interpretation of the Renaissance's interpretation of the "afterlife" of classical artistic forms must be riddled with conceptual aporias, anachronistic needs, unconscious drives, and subjective aspirations was as clear to Warburg as were the similarities and differences that often, but by no means exclusively, seemed to serve as the criteria for arranging individual photographs into tableaux. And yet for all of its subjective, psychological force, like much Renaissance encyclopedism, *Mnemosyne* depends inordinately, catachrestically, on basic spatial metaphors to make its epistemological claims.⁷³ When he presents the *Atlas* as a way of mapping the "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," Warburg literally and figuratively points to cartography as the model for his historical vision.⁷⁴ Not only, as we saw, did he have actual maps prepared for the opening panel, but the essentially spatial epistemology of the *Atlas*,

71. RPA, 556–558.

72. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 245.

73. Studies of Renaissance encyclopedism confirming its dependence on spatial structures include Neil Kenny, *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Conceptions of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); and William West, *Theaters and Encyclopedias in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

74. The metaphor "Wanderstraßen der Kultur" appears in a May 1928 letter from Warburg to Saxl. It was later enthusiastically adopted by Saxl, who saw it as nicely describing their joint work on the migration of astrological symbolism in the *Atlas*. See GS, II.1:xix; Warburg and Saxl, "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," 73.

with its metonymic and diagrammatic logics, would discover how cultural change circulates between east and west, north and south, as well as how it is affected over time. Put another way, his cartographic metaphors reinforces the importance of achieving “metaphoric distance.” And if, like many of his encyclopedic predecessors, Warburg, too, mines a vein of pathos from the impossibility of such ambitions, unlike most of its counterparts, the *Atlas* spurns the *copia* of discourse for a more immanent metonymy of images. The photographs of the constellations of photographs that remain are to us, for all their spectral qualities, still ostensive—to create metaphoric distance they point to artifacts presenting literal motion. As such, Warburg offers a variation on what Roland Barthes calls “the Poetics of the Encyclopedic image, if we agree to define Poetics as the sphere of infinite vibrations of meaning, at the center of which is placed the literal object.”⁷⁵

Curtius and the Library

An important successor to Warburg in the task of distilling (or, better yet, dilating) a historical metaphors is E. R. Curtius, who partially dedicates his monumental study, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, to Warburg.⁷⁶ Warburg is cited in the first, programmatic chapter, where Curtius denies that his comparatist project is an “unrealizable program.” He also enlists Warburg’s scorn for the “guardians of Zion,” or “the proprietors and boundary guards of the specialties.”⁷⁷ “Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail” is then cited at the end of the second chapter when Curtius announces: “We must now proceed from generalities to the concrete wealth of the substance of history. We must now go into details.”⁷⁸ Likewise, in the still more self-reflective, programmatic epilogue, Curtius summarizes his book’s accomplishment and indicates his debts to Warburg’s methods:

When we have isolated and named a literary phenomenon, we have established one fact. At that one point we have penetrated the concrete structure of the matter of literature. We have performed an analysis. If we get at a few dozen or a few hundred such facts, a system of points is established. They can be connected by lines; and this produces figures. If we study and associate these, we arrive at a comprehensive picture

75. Roland Barthes, “The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*,” in *A Barthes Reader* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 230.

76. The other dedicatee is one of Curtius’s teachers, the philologist and scholar of medieval literature Gustav Gröber. Through correspondence about their various projects and occasional meetings, Curtius and Warburg became friendly in Rome in 1928. The definitive account of their relationship and what Curtius might have owed Warburg is Wuttke’s “Ernst Robert Curtius and Aby M. Warburg,” in *Dazwischen: Prinzipschwäche auf Warburgs Spuren* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1996), 2:667–687.

77. E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 13 (hereafter cited as *ELLMA*).

78. *Ibid.*, 35.

[übergreifenden Zusammenhang]. That is what Aby Warburg meant by the sentence quoted earlier: "God is in the detail." We can put it: analysis leads to synthesis. Or the synthesis issues from the analysis; and only a synthesis thus brought into existence is legitimate.⁷⁹

But that *Mnemosyne* yields more a *syncrisis* than a "synthesis" should not deter us from seeing Curtius's monumental, "comprehensive picture" as analogous to Warburg's encyclopedic effort.⁸⁰ Both comparatists carefully gather details and undertake analysis in order to gesture eventually at historical and aesthetic phenomena that span millennia. More particularly, in the section of chapter 3 titled "Rhetoric, Painting, Music," Curtius cites as evidence for rhetoric's wide-ranging influence Warburg's discovery that "Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* can be interpreted iconographically only by reference to antique authors with which contemporary poetry and erudition had familiarized him."⁸¹ All the more puzzling, then, is Curtius's invidious comparison in his first chapter of the visual arts with literature (or, more precisely, "philology") as a field worthy of study.⁸² Furthermore, in a 1950 essay, "Antike Pathosformeln in der Literatur des Mittelalters" (Antique Pathos Formulas in Medieval Literature), Curtius directly borrows the concept of the pathos formula from the visual arts to analyze literary history, albeit with the caveat—one that Warburg himself frequently issues—that such formulas become manifest not just in the Renaissance.⁸³

79. Ibid., 382–383; Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Francke, 1948), 386.

80. *Syncrisis* is a rhetorical figure "by which diverse or opposite things are compared" (*OED*) in order to judge their relative worth. Peter Philipp Riedl compares Curtius and Warburg with regard to their versions of historical memory in *Epochenbilder—Künstlertypen: Beiträge zu Traditionsentwürfen in Literatur und Wissenschaft 1860 bis 1930* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), 58–75.

81. Curtius, *ELLMA*, 76.

82. "Works of art I have to contemplate in museums. The book is far more real than the picture. Here we have a truly ontological relationship and real participation in an intellectual entity. But a book, apart from everything else, is a 'text.' One understands it or one does not understand it. Perhaps it contains 'difficult' passages. One needs a technique to unravel them. Its name is philology. Since *Literaturwissenschaft* has to deal with texts, it is helpless without philology. No intuition and 'essence-intuition' can supply the want of it. So-called *Kunstwissenschaft* [which in a footnote Curtius claims should be distinguished from the "historical discipline of art history"] has an easier time. It works with pictures—and photographic slides. Here there is nothing intelligible. To understand Pindar's poems requires severe mental effort—to understand the Parthenon frieze does not. The same relation obtains between Dante and the cathedrals, and so on. Knowing pictures is easy compared with knowing books" (Curtius, *ELLMA*, 14–15). Yet given his praise of Warburg's work on Botticelli, it is unclear why his late friend's "iconography" (as opposed to conventional "*Kunstwissenschaft*") would not be comparable to philology. As Curtius suggests (*ELLMA*, 14 n. 9), Lessing's discussion on the "boundaries between painting and poetry" seems to have had a baleful influence on Curtius's notion of what kind of temporality is possible in painting. See Wuttke, *Dazwischen*, 2:673–676, on Bing's and Gombrich's responses to Curtius's claims.

83. E. R. Curtius, "Antike Pathosformeln in der Literatur des Mittelalters," in *Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal* (Madrid: CSIC, 1950), 1:257: "Die Verwendung solcher Formeln in der Literatur ist unabhängig von dem historischen Complex, den man seit Burckhardt als Renaissance bezeichnet.

Arguably, however, the most important analogue to *Mnemosyne*, as Warburg suggests in various *Tagebuch* entries and as numerous commentators have observed, was his library. Founded around 1901 as a private collection in Hamburg, and then enlarged by Warburg's myriad, decidedly nonsystematic intellectual interests and intuitions, by 1911 it contained nearly fifteen thousand volumes. In 1926, owing mainly to Saxl's indefatigable labors while Warburg was recovering, the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg became a public institute (affiliated with the newly founded Hamburg University), which attracted scholars from all over Germany and increasingly abroad. As a *Denkinstrument*, an archive, a place for symposia and conversation, and increasingly a publishing house, it thrived until the dire political circumstances and worsening economic situation forced the relocation of its some sixty thousand volumes to London in 1933.⁸⁴ More to the point, given its size, organization, and material, tangible form, the Library uniquely fostered combinatory thought. Spurning traditional classificatory schema that followed either a numerical or an alphabetical system to organize a discipline, the Library's collection was arranged per "das Gesetz der guten Nachbarschaft" (the law of good neighborliness), that is, by Warburg's own intuitive, often haptic, thoroughly metonymic sense of how by an inventive arrangement of books on the shelves one tome might serendipitously lead to another more valuable one. Recalling this principle of (dis)organization, Saxl writes: "The book of which one knew was in most cases not the book which one needed. The unknown neighbour on the shelf contained the vital information, although from its title one might not have guessed this. The overriding idea was that the books together—each containing its larger or smaller bit of information and being supplemented by its neighbours—should by their titles guide the student to perceive the essential forces of the human mind and its history."⁸⁵ A book on Greek mythology might thus be shelved next to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which in turn might rub shoulders with a Renaissance commentary on the poem. In brief, Warburg orders the Library in such a way that it "wants not only to speak, but also to listen attentively" (nicht nur reden, sondern auch aufhören will).⁸⁶ This ideal also shaped the Library's layout, which consisted of four

Sie werden schon in der lateinischen und volkssprachlichen Literatur des Mittelalters ergriffen und dienen zur Ausdrucksverstärkung." See also Joachim Knappe, "Gibt es Pathosformeln?" in *Muster im Wandel: Zur Dynamik topischer Wissensordnungen in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Dickhut, Stefan Manns, and Norbert Winkler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 2008), 115–137.

84. I am relying here on Saxl's essay "The History of Warburg's Library," which is appended to Gombrich's biography (*Aby Warburg*, 325–338).

85. Saxl, "History of Warburg's Library," 327.

86. Quoted by Wind, "Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and Its Meaning for Aesthetics," in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 35 (translation modified). See also Martin Jesinghausen-Lauster, *Die Suche nach der Symbolischen Form: Der Kreis um die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1985). Jesinghausen-Lauster views the library as the symbolic locus, the *Mitte*, that resolves the tensions between the one and the many, history and theory, attention to detail and cultivation of ideas.

floors, corresponding to four categories: *image*, *word*, *orientation*, and *action*. Ideally, the scholar was meant to traverse these regions, ascending slowly, digressively, toward a reconciliation with the world. Surveying the “traces of wreckage: projects not carried out, promises of articles never written, and ideas which were never developed,” Bing concludes: “The only achievement which, within the limits of time and means, embodies the fullness of Warburg’s aspirations is his library.”⁸⁷ And yet it, too, remained forever in flux. Following new intuitions and research interests, Warburg frequently undertook the reordering of parts of the Library’s collection. For example, a few months before his death, increasingly convinced of Bruno’s central place in early modern intellectual history, Warburg proposed another “Umstellung” (reordering) so that the Library could become a better *Denkinstrument* for understanding Bruno’s cosmography and imagery.

Responding in a 1929 letter to a query from Curtius, who was contemplating plans to found a library of his own, Warburg quotes Goethe’s *Maximem und Reflexionen* to gloss his unorthodox methods of acquiring and arranging books: “Jede Idee tritt als ein fremder Gast in Erscheinung, und wie sie sich zu realisieren beginnt, ist sie kaum von Phantasie und Phantasterei zu unterscheiden.” (Every idea appears as a foreign guest, and as it begins to be realized it is hardly to be distinguished from fantasy and illusion.)⁸⁸ As with metaphor, which begins with what Ricœur and others call an “impertinent predication” hardly reconcilable with reason’s ordinary expectations, a library, Warburg believed, ideally works to disrupt conventional classifications of ideas or things in order to produce novel thoughts.⁸⁹ In more material terms, his own library drew on his *Zettelkästen* (boxes of index cards), an enormous catalogue of materials that contained bibliographic notes, annotations from his reading, drafts for projects, memos for books to be purchased, along with letters and even newspaper extracts, and which were organized on thematic grounds—similar to how Benjamin used “files” or *Konvolute* to organize the ever-evolving materials of the *Passagen-Werk*. Thus the Library in Hamburg was meant as a place of heuristics, a scholarly, *geistiger Raum*, that would furnish the means for redrawing and thereby preserving the humanist encyclopedia, the *orbis doctrinae* (circle of learning). As Didi-Huberman enthusiastically observes, “The library constituted a kind of *opus magnum* in which its author . . . loses himself probably as much as he constructed a ‘space of thought’ [Denkraum]. In this rhizomatic space . . . art history as an academic discipline underwent the trial of an ordered disorientation: wherever the *frontiers* between disciplines existed, there the library sought to establish *links* [liens].”⁹⁰

87. Gertrud Bing, “A. M. Warburg,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 302.

88. Warburg to Curtius, 8/5/1929, reprinted in *Kosmopolis der Wissenschaft: E. R. Curtius und das Warburg Institute; Briefe 1928 bis 1953 und andere Dokumente*, ed. Dieter Wuttke (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1989), 33. The same maxim is also cited in GS, VII:445.

89. See Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 117–156.

90. Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante*, 41.

It is tempting to think that Warburg's other *opus magnum sed imperfectum*, the *Bilderatlas*, shares these "rhizomatic" qualities. Both *Atlas* and Library privilege the cultivation of intuitive *liens*, a disdain for disciplinary boundaries, and, if you will, an ontology that suggests how and why historical being is recursive. Tellingly, the panels of the *Atlas* were initially worked on and displayed in the Hamburg reading room of the K.B.W., whose elliptical design was meant to celebrate Kepler's embrace of the ellipse in his cosmographical attempts to reconcile the circle's mythic appeal with the empirical evidence of planets orbiting the sun. Thus, in a neat spatial metaphor, Warburg dubbed the reading room the "Arena der Wissenschaft."⁹¹ By comparison, the *Denkraum* created by *Mnemosyne* is a more immanent, condensed one than the Library's. Its syntax is, at least initially, visual rather than verbal. Its metonymic logic, mimicking the *Nebeneinander* inherent in visual art, works more swiftly than the *Nacheinander* of language, such that the persistence or reappearance of classical pathos formulas can be swiftly compassed and grasped. In this sense, Warburg's published essays along with the mass of his unpublished writings mediate between the nearly wordless *Atlas* and the Library's babel of words. His writing, in sum, is a middle term, a *Mitte* between images and signs—a role that both facilitates and frustrates his "Iconologie des Zwischenraums."

91. The elliptical room also imitated the one Leibniz had constructed in Wolfenbüttel for the ducal library there.

METAPHOR LOST AND FOUND IN *MNEMOSYNE*

Hertziana Lecture

Warburg gave a lecture titled “Die römische Antike in der Werkstatt Ghirlandaios” at the Biblioteca Hertziana in Rome on January 19, 1929. A barely disguised exposition of the ideas and methods informing *Mnemosyne*, the lecture was supported by a sequence of nine panels, containing some 230 photographs, which were sequentially placed along three walls of a large lecture hall.¹ Unfortunately, only an imperfect draft of the lecture remains. Yet this, together with accounts of the event, confirms that it was a truly capacious talk. In presenting Ghirlandaios as an exemplary figure, it also interpreted Botticelli’s illustrations of Dante’s *Commedia*, touched on the Northern Renaissance art of Dürer, Rubens, and Rembrandt, invoked Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* as confirmation of the importance of style and implicitly the symbolic value of the ornaments of style—thus renewing Warburg’s long-standing interest in how garments can express emotions—and, more

1. The *Tafeln* for the Hertziana lecture are not extant, and Warburg’s intention to photograph the “9 Gestelle” (see WIA, GC 24946) was apparently never realized. Drafts for the panels exist, though, in which he diagrammatically sketches how the some 230 photographs (GC 34628) might be arranged. See WIA, III.115.5, *Draft for Screens: “Triumph, Energetic Inversion,”* and WIA, III.115.6, *Disposition of Slides and Screens*, where Warburg initially orders the 264 (fol. 3) or 273 (fol. 4) images he has at hand.

generally, made the case for placing art history in dialogue with the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology, psychology, and literary criticism.²

In his *captatio benevolentiae*, Warburg casts his lecture at once in pathos-filled, prophetic, and defiant terms:

That this iconological attempt [Versuch] is only able to appoint itself as a precursor [Vorläufer], despite thirty years of preparatory work behind it, will become clear to anyone who is familiar with the situation of an art-historical, cultural science combining various areas of scholarship.

Still, I believe in the fruitfulness of establishing closer contact between archaeology, art history, and sociologically exact historiography.³

Yet however provisional or premature the results of such syncreticism, behind Warburg's methodological credo stands a strongly conceived, if idiosyncratic version of phenomenological psychology:

It is a wish-image [Wunschbild] of one who is burdened by the tradition, who confronts the question of whether he can adequately spiritualize and internalize [ein-verseelen], on the one hand, the past's heritage [Erbgut der Vergangenheit] and, on the other, impressions from the living environment. How these wish-images, arranged positively or negatively in relation to self-consciousness, selectively have an effect in the artist's attempt at composition, one can only hope to ascertain where both heritage and the world of impressions [Erbgut und Eindruckswelt] allow themselves to be demonstrated phenomenologically in their constituent parts in an artist's work.⁴

Neglecting the iconologist's ambition of tracing influences on Ghirlandaio—a task already deftly accomplished by his 1902 and 1907 essays—Warburg aims instead

2. Warburg, WIA, III.115.1.2, "Die römische Antike in der Werkstatt Ghirlandaio's" (hereafter cited as *Hertziana*). Curtius attended the lecture and was greatly impressed (Wuttke, "Ernst Robert Curtius und Aby M. Warburg," in *Dazwischen*, 2:670).

3. *Hertziana*, fol. 1. Compare this with *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 102, where Warburg recounts four decades struggling with "Gegensätzlichkeit." At the beginning of the *Hertziana* lecture, Warburg describes his use of a *Bilderreihe*: "In der unfestlichen Aufmachung der uns umgebenden Bilderreihe wollen Sie gütigst meinen Wunsch erblicken, den schönen Raum als *Werkstatt* zu begrüßen und ihn im Gewande eines Arbeiters zu betreten. Wir haben vor Ihnen gleichsam noch feuchte Druckbogen aufgehängt, mit der Bitte um Ihre Mitwirkung durch anteilnehmende Kritik" (fol. 1).

4. *Hertziana*, fols. 2–3. In a 12/15/1928 letter to Saxl (WIA, GC 22286), Warburg discusses the upcoming lecture: "Ich will nicht mit Lichtbildern sprechen, obwohl eine derartige Maschine vorhanden ist, sondern nur die grosse Wand mit Photographien bepflastern. Es handelt sich im wesentlichen darum, Ghirlandaio im Schwanken zu zeigen zwischen flandrischem Seelen Spiegel und römischen Triumphbogen. Alte Gedankengänge, die ich ja zuletzt im Zusammenhänge in Göttingen entwickelte" (fol. 2). But Warburg also sought a new synthesis: "Ich werde diesmal nicht davor zurückschrecken, dieses Stück kunstgeschichtlicher Betrachtung als Nachtrag zu Lessings Laokoon aufzustellen" (fol. 2).

at a phenomenology of the work and its reception.⁵ This consists in the selection (*inventio*) and arrangement (*dispositio*) of “Wunschbilder,” together with the purposeful confusion of the artist’s and the critic’s agency. Meditating on Ghirlandajo’s ability to negotiate the phenomenal extremes of “Erbgut und Eindruckswelt,” Warburg seems to nominate himself, “burdened by the tradition” as he is, “to make psychologically comprehensible the latent unity of the polar process of analysis [des polaren Auseinandersetzungsprozesses].”⁶ The critic, that is, imitates exactly if belatedly the theoretical task he ascribes to the artist.

Such imitation makes Warburg’s reflections on his own method all the more telling:

Through a combination of pictorial elements with the products of language in prose or in poetry it is possible—because we have indeed the opportunity to observe the spiritualization of a refashioned foreign ware [die Einverseelung gestalteten Fremdgutes] in *statu nascendi*—to gain scale and perspective for every process [Maßstab und Gesichtspunkt für jeden Prozeß] that art history used to call by the buzzword “mannerist or baroque” degeneration.⁷

Briefly put, the winning of such “Maßstab und Gesichtspunkt,” which I take to be synonymous with achieving “das ‘wie’ der metaphorischen Distanz,” is Warburg’s methodological ideal.⁸

Moreover, just why art history’s predilection for periodization is such an obstacle to appreciating this “process” becomes manifest when Warburg’s *ekphrasis* of one of Botticelli’s illustrations for the *Commedia* is considered:

Botticelli’s Dante illustration enables one other thought to emerge. A cavalry troop storms along, whose leader must stop if he does not want to trample the woman who throws herself toward him. It seems to me a relief of the emperor leaping over dead enemies under his horse’s hooves was the engram that demanded an ethical restylization—as they found their approximate pagan expression in the individual symbol on the medal depicting Valerian. We stand here before the energetic inversion in the interpretation of antique pathos formulas [Wir stehen hier vor der

5. By “phenomenology” here I mean a nonsystematic, intuitive, yet theoretical attitude toward seeing the artwork that takes into account the contingency of artist and viewer, conscious and unconscious motives. I am interested especially in how such a phenomenological stance creates what Warburg calls “metaphoric” and thus contemplative “distance.” One should not, though, ascribe to Warburg the ontological, ahistorical aspects of seeing that, for example, Merleau-Ponty finds in the way that painting creates “distance.” See Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” in *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Alden L. Fisher (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 259.

6. *Hertziana*, fol. 3.

7. *Hertziana*, fols. 4–5.

8. Compare this notion of “Maßstab” with how the astrologer’s thought is able “to measure” (*mes-sen*). See GS, I.2:491.

energetischen Inversion in der Ausdeutung antiker Pathosformeln], as we will see later on in the aftereffects of Constantine's Arch, and previously in other examples, which preclude any hypothetical element. Through the comparative view [die vergleichende Betrachtung] on two reliefs from the early Renaissance, Donatello's *Miracle of St. Anthony* on the high altar at Padua and a depiction by the hand of Agostino di Duccio from the life of St. Bernard on the facade of the oratory in Perugia, I will set out to explain [auseinandersetzen] what I understand as the process of energetic inversion, that is, the production of contrary interpretations.⁹

This passage neatly captures the rhythm and speed of Warburg's thinking. Contemplation of a Botticelli drawing of *Purgatorio*, canto 10, leads, via a formal analogy, to a "medal depicting Valerian," then to the identification of an "engram," then to the recognition that this pathos formula of triumph leaping over the defeated and the dead "demanded" an "ethical restylization," then to the adducing of analogous images, and finally to a declaration of methodological and hermeneutic aims.¹⁰ In this manner, Warburg foregrounds how essential to the achievement of a "comparative view" is his notion of "energetic inversion," or the dynamic refashioning of pagan images and pathos formulas in a Renaissance Christian cultural and theological context. To invert energetically is "ethical" insofar as it tames what he consistently identifies as the more "barbaric" elements of classical and "pagan" cultures. Such inversion also is dialectical, as it fosters "the production of contrary meaning." Indeed, the audience participates in this "process" ("Wir stehen hier"), as Warburg ekphrastically, sequentially explicates the *Bilderreihe* in the lecture room. In this, their experience uncannily resembles that of Botticelli's Dante, who stands before an enormous, crowded painting of the victorious Trajan and his army as a woman, whose son was killed by the opposing army, begs for revenge. And if no Virgil stood nearby to lead them toward more celestial scenes, at least they had Warburg to sketch a timeless *Pathosformel* to help guide the "process" of interpretation.

Compare this with panel 38 of the *Atlas*, "Mischstil in bezug auf Antike. Höfisches Leben. Liebessymbolik. Vorstufe zu Botticelli in der Auseinandersetzung m. d. Antik . . . (Mixed style in relation to antiquity. Courtly life. Love symbolism. Preparatory stage for Botticelli in the contest with antiquity . . .), which features another image (no. 16) from Botticelli's Dante illustrations. Here Botticelli depicts *Purgatorio*, canto 30—just after the pagan Virgil has left Dante, and his new Christian guide, Beatrice, tries to comfort him by reminding him how far he has come both literally and figuratively from his "dark wood." And, as if to underscore

9. *Hertziana*, fol. 8. On fol. 6, Warburg refers specifically to a "Tafel 1" that "zeigt die zweifache griechische und römische Wurzel in der Gestaltung des innerlich und äusserlich bewegten Lebens." This corresponds roughly to panels 3–7 in the "letztes Version."

10. On fol. 7 of *Hertziana*, Warburg adds: "(Lektüre Dante Purg. X)."

the "inversion," Botticelli draws Beatrice riding in a triumphal car, hailed by the twenty-four writers of the books of the Old Testament and accompanied by the symbols of the Evangelists (an angel, eagle, lion, and steer).¹¹ Since, moreover, this drawing is surrounded by contemporary images by other artists showing how classical notions of love create at once distance and proximity, the panel charts a transitional stage of this crucial "inversion" of pagan expressive values, confirming how it was not particular to just one artist.

As for Warburg, he wins here a "comparative view" by exploiting the panel's nondiscursive *Nebeneinander* to repeat and vary themes he discovers in individual images like Botticelli's illustrations. Furthermore, if a symbolic scene, explicable previously through iconological methods, is seen to undergo an "energetic inversion," then this is not just Botticelli's "Auseinandersetzung m. d. Antik," but Warburg's as well. In this, Warburg provides the model for E. R. Curtius, who, contemplating the sentence "Nur über meine Leiche geht der Weg" (The way runs only over my corpse), and conflating topos and pathos formula, traces a closely related sequence of images in the essay "Antike Pathosformeln in der Literatur des Mittelalters."¹² However, instead of Botticelli, Valerian, Donatello, and Ducio providing variations on the pathos formula, Dante, along with Seneca, Statius, Virgil, Lucan, and the *Chanson de Roland*, visits and remakes the topos. For both Warburg and Curtius, then, the achievement of this hermeneutic "view" is an end in itself, aside from any consideration of content. That such an end both inspires and eludes Warburg in the Hertziana lecture is suggested by his admission that "this iconological attempt is only able to appoint itself as a precursor," his notion of "Wunschbilder," but also by the fact that the lecture, an unwieldy, two-hour balancing act of words and images, apparently confounded many in attendance, in no small part because the seated audience was largely unable to decipher the visual details in the panels. "The abundance of commentary with which Warburg accompanied his presentation, and which the conference organizers vainly tried to interrupt, appealed to a library practice where one is able to display maps, open folders of images, and to consult books. . . . Preceded by a heap of documents and baggage, it surpassed, in countless ways, the dimensions of a book."¹³ To have presented

11. Vasari comments on Botticelli's Dante: "[In Florence], since Sandro was also a learned man, he wrote a commentary on part of Dante's poem, and after illustrating the *Inferno*, he printed the work. He wasted a great deal of time on the project, and while completing it he was not painting, which caused countless disruptions in his life" (*Lives of the Artists*, 227). For a lavish edition of Botticelli's ninety-two drawings depicting the *Commedia* (only four of which are illuminated), see Hein-Th. Schulze Altencapenberg, *Sandro Botticelli: Der Bilderzyklus zu Dantes "Göttlicher Komödie"* (London: Royal Academy of the Arts, 2000). Each drawing tries to depict in synoptic fashion the major events of a canto. See pp. 156–157, 202–203, for *Purgatorio* cantos 10 and 30, respectively.

12. Curtius, "Antike Pathosformeln," 258.

13. Imbert, "Aby Warburg," 8. Axel von Harnack, in a 1/20/1929 letter, reports: "Der Vortrag dauerte fast zwei Stunden—war ein voller Erfolg für die ihn veranstaltende Bibliotheca Hertziana und hat die Zuhörer ausserordentlich gefesselt. . . . Er sprach bald frei, bald las er aus seinem Manuskript ab.

comparatively, rigorously, all nine panels in this manner would have required numerous lectures, each one on the scale of the Hertziana talk. It would have taken a chautauqua of gargantuan proportions. But it would also have required a clear delineation of the difference between metaphor and symbol, something Warburg may not have been capable of discursively achieving.

Conversely, like the horse that leaps over the prone corpse, the imperfect form of *Mnemosyne* avoids these obstacles. Charged with the ethical and epistemological aspirations of its creator, and consisting of the ever-metamorphosing *Nachleben* of classical images, the content of the *Atlas* is exemplary, synecdochic rather than exhaustive. (Such exemplarity must be distinguished from the metonymic logic by which the succession of images is perceived.) Perhaps furtively refashioning Freud's term *Verdichtung*, Warburg notes in a 1927 *Tagebuch* entry how he aspires "to grasp the functions of mnemic condensation [mnemischen Ver-Dichtung], on which in the end every symbolic act is based."¹⁴ Or the *Atlas* may be said to anticipate Roman Jakobson's schema whereby metaphor (the paradigmatic) and metonymy (the syntagmatic) are the two principal "poles" of linguistic (and literary) expression. Describing the dual process of linguistic selection, which consists of *selection* and *combination*—analogous to Warburg's *inventio* and *dispositio*—Jakobson writes: "The selection is produced on the basis of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, while the combination, the build-up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.*"¹⁵

Still, as suggestive as this analogy with structural linguistics is, the experience that precipitates *Mnemosyne* (and which it in turn precipitates in us) need not be tied to specific acts of enunciation. The *Atlas* orients thinking about the *Nachleben der Antike* without discursively dictating precisely what should be thought. What Warburg adumbrates is less the specific syntax of the "language of gestures," or the vocabulary of Greek cosmological imagery, but more the form, the "metaphoric distance," the "process," and the "motion" that these phenomena assume in his eyes, and which he tries in turn to present to ours. Thus the *Atlas* functions less as a pragmatic lexicon or "dictionary" of images, and more as a grammar or meta-encyclopedia enabling us to perceive paradigms and larger patterns of meaning.

Am Wohlsten fühlte er sich offenbar, wenn er im Saal herumgehen und an den Photographien demonstrieren konnte. . . . Diese Art des kunsthistorischen Vortrags ist entschieden den Lichtbildern vorzuziehen." Quoted in Warburg and Saxl, *Wanderstraßen der Kultur*, 194.

14. GS, VII:56. On Warburg and Freud, see Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 273–283. On Warburg's own "terminologische Verdichtung," see Wedepohl, "Wort und Bild," 24.

15. Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 71. Zumbusch discusses "Verdichtung" and the parallel between Warburg and Jakobson in "Der *Mnemosyne*-Atlas: Aby Warburgs symbolische Wissenschaft," in *Aktualität des Symbols*, ed. Frauke Berndt and Christoph Brecht (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2005), 83.

Warburg's Theoretical "Laboratory"

At first glance, *Mnemosyne* would seem to short-circuit the dilated language of the textual hermeneut, for again, at the time of his death, Warburg had not settled on the documents, the textual apparatus, that would accompany it. A central question in its reception thus has been how and to what extent its images should be accompanied by his own words. In what appears to be a draft for a title page, an entry in Warburg's notebook *Grundbegriffe* I, provides some direction:

A. Warburg "Mnemosyne" das Erwachen der Heidengötter im Zeitalter der europäischen Renaissance als energetische Ausdruckswertschöpfung. Ein Vergleich kunstgeschichtlicher Kulturwissenschaft 2 Bde Text Atlas mit etwa 2000 Abb. Indices von Gertrud Bing, deren heilige Neugier mich zum Schreiben brachte.¹⁶

A. Warburg "Mnemosyne" the awakening of the pagan gods in the epoch of the European Renaissance as energetic expression of value added. A comparison of art-historical cultural science 2 volumes text Atlas with approximately 2,000 reproductions indices by Gertrud Bing, whose sacred curiosity brought me to writing.

Like the nature of his relationship with Bing, what Warburg means exactly by "Schreiben" is obscure.¹⁷ In his last years Warburg wrote a trove of letters, delivered a handful of lectures, gave several seminars at the University of Hamburg, including one on Jacob Burckhardt (with some attention given to Burckhardt's relation to Nietzsche), and filled sundry notebooks with aphoristic entries, synoptic diagrams, and imperious affirmations pertaining to the nature and direction of Western cultural history—all of which culminates in the visual cartography of the *Atlas*. In a letter written in 1930 to a prospective publisher, B. G. Teubner, Saxl thus presses for two supplementary volumes of text to accompany the one containing the panels. These supplements would have contained commentaries on the individual panels, drawing on Warburg's publications, his sources, and unpublished materials, including the Kreuzlingen talk, notebooks, diaries, and letters.¹⁸ Conceding the difficulty of apprehending the project's significance as Warburg left it, Saxl writes:

16. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 14. But compare with GS, VII:453.

17. Bing began a liaison with the unhappily married Saxl in the 1920s, a relationship Warburg strenuously objected to, it seems largely on moral grounds. Meanwhile, Warburg grew increasingly attached to Bing's assistance, solicitude, and intellectual companionship. They traveled together to Rome in 1928–29, mostly without Warburg's wife. I will discuss their sojourn and collaboration in chapter 7. For some of Saxl's and Warburg's correspondence touching obliquely on this triangle, see "*Wanderstraßen der Kultur*."

18. GS, II.1:xix. Saxl hoped to include "Erläuterungen" (xviii) of individual panels, which would have consisted of archival materials that Warburg used in his essays, such as Sassetti's testament or Lucrezia Tornabuoni's poems for her children (see *RPA*, 201). He also wanted to include "300–350 Lichtdrucktafeln" (collotype sheets); but given that only sixty-three panels occur in the "last version," this presumably meant that illustrations would have been made of smaller constellations of images or of individual images.

It is self-evident that only his words, which are stamped with such depth and beauty [daß nur sein Wort, das eine Tiefe und Schönheit der Prägung hat], as without a doubt no other living art historian's are, will alone be in the position to lend the panels the meaning [Bedeutung] and give them the impact [Wirkung] they merit. We possess a very rich legacy of unpublished materials, which when put together in the manner of a mosaic [mosaikartig], will doubtlessly yield that text. It is to be expected that we will largely be able to work Warburg's aphoristic notes into the atlas. . . . Almost since his time at the university Warburg made notes for finished formulations [fertige Formulierungen] of scholarly problems that occupied him, formulations comprising the entire realm of his thinking, the extent of which the composition of Warburg's Library gives a picture.¹⁹

Figured here as a kind of latter-day Lichtenberg, Warburg's ghost is made to supplement a wordless "inventory" of images through the vicarious efforts of his devoted followers. His condensed, aesthetically pleasing "Formulierungen," when arranged "mosaikartig," promise to give the *Atlas* its full "Bedeutung" and "Wirkung."²⁰ Strangely, though, Saxl ignores how the metaphoric aspects of Warburg's inimitable "Wort" might have served his mentor as the means of closing the gap between word and image.²¹ Indeed, if the "vorgeprägte Kunst" that Warburg spends his career contemplating corresponds to his writing's "Tiefe und Schönheit der Prägung," then the latter deserves contemplation in its own right. The *Atlas* lacks words; Warburg's writing is cryptically condensed; but both are stamped by the same real and figurative forces.

That Georges Didi-Huberman's book and other critical mosaics of Warburg's legacy have more avidly discovered in it a "schizophrenia internal to the image," instead of foregrounding its more balanced, objective elements, is an approach encouraged by Warburg's own self-proclaimed role as a "Psychohistoriker" diagnosing "die Schizophrenie des Abendlandes" through its images.²² However, many mosaic-makers, again following Warburg's lead, have chosen to emphasize less subjective aspects of his *Kulturwissenschaft*. Beginning with Edgar Wind's early efforts and, more recently, those of Horst Bredekamp and others who regard Warburg as an avatar of *Bildwissenschaft*, scholars have sought to separate the work

19. GS, II.1:xix.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. In the *Tagebuch*, on 4/2/1929, Warburg writes: "Manchmal kommt es mir vor, als ob ich als Psychohistoriker die Schizophrenie des Abendlandes aus dem Bildhaften in selbstbiographischem Reflex abzulesen versuche: die ekstatische Nympha (manisch) einerseits und der traurende Flussgott (depressiv) andererseits als Pole zwischen denen der treuformend eindrucksempfindliche seinen tätigen Stil zu finden versucht. Das alte Contrasto-Spiel: Vita activa und vita contemplativa" (GS, VII:429). For interpretations of Warburg as *Psychohistoriker*, see Imbert, "Aby Warburg," 20; and Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 285.

from the worker.²³ But whatever the many reasons for this polarity in his reception, surely Warburg's refusal in the 1920s to cast his ideas and methods in standard academic form play a role, too. Not only did Warburg leave to others the task of filling in the blank spaces in his *Atlas*, but his reliance on metaphoric expression and method has made him a figure ripe for constant refiguring.

In the "Schlusswort" (postscript) to his 1920 essay on Luther and astrology, the last essay he published in his lifetime, Warburg paints his labors as fragmentary (the images he adduces form only a "Bruchteil" of those he could have adduced), provisional, and yet essential to preparing the ground for collaborative, comparatist scholarship:

The intention has been to show, by the example of a positive investigation, how *the method of the science of culture* can be strengthened by an alliance between the history of art and the study of religion.

The shortcomings of this tentative experiment [Vorversuches] have been all too evident to the writer himself. But he has come to the conclusion that the memory of [Hermann] Usener and [Hermann] Dietrich is best honored by taking our orders from the problem at hand (in the present writer's case that of antiquity's influence), even when it sends us into not yet arable land. May art history and the study of religion—between which lies nothing at present but wasteland overgrown with verbiage [noch phraseologisch überwuchertes Ödland]—meet together one day in learned and lucid minds (minds destined, let us hope, to achieve more than the present writer); and may they share a workbench in the laboratory of the *cultural-scientific history of images*.²⁴

But as I have suggested, Warburg himself realizes such interdisciplinarity a few years later in *Mnemosyne*, his cultural-scientific "laboratory," where, with the help of others, he grafts the history of astrology (an offshoot of the "study of religion") onto "art history." Encouraged and provoked upon his return from the sanatorium by Saxl's use of *Tafeln* and his interests in medieval and Arabic astrology, Warburg pushes himself to cultivate a new field of thought.

It has often been lamented that Warburg left no programmatic text clearly adumbrating this newfound "land" and the theoretical ideas that help him map it.²⁵ The *Einleitung* to *Mnemosyne*, however, does attempt to distill the main currents of his speculative thought for a general readership. More particularly, this text tries

23. See Wind, "Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and Its Meaning for Aesthetics," in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Horst Bredekamp, "A Neglected Tradition? Art History as *Bildwissenschaft*," *Critical Inquiry* 29 (2003): 418–428; also Wuttke, "Aby M. Warburgs Kulturwissenschaft," in *Dazwischen: Kulturwissenschaft auf Warburgs Spuren* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1996), 2:737–766.

24. *RPA*, 650–651 (translation modified); *GS*, I.2:534–535.

25. Warburg wrote a brief text on method in 1928, "Zur kulturwissenschaftliche Methode" (WIA, III.113.4.1) whose main points are all taken up in the *Einleitung* to *Mnemosyne*.

to explain why art history should be joined to cosmography in a single intellectual vision, or, if you will, why a single *Bilderatlas* should be both an “album” of art and a collection of astrological images. In the event, however, this thoroughly heuristic text tends to shift back and forth between these two realms, as if it were obvious that they shared the same theoretical propositions or assumptions. One passage, though, directly juxtaposes Warburg’s two principal intellectual concerns:

[Bewußtes Distanzschaffen] setzt die unverlierbare Erbmasse mnemisch ein, aber nicht mit primär schützender Tendenz, sondern es greift die volle Wucht der leidenschaftlich-phobischen, im religiösen Mysterium erschütterten gläubigen Persönlichkeit im Kunstwerk mitstilbildend ein, wie andererseits aufzeichnende Wissenschaft das rhythmische Gefüge behält und weitergibt, in dem die Monstra der Phantasie zu zukunftsbestimmenden Lebensführern werden.²⁶

[Conscious creation of distance] mnemonically implants the undetachable heritage, but not with a primarily protective tendency; instead, the full force of the passionate-phobic personality, convulsed by and believing in religious mystery, intervenes stylistically in the artwork, just as, conversely, record-keeping science conserves and imparts the rhythmic structure in which the monsters of fantasy become future-determining guides to life.

Unfortunately, we are told nothing more here about how “Bewußtes Distanzschaffen” via the artwork is the same (or different) from that forged by astrological science. Rather, we are left to ponder the convergence of “religious mystery” and “monsters of fantasy.”

For clarity’s sake, then, I want to consider, first, the passage in the introduction that frames *Mnemosyne* primarily as an art-historical project. Its relatively straightforward description of Warburg’s aims and method relies on vocabulary by-now familiar to us:

The atlas for *Mnemosyne* wants initially only to be, in its pictorial foundation, an inventory [Inventar] of classicizing pre-stampings, which stylistically affected the representation of life in motion in the period of the Renaissance.

Such a comparative view must be limited to the investigation of *œuvres* of a few main artist types [Hauptkünstlertypen], especially because systematic, comprehensive groundwork is lacking in this field. Instead, it has to try to comprehend the meaning of these expressive values preserved by memory [dieser gedächtnismäßig aufbewahrten Ausdruckswerte] as a meaningful, spiritual-technical function, through a more deeply penetrating social-psychological investigation.²⁷

26. GS, II.1:3.

27. Ibid.

The novelty of this formulation lies in how a “vergleichende Betrachtung” is now specifically based on a limited “Inventar” of images. In claiming that the lack of “systematic, comprehensive groundwork” forces him to rely on “Hauptkünstler-typen” for his “investigation,” Warburg also spurns the iconographic and iconological methods that Panofsky, in particular, promotes in the 1920s. Warburg may also be distancing himself, as I shall argue in the next chapter, from Cassirer’s systematic philosophy of symbolic forms.²⁸ Undertaking instead “a more deeply penetrating social-psychological investigation,” one that will allow *Mnemosyne*’s viewers to perceive immediately how *Distanzierung* is won and lost over time and across cultures, Warburg champions, both from necessity and conviction, a decidedly nonsystematic, imperfect, and participatory form of art history. The “meaning” he seeks “to grasp” is fluid rather than static, expressive rather than symbolic, as we are invited to remember “expressive values” and to mediate their spiritual uses.

Aside from its typically dense, neologicistic diction, the most telling aspect of the *Einleitung* is how it invokes dualities only to dissolve them. Reflecting, for instance, on his debt to Nietzsche, Warburg writes:

Since Nietzsche’s time a revolutionary posture is no longer needed in order to see antiquity’s essence in the symbol of the dual-herm of Apollo-Dionysius. On the contrary, the superficial, quotidian use of this doctrine of contraries [Gegensätzlichkeitslehre] in the contemplation of pagan art makes it instead difficult to take seriously that one comprehends *sophrosyne* and *ecstasis* within the organic unity of their polar function as liminal values stamped by human expressive will [bei der Prägung von Grenzwerten menschlichen Ausdruckswillens].²⁹

Nietzsche’s contrast between the Dionysian and Apollonian modes provokes superficial interpretations because many are unwilling or unable to perceive “the organic unity” that may allow both modes to inform the artwork at once. On closer inspection, then, two other cardinal aspects of Warburg’s thought emerge here. First, there is an important, if imperfect and rather underappreciated, debt to the Hegelian, dialectical tradition in which opposites, however extreme, find mediation in self-consciousness, here dubbed the “expressive will.” Warburg would balance Apollonian *sophrosyne* with Dionysian *ecstasis* to realize a third term that sublimates them. In this sense, he flirts with the traditional synthetic aspirations of *Geistesgeschichte*, even as he implicitly challenges Panofsky’s notion of *Kunstwollen*, which suggests that the artwork’s “immanent meaning” must be divorced

28. Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante*, 437, asserts there was no “communauté du travail” between Panofsky, Cassirer, and Warburg.

29. *GS*, II.1:4. A herm was a rectangular stone, bearing a carved head or bust, usually of Hermes, that served as a boundary stone in ancient Greece and later in Rome. The term *herm* also is the origin of the word *hermeneus* (interpreter).

from the artist's intentions and psychology, or for that matter from those of the belated viewer.³⁰ But again, Warburg's attempts at synthesis are far less stable, conceptual, and teleological than those cultivated in Hegel's phenomenological aesthetics or account of historical change. Throughout his work, but especially in *Mnemosyne*, Warburg refuses to let "liminal values" become merely sublated "moments" (*Augenblicke*); instead, such values remain stubbornly improper and personal, and so in excess of any desired synthesis. As we saw in the Kreuzlingen talk, such *Ausdruckswerte* inevitably recur, even in places quite distant in time and place from where they first appear. Nonetheless, and this is my second point, like Nietzsche's vision of Greek antiquity, Warburg's ideal is retrospective, indeed at times rather nostalgic. It is only in a select sliver of Renaissance art, marked by its formal language of human gestures and emotions, here epitomized by the phrase "Prägung von Grenzwerten menschlichen Ausdruckswillens," which combines, monad-like, objective and subjective elements, that Warburg finds his utopia. Related to this, therefore, is Warburg's willingness to make analysis of the historical plight of the *Nachkommender* and the question of values the vital, even necessary prologue to any hermeneutics. Historical memory is synonymous with *Kulturwissenschaft*; but such wide-ranging retrospection also serves as the dialectical, distance-creating third way for "pliable, artistic people" to navigate between science and religion, or between "the tendency towards tranquil looking or orgiastic devotion" (*die Tendenz zur ruhigen Schau oder orgiastischen Hingabe*).³¹

Mnemosyne is dedicated to describing and redescribing this dialectic and the metaphoric in-between space it creates: "Between imaginary grasping and conceptual contemplation [Zwischen imaginären Zugreifen und begrifflicher Schau] stands the supple gauging [hantierende Abtasten] of the object with its consequent plastic or painterly mirroring, which one calls the artistic act."³² Warburg would catalogue and make visible again "those quandaries of spiritual humanity," caught between the chaos of emotions inspiring artistic creation and the actual objects, whether historical or empirical, calling for formal representation. In so doing, he would bring before the eyes the scholar's contingency. Culture thus can be judged

30. See Erwin Panofsky, "The Concept of Aesthetic Volition," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981): 26. This is a translation of his 1920 essay, "Der Begriff des Kunstwillens." Briefly put, artistic volition must be discovered in the artwork, not outside it. For a reconsideration of this influential text, see Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 79–96. See also Ginzburg's discussion of *Kunstwollen* in "From Aby Warburg to E. H. Gombrich," in *Myths, Emblems, Clues*, 37–39. W. J. T. Mitchell largely rejects Panofsky's hermeneutic in *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), esp. 47–48.

31. GS, II.1:3. In *Grundbegriffe* I, Warburg varies this theme repeatedly; for example: "Unser (des Menschen) einzig wirklicher Besitz: die ewig flüchtige Pause zwischen Antrieb und Handlung" (fol. 4). In trying to reconcile such diverse efforts as the *Mnemosyne* project and Warburg's study of the snake rituals of North American Pueblo Indians, Imbert argues that the *tertium quid* is an anthropological perspective. Imbert, "Aby Warburg," 38–39.

32. GS, II.1:3.

by the degree to which it succeeds in mediating between the “external world” of action and interior worlds of imagination and contemplation. Culture forms a “Zwischenraum,” which the *Atlas* strives to mimic and (re)structure. Mapping this historical, material, and conceptual space is how Warburg determines the artwork’s quality, which is to say chiefly its psychological and anthropological value (*Wert*). Rather than adopting the schematic, Kantian language of taste, or riding the locomotive of systematic, critical philosophy, he avoids the nebulous territory of aesthetic judgment, already well-trod by nineteenth-century art history, in favor of tracking from antiquity onward the recurrence of expressions of “animated life.” A kind of eternal return (though Warburg never uses the phrase), this phenomenon can be intuited by the re-membering art historian, who tries to identify its contours (*Umfänge*), recuperate its “values,” and only then make judgments about individual cultures, artists, and artworks.

Warburg’s efforts thus imitate, however quixotically, those of Florentine quattrocento artists who struggled “die Erbmasse phobischer Engramme einzuver-seelen” (to internalize spiritually the hereditary mass of phobic engrams) in the wake of a general historical amnesia and the specifically medieval tendency to abstract and so deny the primacy of corporeal movement and expression. Renaissance attempts to reexpress these universal, irrepressible “engrams” were libratory insofar as the individual artist, in conscious imitation of the formal models provided by his classical predecessors, engaged the world through “self-externalization.” In a crucial passage for understanding his art-historical project, Warburg explicates this cardinal tension between form and content, or, more accurately, world and self, and how such polarity yields a compelling style even as it provides the model for his own encyclopedic, syncretic efforts:

The compulsion toward a confrontation with the form-world of previously stamped expressive values [Auseinandersetzung mit der Formenwelt vorgeprägte Ausdruckswerte]—they may well originate either from the past or present—heralds the decisive crisis for every artist who wants to accomplish his own style. The insight that this process has an extraordinarily far-reaching and until now overlooked meaning for the stylistic formation of the Italian Renaissance led to the present attempt of “Mnemosyne,” which in her pictorial-material foundation wants initially to be nothing other than an inventory of the verifiable pre-stampings [ein Inventar der nachweisbaren Vorprägungen], which demanded from the individual artist either a turning away from or ensouling [Einver-seelung] of this dual, insistent mass of impressions.³³

Significantly, the “Auseinandersetzung” described here is just one remove from the “struggle” described by Jean Paul. Instead of directly encountering the “world”

33. *GS*, II.1:4.

and thus suffering raw, volatile emotions, the Renaissance artist, whether painting in Florence or making tapestries in Burgundy, encounters an inherited “Formenwelt” already charged with engrammatic force.³⁴ His choice in this “crisis” is disjunctive: with an “Abkehr” he denies or represses the past and its “inventory”; but with an “Einverseelung”—Warburg’s neologism—a spiritual passage occurs, one that boldly looks backward and forward in time.

Even more than *Einverseelung*, the notion of an *Auseinandersetzung* is crucial for an understanding of Warburg’s “comparative view.” Defying translation into English with a single word or phrase, for Warburg it can mean, Gombrich observes, an “explanation,” a willingness to undertake a dialogue, or, more strongly, a “deliberate and difficult struggle” with the emotional content and aesthetic forms of the past.³⁵ Besides being historically and culturally contingent, *Auseinandersetzung* has formal, psychological, “ethical,”³⁶ and spiritual connotations for Warburg. Kany thus makes “die Geschichte eines Symbols” synonymous with an “Ergebnis von Auseinandersetzung” with memory.³⁷ For an *Auseinandersetzung* heralds the crucial *Prozeß* by which the Renaissance artist tries to tame humanity’s timeless demons and simultaneously reacts to specific historical influences and movements. In the *Einleitung*, for example, Warburg observes how the “monumental style of the Italian Renaissance” is in dialogue with Constantine’s triumphal architecture. Likewise, he insists that the “artistic language of forms” used by Raphael and Michelangelo rediscovers “the joy in the magnificent gestures of classical sculpture in conjunction with an equally vocal, reawakened sense for the archaeological real.” And, to illustrate the dependence on material factors in this “process,” he recounts how Flemish tapestries, with their physical mobility and realistic style, migrated to the south to effect “den Austausch [exchange] der Ausdruckswerte” in Antonio Pollaiuolo’s painterly depiction of Hercules’ deeds.³⁸ The study of this “Austausch” should yield a dynamic “inventory,” a thesaurus really, cataloguing “die sich illustrierte psychologische Geschichte des Zwischenraums zwischen Antrieb und Handlung” (the self-illustrated, psychological history of the liminal space between inclination and action).³⁹ Similarly, effectively rewriting Jean Paul’s “dictionary of faded metaphors,” Warburg elsewhere dubs this “inventory” humanity’s “Leidschatz” (treasure of woe).⁴⁰ Prizing such barely buried, pathos-laden treasure, he

34. Even a cursory glance at Warburg’s writings and *Mnemosyne*’s panels confirms that the artist may be Flemish as well as Florentine. See Gombrich’s discussion of Warburg’s evolving view of the “Gothic” *Auseinandersetzung* with classical “expressive values” (*Aby Warburg*, 159–167).

35. Gombrich, “Aby Warburg,” 281.

36. GS, II.1:6.

37. Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 177.

38. GS, II.1:4–5. In panel 37 this example is realized purely in images.

39. GS, II.1:3.

40. Quoted in Diers, “Warburg and the Warburgian Tradition,” 68. See also Warnke, “Der Leidschatz wird humaner Besitz,” in *Die Menschenrechte des Auges: Über Aby Warburg*, ed. Werner Hofmann et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 113–186.

would reanimate the “liminal space” created by the object with the *Ersatz* visual space created by *Mnemosyne*'s panels. The artistic *Zwischenraum* thus becomes coincident with the theorist's *Denkraum*—both are places for *Auseinandersetzen*. What were before conceived as aesthetic *Denkmale* (historical-cultural monuments) here lose their reified status and are reanimated as fluid *Denkräume*, which even the belated spectator can experience at first hand.⁴¹ Warburg's metaphoric, stereoscopic vision, in short, is more focused on *Auseinandersetzung* than content, more interested in expression than representation.

In his prospectus letter, Saxl presents the *Atlas* as the culmination of all of his mentor's previous intellectual efforts:

The *Atlas* is a foundational attempt to combine philosophical and art-historical modes of observation.

Warburg dealt mainly with Italian Renaissance art history. Indeed, he does so much more amply than in his previous publications. In the *Atlas* Warburg succeeds in setting out synoptically the wealth of his scholarly work and research results.⁴²

Constellations of photographs accomplish, Saxl believes, what Warburg's writings could not by themselves: a synoptic, comparatist vision of how antiquity influences Italian Renaissance art.⁴³ In the *Atlas*, the parts are finally made, if not whole, at least accessible:

This configuration of history by means of placing before us now in a lively manner [gleich lebendig vor uns hinstellen] the historical singularity of the Renaissance in word and image is Warburg's singular path toward answering his question. For thus the people, who accomplished that reception of antiquity, become comprehensible to us.⁴⁴

41. In “Of Monuments and Documents: Comparative Literature and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Studies, or the Art of Historical Tact,” in *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, ed. Hans Saussy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 155–174, Christopher Braider takes as one of his starting points Panofsky's notion, epitomized in “The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline,” of the artwork as monument. He suggests that for all the interdisciplinarity promoted by Panofsky's science of “iconology,” the monument as such remains idealized and thus largely reified. But given how Warburg cultivates *Denkräume* over the building of *Denkmale*, the *Atlas* effectively rejects such monumentality, to say nothing of the neo-Kantian framework Panofsky adopts to interpret the artwork. See also Braider's *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth: Hercules at the Crossroads* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

42. *GS*, II.1:xviii.

43. It is also a study in self-consciousness: “Dennoch ist dieser Atlas etwas ganz anderes als ein Bilderatlas zur Kunstgeschichte der italienischen Renaissance, denn die Künstler-Persönlichkeiten sind von einer zentralen Fragestellung aus (nach ihrem Wesen) betrachtet: was bedeutet in ihrem Werk der Einfluß der Antike?” (*GS*, II.1:xviii).

44. *GS*, II.1:xviii.

But remarkably, in marketing the imperfect, idiosyncratic *Atlas*, Saxl refuses to moderate the “Pendelbewegung” of thought Warburg found in the Renaissance and indeed throughout history.⁴⁵ And though he might tell a neater *Begriffsgeschichte* than Warburg was able to or might have wished, Saxl faithfully promotes the most radical aspect of *Mnemosyne*. Noting that Warburg had previously transformed decades of research into only “small essays,” he observes: “In the *Atlas* [these] are demonstrated in broad form *ad oculos*.”⁴⁶

How, then, would Warburg reconcile visual and verbal conceptions of metaphor? In a September 29, 1928, *Tagebuch* entry, Warburg elliptically recounts: “Morgens im Palazzo Ghisleri (Brun) an dieser Kopie eines Mystischen Bildes (XVII s. holländisch? zwei Männer tragen die Weintraube aus Kanaan) das Wesen des Denkraumverlusts (das *Wie* der Metapher) dargestellt, ist labil.” (Morning in the Palazzo Ghisl[i]eri [Hotel Brun] with this copy of a mystical image [17th cent. s(outhern) Dutch? two men carry the wine grapes from Canaan] the essence of the loss of thought-space [the *How* of metaphor] depicted, is unstable.)⁴⁷ Warburg decries here the fruitless inversion of the “mystical image” of the pagan Dionysius being carried away from the Holy Land.⁴⁸ This suggests that Athens and Jerusalem (paganism and Christianity), rather than coming together typologically or metaphorically, remain at odds, *auseinandergesetzt*, and thus, by extension, Warburg’s project of bringing antiquity and the Judeo-Christian Renaissance together is put at risk, becomes “unstable.” Further, by making the “essence” of his prized *Denkraum* synonymous with “the *how* (or *way*) of metaphor,” and by making their loss coincident, he implies that historical moments occur and recur when artistic presentation is structured like metaphor and, conversely, moments when it is not. And while I have not been able to identify the “mystical image” pondered here, surely its importance lies in the way it forestalls hermeneuts like Warburg from using metaphor’s heuristic and conceptual powers to make sense of disparate historical material without becoming hermetic or, conversely, transparently allegorical.

45. GS, II.1:xix.

46. “In dem Atlas sind sie in breiter Form *ad oculos* demonstriert. Es sind die Pathosgestalten der Antike—wie die Mänade, der von den Frauen zerrissene Orpheus . . . —die in den Kunstwerken der Frührenaissancekünstler bald verkleidet, oft in völlig antikerischer Weise uns begegnen . . . Warburg hat begriffsgeschichtlich untersucht, welche von der Antike künstlerisch vorgeprägten Erlebnisformeln in der Kunst der Renaissance wieder aufleben. Die Ergebnisse dieser, durch Jahrzehnte hindurch geführten, ein großes Material umfassenden Untersuchungen, wurden von ihm bisher nur in kleinen Aufsätzen angedeutet” (GS, II.1:xviii).

47. GS, VII:345. The sixteenth-century Palazzo Fava Ghislieri is in Bologna and served in Warburg’s time as a “Palazzo delle Esposizioni.”

48. For the imagery of the cluster of grapes from Canaan, see Numbers 13:23. In another entry made the same day, an exchange between Warburg and Bing charts similar territory and connects the “loss” of “das *Wie* der Metapher” to the “Barock” (GS, VII:346). Franck Hofmann underscores how “bewegliches Bilderdenken” and the winning of “metaphoric distance” inform Warburg’s vision for the K.B.W. and his methods in the *Atlas*. See Hofmann, “Zwischen Mythos und Metapher: Kulturwissenschaftliche Philologie als Spazierung nach Auerbach und Warburg,” *transversale*, www.transversale.org/jb2/mythos/jb2_mythos.pdf.

Why such hermeticism might be perilous becomes somewhat clearer in another, somewhat less gnomic entry concerning metaphor and astrology:

Saxl hat meine Definition der Astrologie als "Kult der monströsen Metapher" etwas rasch abgelehnt: ich sollte vielleicht hinzufügen, der "abgeschnürten" Metapher.

Wovon abgeschnürt? Von dem Zusammenhang mit dem beobachteten Stern.—Diese antikosmologische Abschnürung erfolgt automatisch in der "Sphaera (Alexandria) barbarica," weil die tautologische Bezeichnung desselben Sternes die allein methodisch zulängliche Handhabung mit der 48 Gestirnen Ptolemaeus Sphaera) aufhebt, die Sphaera also als Zweckmässigkeitsinstrument "im Geschäfte der Orientierung" aufhebt.—Dadurch werden die biomorphen Elemente für hantierende Metamorphose des betrachtenden *Subjektes* frei: die durch Beobachtungszwang verbürgte Eindeutigkeit der Metapher als objective Umfangsbestimmung geht somit verloren.

Anstelle der logischen mathematischen ortsbestimmenden Verknüpfung (griechisch) tritt die diataktisch-hermetische. . . . Dies die Europafeindliche zur Trugschlüssigkeit zwingende Alexandrinische Element. Kosmologik gegen Kosmodiataktik die Metapher als "Sondergottheit" (Dank an Usener!).⁴⁹

Saxl has rather hastily rejected my definition of astrology as the "cult of monstrous metaphor": I should have perhaps added, of the "tied-off" metaphor.

Tied-off from what? From the connection with the observed star.—This anti-cosmological tying-off occurs automatically in the "Sphaera (Alexandria) barbarica," because the tautological designation of the same star annuls the only methodical, adequate manipulation of the 48 stars in Ptolemy's sphere; it annuls therefore the sphere as a purposeful instrument "in the business of orientation."—Through this the biomorphic elements for the observing *subject's* busy metamorphosis are let loose; also thereby lost is the guaranteed unambiguousness of metaphor as objective determination of scope through the requisite act of observation.

Instead of the (Hellenic) logical-mathematical, place-determined linkage appears the diatactic-hermetic. . . . This Alexandrian element hostile to Europe forcing her to false conclusions. Cosmologic against Kosmodiatactic, metaphor as "special deity" (thanks to Usener!).

The "tied-off metaphor" signals that a viable "linkage" no longer exists between meaning produced by metaphor and objective empiricism.⁵⁰ Just as one ties off a tourniquet to restrict the blood flow, such metaphor constricts access to vital

49. GS, VII:139. The entry is from 9/2/1927.

50. *Abschnüren* means here "to tie-off," "to constrict," or "to put a tourniquet on" (an artery, arm, etc.). The entry in Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* begins: "funiculum solvere, von der schnur, mit der schnur lösen und messen."

experience. The astrological imagination, it is further implied, here ignores reason's practical claims. Instead, it is fueled by *Schlitterlogik*. Analogously, in his notebook *Allgemeine Ideen*, Warburg asserts: "Wesen des Barockstils: Hantieren mit abgeschnürten Dynamogrammen." (Essence of the Baroque style: Manipulation with tied-off dynamograms.)⁵¹ In this manner, dynamogram and metaphor become synonymous, even as Baroque art's artificiality and didacticism are implicitly compared to elements of Alexandrian aesthetics. Thus, in the passage above, *diatactic*, which means "pertaining to order or arrangement, specifically as exercised by the Church," connotes excessive artifice.⁵² It recalls Warburg's oft-expressed judgment that for theological reasons medieval art and imagery repress the body's sensuous aspects, or what here are called the "biomorphic elements." Accordingly, *aufheben* here has fully negative connotations; it lacks any Hegelian sense that a more meaningful historical moment has been reached. Warburg decries Alexandrian astrology because it neglects the vital connection with the phenomenal world, such as had been established by its more empirical, dynamic predecessors like Ptolemy and Aristarchus. The Alexandrians cultivate only the "diatactic-hermetic" play of signifiers; they fail to reconcile the need for "Orientierung" with the empirical but universal phenomena ("die biomorphen Elemente") anchoring *Pathosformeln*. Instead, they give too much license to "the observing subject," who now manipulates the astrological *Denkraum* such that metaphor becomes what Warburg's onetime teacher, the classical philologist and historian of religion Hermann Usener, calls a "Sondergottheit," or a metaphor associated with the origins of myth, rather than the "guaranteed" means of producing an "objective determination of scope" about the real and symbolic relations between self and cosmos.⁵³ In this sense, Warburg traces here a formal regression or decline, from the universal back to the particular, from Hellenic science down to Hellenistic astrology or myth. And that he quite conservatively regrets the loss of "unambiguousness" (*Eindeutigkeit*) in metaphor again suggests how it serves as his methodological ideal, even if in practice this may prove incompatible with actual historical change.

51. *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 37. See also *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 87. In "Theory of Signatures," in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), Agamben offers a Neoplatonic reading of the "dynamogram" by comparing it to Renaissance signatures that function not just as sign or signified, but also as a form of signification coincident with the images themselves: "Just as the *Introductorium maius* or *Picatrix* offers to the magician perusing its pages the catalog of the *formae* and signatures of the decans and planets that will enable him to produce his charms, so *Mnemosyne* is the atlas of signatures that the artist—or the scholar—must learn to know and handle if he or she wishes to understand the risky operation that is at issue in the tradition of the historical memory of the West. For this reason, Warburg, with para-scientific terminology that is, in truth, closer to that of magic than of science, can refer to the *Pathosformeln* as 'disconnected dynamograms' (*abgeschnürte Dynamogramme*) that reacquire their efficacy every time they encounter the artist (or the scholar)" (56–57). Yet as the passage cited just above from the *Tagebuch* confirms, sometimes the scholar's task is to diagnose the disconnection between "signature" and image, rather than trying to remedy it.

52. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v.

53. I will discuss Hermann Usener's importance for Warburg in chapter 4.

While the large role that Warburg gives the cosmological in the *Atlas* indicates his debts to Saxl's pioneering research on the Arabic role in transmitting Hellenic and Hellenistic astronomical-astrological knowledge during the Middle Ages, by Saxl's own account in the letter to the Teubner Verlag, Warburg appropriates his research to construct a broader theoretical narrative:

On several panels Warburg shows the de-Olympification of the Olympians as demonic stellar figures in the late classical Hellenistic and Arabic east. And he brings to our eyes [vor Augen] the roaming street [die Wanderstraße] that Zeus traveled from Athens to Alexandria and India and from there returning back via Persia and Islamic Spain toward medieval Europe.⁵⁴

The Hellenistic process of "Ent-Olympisierung," but also the subsequent, recursive *Wanderstraßen*—decidedly not Benjaminian *Einbahnstraßen*—serve, respectively, as metaphors for the loss and rediscovery of metaphor's vitality. Warburg's self-appointed, intellectual-historical task, then, is not only to retie metaphor to the *lifeworlds* of the Renaissance and antiquity, but also to make visible ("ad oculos," "vor Augen") how and why this dynamic ability to transform the relation of the proper and improper for the observing subject is won or lost. As Davide Stimilli nicely demonstrates, Warburg tries to reanimate the mythological connotations in the word *Atlas*.⁵⁵ But whereas divine strength enables Atlas to carry, *phero* (Gr.), the world on his back, Warburg relies on the constructive powers of *Metapher* to undertake his most ambitious work.

Since metaphor both constitutes and describes Warburg's *Denkraum*, it is no wonder he decries the hermeticism of Alexandrian astrology, which with its heavy-handed allegories obscures the genealogy and translation of meaning. Still, it is telling that when it comes to Warburg's own metaphors, Saxl in the *Tagebuch* entries quoted above seems to object to its audacity. In his attempt to animate a new view of the intellectual history of antiquity, Warburg, Saxl suggests, has gone too far, is too intuitive, too closely attuned to what Nietzsche, in "Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense," calls the "Nervenreiz" (stimulation of the nerves) that fuels the kind of daring, novel metaphor that the philosopher prizes.

In their introduction to the *Tagebuch*, Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass directly link "Die Metaphorisierung als intellektueller Prozeß" (metaphorization as intellectual process) to Warburg's discussion of the history of astrology: "While metaphor's role in the history of the knowledge of nature is seen and analyzed from the distance provided by the Renaissance and modernity, it remains for Warburg in his own thinking an always valid, unquestioned

54. GS, II.1:xix.

55. See Warburg, "Per monstra ad sphaeram," 25; also Davide Stimilli, "L'impresa di Warburg," *aut aut* 321–322 (2004): 97–116.

tool.”⁵⁶ My contention, however, is that his entire œuvre, and not just his writing on astrology, questions and simultaneously seeks to vindicate “the role of metaphor” or what the translator of Paul Ricœur’s *La métaphore vive* (with Ricœur’s encouragement) calls “the rule of metaphor.” Metaphor for Warburg is much more than a “tool.” With its startling economy, swiftness of thought, unrivaled ability to unite disparate material in a vivid manner, together with its heuristic, thaumaturgical powers, metaphor is the methodological ideal toward which he constantly strives, especially in the unfinished *Bilderatlas*. To lean momentarily on Aristotle, if “life in motion” in art and the “dialectic of the monster” in astrology furnish *Mnemosyne* with its material causes, and the attainment of *sophrosyne* is its final cause, then metaphor serves as both its formal and its efficient cause.

Panels 41–49

Metaphor’s causality is most vividly seen in the sequence of panels 41–49, which form, arguably, the conceptual center (*Mitte*) of the *Atlas*.⁵⁷ Here the adaptation of classical images and artistic forms expressing the language of gestures and emotions proves most conflicted but also most subtle, as Ghirlandaio and Mantegna epitomize, respectively, what Gombrich describes, in an uncharacteristic but certainly apt Nietzschean gesture, as the “weak” and “strong” attitudes toward antiquity.⁵⁸ That is, Warburg eschews any programmatic, teleological narrative in the sequence; instead, constant oscillation and “inversion” are the norms.

Panel 41 (fig. 4), “Vernichtungspathos [cf. Tafel 5] Opfer. Nympha als Hexe. Freiwerden des Pathos” (Pathos of annihilation (cf. panel 5) Victim. Nymph as witch. Liberation of pathos), depicts, through an eclectic array of mostly late quattrocento images, the volatile emotions associated with the grisly fate of Medea, Christ, Orpheus, Hecate, and several unnamed “witches,” and then, fleetingly, how figures like David and Hercules overcome the forces precipitating such suffering. Outstripping the scope of Warburg’s early essay on Orpheus—the copperplate engraving of the *Death of Orpheus* by an anonymous master from Ferrara figures here (no. 11) prominently as well—the panel contemplates Christian inversions of

56. GS, VII:xxxvi. They also observe: “Warburgs Schreiben besteht vor allem darin, schwierige Sachverhalte im Aphorismus und in der Metapher zu fassen” (xxxv–xxxvi).

57. Saxl asserts: “Diese Gruppe bildet den Hauptteil des Atlas” (GS, II.1:xviii). Bauerle groups panel 40 through to panel 50–51 together. She ascribes the illustrations of the Tarot cards in panel 50–51 to Mantegna and comments: “Tafel 50–51 verdeutlicht noch einmal den schwierigen Prozeß der Antikenaneignung als einen der Befreiung aus zwiefacher Maske.” Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 122–123. Incorporating panel 50–51 into the sequence emphasizes continuity between art-historical and cosmographical currents in the *Atlas*.

58. Mantegna has the “attitude of strong natures towards the antique worlds of forms and emotions,” while Ghirlandio belongs with those “weak characters,” as he “allowed himself to be overwhelmed by the onrush of pagan frenzy that invaded his mind through the contact with Roman triumphal sculpture” (Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 296).

the pathos formula, such as Agostino di Duccio's relief sculpture of Saint Bernard's martyrdom (no. 4) and Luca Signorelli's pity-inspiring painting *The Flagellation of Christ* (no. 8).⁵⁹ Remarkably, it also incorporates the subtheme of the *Nympha als Hexe*. Renaissance manuscript and book illustrations of Medea form the opening chord (nos. 1, 2¹, 2², 3), and two images (nos. 17^a, 17^b) of a small bronze statue of a striding Hecate (or perhaps Prudentia) offer a relatively quiet coda in the lower right-hand corner. The right side of the panel, though, is troubled by a drawing (no. 21) by Antonio Pollaiuolo of Hercules with his foot on the neck of an already-defeated Cacus; this, just below a medal depicting the same scene, with the motto "vitorum dominator" (conqueror of vices).⁶⁰

Despite this apparent ethical triumph, the panel's overall formal effect is to suggest how Christian Renaissance attempts at "inversion" continue to be haunted by the extremes of magic and myth. Ovid's cardinal influence in the Renaissance is underscored by a small but centrally placed image (no. 3) from a 1586 edition of the *Metamorphoses*, whose resonance has just been established by ten mythological scenes (nos. 10¹–10¹⁰) from Baldassare Peruzzi's frescoes based on Ovid's poem, which occupy the right side of panel 40, "Durchbruch des antiken Temperaments. . . . Exzess der Pathosformel" (Breakthrough of the classical temperament. . . . Excess of the pathos formula).⁶¹ This survival of pagan irrationality is emphasized most obviously by the cross-reference in panel 41's *Überschrift* to panel 5, "Magna mater, Kybele. Beraubte Mutter. (Niobe, Flucht und Schrecken). Vernichtende Mutter. Rasende (beleidigte) Frau. (Mänade, Orpheus, Pentheus). Klage um den Toten . . ." (Magna mater, Cybele. Violated mother. (Niobe, Flight, and Terror). Annihilating mother. Raving (afflicted) woman. (Maenad, Orpheus, Pentheus). Lament for the dead . . .). Instead of signaling progressive enlightenment, then, panels 40 and 41 stress how classical images of violence and woe recursively trouble the Renaissance imagination.

In panel 41a (fig. 5), "Leidenspathos. Tod des Priesters. [cf. Tafel 6]" (Pathos of suffering. Death of the priest. [cf. panel 6]), Warburg narrows his theme to focus on depictions of Laocoön's dramatic suffering.⁶² This pathos formula, we learn from

59. See Bauerle (*Gespengeschichten*, 35) who glosses the panel by quoting a remarkably syncretic passage from *Schicksalsmächte im Spiegel antikiisierender Symbolik* on the polarity between Orpheus and Plato.

60. Commenting on *De laboris Herculis*, Grassi treats Hercules as a "founder of cultural and ethical values" and Salutati as championing metaphor as integral to "human self-realization" (*Rhetoric as Philosophy*, 85).

61. Kaja Silverman's *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), which explores the persistent role of Ovidian analogy in late nineteenth-century art and thought to the present, is variously influenced by Warburg.

62. Panel 6 is titled "Raub (Proserpina, Unterwelt [Tafel 5]). Opfer (Polyxena). Opfernde Mänade (Priesterin). Tod des Priesters (Laokoon). Conclamatio. Tanz des Priesters (Isis). Grabtänzerinnen . . ." It is here that an image (no. 7) of the Belvedere Laocoön first appears in *Mnemosyne*, though it remains unexplained, suspended, if you will, until panel 41a. Also panel 50–51 confirms the viability of the pathos formula of the "Grabtänzerinnen" with three images by Mantegna (nos. 5^a–5^c) depicting the "dancing muses."

the notebooks, is synonymous with the undesirable, but inevitable “superlative” central to Baroque art’s expressive language.⁶³ While the 1506 unearthing of the Laocoön statue in Rome marks the rediscovery of antiquity’s maximum engrammatic charge, it occurs, according to the account in Warburg’s 1905 essay on Dürer, well after the Baroque style had begun in Italy:

The discovery of Laocoön was an outward symptom of an inwardly conditioned stylistic-historical process [innerlich bedingten stilgeschichtlichen Prozesses]; it marked the climax, not the birth, of the “Baroque degeneration.” It was a revelation of something that the Italians had long sought—and therefore found—in the art of the ancient world: the extreme values of gestural and physiognomic expression, stylized in a sublime, tragic form [die in erhabener Tragik stilisierte Form für Grenzwerte mimischen und physiognomischen Ausdrucks].⁶⁴

Archaeology confirms the path already taken by Italian Renaissance culture, which includes, panel 41a shows, diverse media such as relief sculpture, woodcut, drawing, fresco, oil painting, and manuscript illustration. And if the essay on Dürer briefly traces the commerce visual arts had with literary texts such as the *Metamorphoses* and Poliziano’s *Orfeo*, here Warburg, especially in images 1¹–9 (all from before 1506), makes visible the debts artists had to the Virgilian tradition. While Pliny’s famous description and praise of the Laocoön sculpture (“a work to be preferred to all that the arts of painting and sculpture have produced”) informed artworks made before the discovery of the Belvedere statue, Warburg’s inclusion of images from a 1470 Virgil manuscript (nos. 1¹, 1²), a ca. 1450 manuscript of the *Aeneid* (no. 6), and a thirteenth-century version of the *Excidium Troiae* (no. 2) indicates how the literary tradition was also a direct source for visual *imitatio*. Further, this image constellation (literally) illustrates the circuitous and recursive paths of *translatio imperii*, or the uncanny motions that Stephen Greenblatt characterizes as evidence of “cultural mobility.”⁶⁵ Indeed, the fact that in fifteenth-century Europe,

63. See *Grundbegriffe* I, fols. 85–86, where Warburg suggests the Baroque style is synonymous with “Superlativa” and posits “Kunstgeschichte als historische Psychologie der Ausdruckswertschöpfung.” As such, the artist looks to “intensiveren Ausdrucksprägungen die er nun als *Comparativ Steigerungsform* eintreten lässt: Sie entarten zu abgeschnürten Superlativen d. Gebärdensprache deren Wucher des Wesens erster Rausch ist.” See also *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 67; *Grundbegriffe* II, fol. 57. As we shall see in chapter 4, Warburg’s notion of the “superlative” partly derives from Herman Osthoff’s research in comparative linguistics. In a marginal note, Warburg writes: “Inception of the Baroque style through the appearance of disjunct superlatives (Herman Osthoff, *Vom Suppletivwesen der indogermanischen Sprachen*, academic oration, Heidelberg, 1899)” (*RPA*, 249).

64. *RPA*, 556 (translation modified); *GS*, I.2:449.

65. Panel 7 (“Auffahrender Wagen als Sonnensymbol. Unterwerfung [Provinz] . . .”) and panel 8 (“Aufahrt zur Sonne”) are also, partially at least, dedicated to spatial dislocation. In panel 7, Warburg juxtaposes images of David and Napoleon. For the notion of “cultural mobility,” see Stephen Greenblatt et al., *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

and then again in early twentieth-century Hamburg, people were reading Virgil at the same time as they were creating and looking at art becomes central to the meaning of these visual and verbal documents.

While it is only in late quattrocento culture, the subsequent panels will argue, that this moment in the classical tradition acquires its proper “metaphoric distance,” the unique appearance in the *Atlas* of El Greco, via his *Death of Laocoön* (no. 19), strengthens the impression that Warburg is more interested in the synchrony of “expressive values” than in any Hegelian march of progress. Alternately, an emblem, *Dolore*, from Ripa’s 1603 *Iconologia* indicates another, more didactic method of interpreting and therefore mediating the violence of such imagery. As we saw Gombrich comment in “*Icones Symbolicae*,” Ripa offers a dictionary of visual symbols that relies at once on language to achieve its meanings and yet short-circuits language’s temporal dimension. Placing El Greco’s painting next to Ripa’s emblem (actually just the initial page of Ripa’s entry, the one with the *inscriptio*, image, and the first sentences of the *subscriptio*) confuses any purely allegorical value that might be derived from the emblem. The panel’s twenty-four images create instead a loose typology, fueled most powerfully by two images from Filippino Lippi’s magnificent frescoes (ca. 1495) from the Capella Strozzi in Santa Maria Novella.⁶⁶ In the first, panoptic image (no. 7^a), Adam is depicted just after the Fall, entwined, Laocoön-like, by a serpent; but in the second (no. 7^b), Warburg excerpts only Adam’s agonized face. This, in turn, is juxtaposed with an image (no. 4), apparently a sketch made from a classical statue, ascribed to Pisanello, of a bearded man’s suffering face. (Also included in the panel is a drawing by Lippi, no. 8, of Laocoön’s death.) In this manner, Adam endures the same fate as Laocoön, while the timeless *Ausdruckswerte*, the “überlebendige Muskelrhetorik” (overly animated rhetoric of muscles) associated with such death, mediate the temporal and cultural distance between Jerusalem, Athens, and Florence.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the “process” of sublimation becomes increasingly visible in panel 42 (fig. 6), “Leidenspathos in energetischer Inversion (Pentheus, Mänade am Kreuz). Bürgerliche Totenklage, heroisiert. Kirchl. Totenklage. Tod der Erlösers [cf. Tafel 4]. Grablegung. Todesmeditation” (Pathos of suffering in energetic inversion (Pentheus, maenad by the cross). Bourgeois death laments heroized. Ecclesiastical death lamentation. Death of the Redeemer [cf. panel 4]. Entombment. Meditation

66. It is significant that Lippi’s frescoes are found in the side chapel just to the right of Ghirlandai’s Tornabuoni Chapel, which forms the chancel of Santa Maria Novella, for just as a churchgoer might first experience Adam’s suffering but then find his redemption in Ghirlandai’s sequence of frescoes depicting the lives of John the Baptist and Mary, so the viewer of the *Atlas* turns from *Leidenspathos* in panel 41 to the inversions promised by Christianity in subsequent panels, esp. 43, 44, 46, 47, and 49.

67. Warburg, “Dürer und die italienische Antike,” *GS*, I.2:447. In this sense, what Daniel Albright calls the “*gestus*” of the Laocoön statue transcends the medium of stone and the mere spatiality that Lessing would allow sculpture. See Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

on death).⁶⁸ Here Donatello, Verocchio, Raphael, and others are enlisted to render death more static, less bestial, and thus as an event demanding “Todesmeditation” over revenge. Christ’s Deposition provides the primary pathos formula, with variations furnished by a relief from the Sassetti tomb in Santa Trinità (no. 4) depicting Meleager’s fiery death—which explains the phrase “Bürgerliche Totenklage, heroisiert”—and two images (nos. 1, 10) of the so-called miracle of the foot accomplished by Saint Anthony, which are meant, it seems, to invert humorously Pentheus’s dismemberment.⁶⁹ But given what is to come in this sequence of panels, arguably, the key to panel 42 is the image riddling its center: a Mantegna engraving of the Deposition (no. 7). Mantegna, as we shall see, plays a primary role in Warburg’s fragmentary, metonymic narrative of how classical *Ausdruckswerte* are successively mediated by Renaissance artists. No matter that the Deposition from Donatello’s bronze reliefs (nos. 15¹, 15²), a Raphael drawing (no. 5), and a Signorelli fresco (no. 6) make greater aesthetic claims; Mantegna’s engraving commands, retrospectively, our attention.

Yet rather than immediately amplifying his interest in Mantegna, Warburg, as if needing to revisit his 1902 and 1907 essays, turns (back) to Ghirlandaio in the next four panels. Those ur-efforts in iconology, however, now form the background for his attempt to depict the dynamics of the “*how* of metaphor.” Panel 43, “Sassetti-Ghirlandajo als Exponent der bürgerl. Kultur. Eindringen des Porträts—Selbstgefühl. Andacht pseudo-nordisch” (Sassetti-Ghirlandaio as exponent of bourgeois culture. Intrusion of the portrait—self-awareness. Pseudo-Nordic devotion), consists of images from Ghirlandaio’s frescoes for the Cappella Sassetti, together with one of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* anchoring the panel’s lower left corner. As we saw previously, Warburg argued that these artworks, especially when viewed alongside the Giotto fresco (ca. 1317) in Santa Croce, mark a transition between a medieval devotional style and a Renaissance desire to represent individual gestures and features to satisfy a patron’s worldly desires.⁷⁰ In the *Atlas*, however, the patron’s *voluntas* recedes to become a part of a virtual intertext.⁷¹ This does not mean

68. The *Überschrift* for panel 4, which features mainly images of Roman relief sculpture, reads: “Kampf. (Giganten) Raub. Herkulestaten. Unterwelt? Erdgebundenheit (Flußgott, Parisurteil) und Auffahrt. Auffahrt und Sturz (Phaeton). Der leidende Erlöser. (Prometheus. Feuerholen. Hochmut).”

69. On hearing the confession of a young man who regretted kicking his mother, Saint Anthony upbraided him: “The foot of him who kicks his mother deserves to be cut off.” Hearing this, the young man returned home and amputated his leg. Anthony, then regretting his words, miraculously rejoined and healed the severed limb.

70. Again, the essays discuss the cultural-historical contexts informing Ghirlandaio’s frescoes, including Sassetti’s will and the practice of the Florentine bourgeoisie of suspending life-size wax effigies from the vault of the Basilica de Santissima Annunziata as a thanksgiving and to gain God’s protection, a practice comparable to the hyperrealism Warburg laments elsewhere in Dutch Renaissance painting and the style *à la française*. Yet for all his attention to Sassetti’s “indomitable will to live” and Ghirlandaio’s obedience to the same, Warburg does pay some attention to the artworks per se. See *RPA*, 187.

71. But, in his letter to Teubner, Saxl suggests that “in den Erläuterungen wird das Testament des Sassetis veröffentlicht, das diesen Mann im Wort lebendig zu uns sprechen läßt” (GS, II.1:xviii).

it is simply replaced by attention to the artist's intention or to the spectator's psychology, two approaches that Panofsky critiques in his 1920 essay, "Der Begriff der Kunstwollens."⁷² Instead, Warburg balances Panofsky's formalism with his own psychological and historical concerns to recreate the tensions between different styles (and the values they express). The presence in the panel's bottom right-hand corner of two small portraits (nos. 7¹, 7²) of Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine by Ghirlandaio and Botticelli, respectively, thus indicates the still-incongruous influence of northern devotional painting. But in terms of meaning, like the Florentine painters, both saints self-consciously mediate between pagan antiquity and Christian doctrine, as if helping to fulfill the prophecy concerning Christ on the tomb in the *Adoration*. They represent "Selbst-Gefühl," and their portraits are placed on the same visual plane as those of Sassetti, the Medicis, and Poliziano. In the *Atlas*, that is, Ghirlandaio, much more than Sassetti, is made to look forward and backward—backward to Giotto's struggle to break with the Byzantine style in order to imitate nature, and forward to Mantegna's more refined solutions.⁷³

The contrast between classical and Renaissance "expressive values" is simultaneously heightened and muted in panel 44 (fig. 8), whose syncretic ambitions are announced by its *Überschrift*: "Siegerpathos bei Ghirlandajo. Grisaille als erste Stufe der Zulassung. Dagegen: Sturz (Phaeton, mêlée) Verwandlungen der Nike" (The victor's pathos in Ghirlandaio. Grisaille as the first stage of admissibility. In contrast to: Crash (Phaeton, mêlée) transformations of Nike). Asserting a seamless continuity between sculpture, drawing, and grisaille, the panel may be said to begin with a photograph of Verrocchio's relief sculpture (no. 1) commemorating Francesca Tornabuoni's death; but then it concentrates on Ghirlandaio's efforts inside the chapels of Santa Trinità and Santa Maria Novella to imitate classical gestures. Warburg enables this comparison by first showing images (nos. 2^a, 2^b, 2^c) of one of the tombs and the classicist friezes surrounding it in the Cappella Sassetti.⁷⁴ These images are then framed by four images (nos. 3^a, 3^b, 3^c, 3^d) from Ghirlandaio's grisailles, which border his frescoes in the same chapel. Depicting classical scenes of triumph and eloquence (*adlocutio*), they symbolize the survival and inversion of pagan expressive values in the Renaissance—thereby establishing the Florentine's debts to the art of mourning as featured on Roman sarcophagi, while forging, too, a causal link with panel 7, which is also titled "Siegerpathos."⁷⁵ Warburg shows two scenes (nos. 4¹, 4²) from the grisailles

72. Instead, as Holly notes, Panofsky wanted the artwork to be considered "as a *single* intelligible phenomenon in itself" (*Past Looking*, 80).

73. Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 114, reads panel 43 as representing the "Moment des Überganges" in the sequence. In the *Tagebuch*, Warburg describes Ghirlandaio simply "als Probe" for the *Atlas* (GS, VII:503).

74. An editorial note ascribes these to Giuliano da Sangallo (GS, II.1:80).

75. In effect, then, a structural relationship exists between the sequence of panels 5–7 and that of 41–44.

incorporated into Ghirlandaio's fresco, *Angel Appearing to Zacharias in the Temple*, in the Tornabuoni Chapel in Santa Maria Novella. These depict, respectively, a battle scene in which soldiers' horses appear to trample people and then an address of a victorious commander with those same people apparently spared, as if Ghirlandaio were painting Virgil's memorable lines from *Aeneid* 6.852–53: "haec tibi erunt artes: pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos." (These will be your arts: to impose the custom of peace, to spare the defeated, and battle the haughty.) These scenes, in turn, are juxtaposed with two analogous ones (nos. 5¹, 5²) taken from Constantine's early third-century victory arch in Rome. The effect of all this, then, is to narrow the distance between pagan and Christian values.

While juxtaposing artifacts separated by such vast chronological distances is the most obvious means of proving the *Nachleben der Antike*, in fact it is the metaphoric "how" of the grisaille technique that proves more crucial to an understanding of the method and theoretical aims structuring *Mnemosyne*. Playing on the Renaissance painting technique of using shades of just one color, usually gray, to imitate the texture of marble, bronze, or similar materials, Warburg frequently referred to the panels comprising the *Atlas* as grisailles. In an intriguing parallel with Benjamin's notion of mechanical reproducibility, Renaissance grisaille technique is imitated or recreated by Warburg via photography such that the black and white images of different artwork, often by different artists, frequently on different subjects, and sometimes from widely different historical periods, can be made to seem similar or immanent enough for comparison and metaphor to proceed, or at least to be contemplated. While art historians often link grisaille with chiaroscuro, viewers of the *Atlas* have compared it with quotation, the rhetorical figure of metanoia, as well as the suspension (*epochē*) urged by phenomenology so that the philosophical space of intuition and *Erlebnis* can be constructed.⁷⁶ Furthermore, like Renaissance grisailles, which not accidentally were often used to prepare the way for finished paintings with their full panoply of colors, Warburg's are meant, literally and figuratively, to adumbrate a more comprehensive, polished vision. As Schoell-Glass observes in an essay contrasting Renaissance uses of grisaille with Warburg's, the latter's monochromatism creates a secure space of comparison such that the immediacy of the passions can be mediated and therefore contemplated: "In every instance, the grisaille painting-technique is apprehended here as a space-creating medium (and thus as plastic); conceived together soul-space [Seelenraum] and wish-space [Wunschraum] may

76. For grisaille as quotation, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 264. For grisaille as metanoia and *epochē*, see Imbert, "Aby Warburg," 29–30. Didi-Huberman calls the technique a way "faire tableau avec des photographes" (*L'image survivante*, 454). On contemporary "quotation," intertextuality, and iconography, see Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

signify something like an inner utopia.”⁷⁷ In the so-called *Grisaille* notebook kept in 1928–29, Warburg plainly states: “Erschaffung des Grisaille-Menschen als Akt der künstlerischen Sophrosyne” (Creation of the grisaille-human as act of artistic sophrosyne).⁷⁸ Like the Renaissance artist and viewer, the belated critic and viewer embrace grisaille to secure reason’s spiritual comforts.

The grisaille technique also helps Warburg give metaphoric meaning to the history of art and ideas. In the *Grisaille* notebook, he contends: “Die scheinplastische antike Vortragsweise (*Grisaille* als Stich oder Zeichnung) hält das Schattenreich der vorgeprägten Revenants in metaphorischer Distanz, die ihrem *Wesen* nach [eine] dreistufige Typologie ist.” (The plastic-antique performance style [*Grisaille* as engraving or drawing] keeps the shadowy realm of the pre-stamped revenants at a metaphoric distance. Its essence follows a three-tiered typology.)⁷⁹ These three tiers are then outlined as (1) sculpture: Donatello, Agostino di Duccio, Bertoldo; (2) Pollaiuolo, Bellini, Botticelli, Mantegna, Ghirlandaio; and (3) Dürer. As such, keeping the “Schattenreich” visible yet “in metaphorischer Distanz” is a tangible art-historical task perfected over time. Dorothée Bauerle lays out the conceptual implications: “In three tiers Sophrosyne accomplishes its achievement of distantiation [Distanzierungsleistung]; it places the pause of prudence [Besonnenheit] not only between the self and the world, embodiment and abstraction, but also between past and present.”⁸⁰ Just as Odysseus in Hades keeps the shades of the dead at a distance, but still close enough to hear their instructive tales, Sophrosyne balances the near and far.

But that in practice the attainment of such “prudence” proved elusive for Warburg and the Renaissance painters he admired is confirmed by his ambiguous, shifting stance toward Ghirlandaio. In the 1907 essay, Ghirlandaio’s frescoes in the Sassetti Chapel are said to subordinate subtly images of “pagan histrionics” within an orthodox schema that declares the primacy of the “Christian edifice”:

In the shadowy midrealm [Zwischenreiche], below the Saint, and above the unbridled antics of the nature spirits, the spandrels of both funerary niches are painted with military scenes in grisaille, faithfully copied from Roman imperial coins. . . . The iconographical position of the grisaille figures will now be clear. They belong to the circle of those energetic, balancing symbols [Sie gehören dem Kreise jener energetischen

77. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, “Warburg über grisaille: Ein Splitter über einen Splitter,” in *Aby Warburg: Akten des Internationalen Symposium, Hamburg 1990*, ed. Horst Bredekamp et al. (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1991), 209. Schoell-Glass cites a *Zettel* by Warburg that reads: “Bilderatlas. Grisaille = arkadischer Seelenraumbekenner. Primitiv einfältiges, primitiv tatkräftiges Menschentum im Wunschraum” (199).

78. *Grisaille*, fol. 24.

79. *Grisaille*, fol. 32. Gombrich discusses this passage as signaling a Christian typology (*Aby Warburg*, 247). *Vortrag* generally means “lecture,” but it can denote also a “balance carried forward,” as in an accountant’s record book.

80. Bauerle, *Gespenstergeschichten*, 33.

Ausgleichssymbole an]; but they are confined to a shadowy existence, beneath the sphere of the sacred, where they can never disrupt Ghirlandaio's serene realism by introducing the gestural eloquence of their Roman *virtus*. This seems to me to symbolize the retarding function performed by the culture to which Sassetti belonged, in the stylistic shift from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.⁸¹

More particularly, Ghirlandaio achieves "gestural eloquence," rhetorical force, via grisailles that, given their position, function as images symbolic of the need to mediate between the active, worldly elements associated with pagan *virtus* and the contemplative, otherworldly elements proper to Christianity. By themselves, they are merely symbolic, even static representations of a lost culture. But viewed iconologically and, in the *Atlas*, metaphorically and metonymically, they institute the "process" of memory, restitution, and "reason" so dear to Warburg. Symbol thus becomes metaphor when its "function" is primarily expressive, relational, comparatist, and syntactic, rather than immediately representational. This explains why Ghirlandaio is gently blamed for the way the cycle of frescoes in the Tornabuoni Chapel (there are twenty-five separate scenes in all) permits content to gain the upper hand: "Once freed, the votaries of antique emotive gesture could no longer be kept at a devout distance [in andachtsvoller Distanz]."⁸²

This dangerous proximity explains why Warburg inserts in panel 44 two other sequences of images concerning Phaeton's crash and Nike's (or the nymph's) transformation. These moments of insufficiently mediated pagan "gestural language" serve as antithetical instances of, or perhaps simply strong points of comparison ("Dagegen") with, the way Ghirlandaio uses grisaille to admit ("Zulassung") such content into a Christian schema. Briefly put, the historical *translatio* of these former images is not yet fully achieved. We remain only at the "first stage." Hence Warburg shows two images based on Leonardo's frescoes (ca. 1503–5) in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio (nos. 12, 13), in which amid a chaotic battle scene once again people appear about to be trampled under horses' hooves. An image (no. 14) from Ghirlandaio's studio of Jason and Medea also returns, while Phaeton (nos. 10, 11) crashes once again. Similarly, two images (nos. 15¹, 15²) from the fifth-century illuminated manuscript known as the *Vergilius Romanus* and a stark image (no. 16) from a 1450 Virgil codex showing Aeneas and Achates led by Venus suggest how the uncertainty of those cardinal physical and spiritual *translationes* persists into the Renaissance. And while it is true that "Neptune calms the waves" in a manuscript illustration (no. 17) by Apollonio di Giovanni (ca. 1460)—and that this gesture, pathos formula, or literary topos is a philosophical touchstone

81. *RPA*, 247 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:157. Compare this with the two images of *adlocutio* in panel 44.

82. *RPA*, 249 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:157. See Vasari's account of Ghirlandaio's fidelity to the classical tradition (*Lives of the Artists*, 221–222).

for the late Warburg—still, the Trojan exiles remain stranded in North Africa far from their Italian destiny. Indeed, in this sequence of panels, Virgil momentarily usurps Ovid's place as Warburg's favorite classical poet, though it is the Virgil of empire, of hyperbolic extremes, where the desires of men and gods conflict, that emerges here. Finally, and most importantly, a sketch (no. 6) by a member of Ghirlandaio's workshop of a woman carrying a fruit bowl on her head suggests one of the possible "transformations of Nike"—although we still do not know where this "nymph" is bearing the fruit. Moreover, that we also see two details in grisaille (nos. 7¹, 7²) of *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, a painting ascribed to Ghirlandaio, which omit the head but depict, respectively, the Tritons and a battle scene looming behind the figure of a woman (presumably Judith), indicates that Warburg is still trying to confine the pathos formula's more ominous aspects within "a shadowy existence."

Panel 45 (fig. 9) proves most dramatically just how rare, precarious, and valuable metaphoric "Distanz" is for Warburg. A study in contrasts, its title reads: "Superlative der Gebärdensprache. Übermut des Selbstbewußtseins. Einzel-Heros, heraustretend aus der typologischen Grisaille. Verlust des 'Wie der Metapher'" (Superlatives of the language of gestures. Wantonness of self-consciousness. Individual heroes emerging out of the typological grisaille. Loss of the "how of metaphor").⁸³ At the center of the panel's twenty-four images are two frescoes by Ghirlandaio from the Tornabuoni Chapel, *Massacre of the Innocents* (no. 10) and *Apparition of the Angel to Zechariah* (no. 4^b). Cast largely in the expressive language of "superlatives," the *Massacre* unleashes all the terrible psychic energy that Ghirlandaio generally tends to sequester in grisaille.⁸⁴ Indeed, in the actual fresco, the slaughter colorfully depicted in the foreground is repeated monochromatically in the scenes portrayed on the triumphal arch in the background. Warburg's black and white *Atlas* questions this dangerous convergence by metonymically placing this image just above a reproduction of the *Apparition*, where the unrestrained pagan gestures are safely imprisoned in the background grisailles. Moreover, the same painting also appears in the panel as a smaller image (no. 4^a), as if Warburg were exploring the visual equivalent of rhetorical figures of emphasis. In this way typology is made to indicate not a theological progression but rather how the Renaissance language of gestures is prefigured in classical antiquity. Yet insofar as the grisaille form is dynamic, it inevitably yields to the painter's desires to find new forms of individual expression. The *Pathosformel* of the victorious hero is thus complicated by an image (no. 11) of Giovanni Bellini's *Blood of the Redeemer* (1460), where a triumphant but contemplative Christ dwarfs a kneeling angel, while both are shadowed by two

83. GS, II.1:82. See Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 115.

84. Commenting on the *Massacre of the Innocents*, Vasari highlights Ghirlandaio's "good judgment, ingenuity, and great skill" in expressing "emotions" in this "beautifully arranged confusion of women" (*Lives of the Artists*, 218).

gruesome reliefs of pagan sacrifice in grisaille.⁸⁵ This “stepping-out” of typology signals heightened artistic self-consciousness vis-à-vis the past, even as Warburg refuses to tell a one-directional historical narrative (here, for example, Bellini’s work predates Ghirlandaio’s by at least twenty-five years).

What, though, do the two extremes named in the gloss for the panel signify? To begin with there is the “Übermut des Selbstbewußtseins,” or when the dialectic of “I” and “not-I,” as Gombrich describes it above, becomes skewed, and artistic expression becomes too idiosyncratic, subjective, and contemplative. The panel thus seems to anticipate Warburg’s arguments about the Baroque as a culture of “superlatives” in which excessive attention to artistic forms leads to “Hantieren mit abgeschürften Dynamogrammen.”⁸⁶ Ironically, then, in a fresco like the *Massacre of the Innocents*, the dialectic between *Engramm* and form is weighted toward the latter, since the excessive passions depicted there no longer maintain a vital, empirical connection to the world but rather are merely imitative of classical scenes. Again, the metaphor is “tied-off.”

Conversely, with the “Verlust des ‘Wie der Metapher’” a hermeneutic loss occurs with immediate implications for Warburg’s method; for in this panel, hyperbolic gestures and self-conscious heroes verge on exiting his typological ideal. Between the symbol’s immediacy and allegory’s abstraction lies metaphor’s dynamic, if unstable and often unattainable *Denkraum*. The “loss of the ‘how of metaphor’” occurs in this panel’s space, just as it does for Warburg in Alexandrian astrological imagery, since in both the artistic and the cosmographic realms overly subjective expression trumps both empirical vitality and formal restraint (such as is achieved by grisaille). Thus Matthew Rampley argues that the Renaissance is so central to Warburg because it serves as the “pivot point in the transition from the symbol to the allegory and, being an ‘era of transition,’ [it] is a site of conflict, of tensions between two contradictory attitudes toward representation.”⁸⁷ And yet Warburg largely spurns the Benjaminian pleasures of the melancholic allegorist—this despite Benjamin’s attempts in his 1928 book on the *Trauerspiele* (almost certainly not read by Warburg) to enlist Warburg as an ally.⁸⁸ Nor does he cultivate any Foucauldian nostalgia for an *episteme* of resemblance based on analogy. Rather, he tries to confront and thereby combine the material and spiritual aspects of the *Nachleben der Antike*. If his approach is allegoric, it signals a *psychomachia* of opposing forces rather than heralding a sublimation of material, sensuous facts.⁸⁹ A 1929

85. The annotation reads: “Christus als Erlöser, dessen Blut von einem Engel im Kelch aufgefangen wird. Im Hintergrund Brüstung mit paganen Opferszenen” (GS, II.1:82).

86. See also Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 250.

87. Matthew Rampley, “From Symbol to Allegory: Aby Warburg’s Theory of Art,” *Art Bulletin* 79.1 (1997): 52.

88. See Benjamin, *Origin*, 150–151, 225–226.

89. On allegory as *psychomachia*, see Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964).

notebook entry dramatically maps this polarity in both cosmic and personal terms: "(ging das Denken schlecht). . . . Malerei—Illustrat. Kst. kosmisch einordnend schafft sich d. Kühlraum der Pathosformeln in der Scheinplastik d. Grisaille. Die metaphorische Distanz der typologischen Theologie kommt zu Hilfe. Aufruhr d. Tragödie" ([thinking went badly]. . . . Painting—Illustr[ative] art cosmically ranging creates in grisaille plasticity the walk-in cooler of pathos formulas. The metaphoric distance of typological theology provides help. Up[roar] of tragedy).⁹⁰ With tragedy's specter always looming, Warburg would construct a metaphoric "Kühlraum" where theological typology and artistic technique might coolly combine to produce the pathos formulas by which we can intuit our not-so-proper place in history and the cosmos.

Panel 46 (fig. 10) is glossed as "Ninfa. 'Eilbringitte' im Tornabuoni-Kreise. Domestizierung" (Nymph. "Hurry-Bring-It" in the Tornabuoni circle. Domestification). Gombrich's detailed, inspired reading of this panel treats it as emblematic of the entire *Atlas*; he describes how the series of variations on Ghirlandaio's fruit-bearing "nymph"—images by Lippi (no. 5), Raphael (no. 16), Botticelli (no. 13), and even a photograph taken by Warburg of a peasant woman in Settignano (no. 18)—produces "memory" in the spectator.⁹¹ The panel also highlights how literary expression plays a crucial, dialectical role in Renaissance art history. Five images (nos. 8¹-8⁵) are dedicated to reproducing manuscript pages of Lucrezia Tornabuoni's *Storie sacre*, written sometime after 1469, apparently for her grandchildren.⁹² Versifying biblical themes, particularly those associated with Judith and Holofernes (no. 8³), Susanna and the Elders (no. 8⁵), Tornabuoni's poems provide Warburg with another instance of *translatio studii*. But even more than these verbal artifacts, the visual evidence of what it means to effect a *translatio* in quotidian space drives the panel's metonymic logic. Next to the five manuscript pages a portrait by Ghirlandaio of Giovanni Tornabuoni's daughter-in-law is placed (no. 9), and this leads, reading from left to right, to a medallion, with her image on one side (no. 10¹), but on the other that of "Venus virgo" (no. 10²). Dwarfing all of these images, though, is a reproduction (no. 6^a) in the panel's upper right-hand corner of Ghirlandaio's *Birth of John the Baptist* in the Tornabuoni Chapel. And, as if the panel's other images had not already made manifest what our focus should be in this scene of "Domestication," Warburg appends, with a paper clip, a copy of the detail of the fruit-bearing woman, just to the right of the fruit-bearing woman in the actual reproduction.

That Warburg seizes on this (literally) marginal figure has historical precedent. Vasari observes: "And finally, there is a woman who, following Florentine custom,

90. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 44.

91. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 297–300.

92. For a translation of Tornabuoni's verse, see Lucrezia Tornabuoni, *Sacred Narratives*, ed. and trans. Jane Tylus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

brings fruit and flasks of wine from the country—a very beautiful detail.”⁹³ Yet for Warburg the aesthetic aspects of this “detail” are, he insists, less important than what it confirms about the survival of the classical tradition’s most vital, redemptive aspects. This figure’s engrammatic charge was successfully domesticated (“Domes-tizierung”) in Christian Renaissance Florence, but in such a way that it bore fruits that we latecomers, if we let ourselves be led by Warburg’s obsessions, can still perceive it with the shock of recognition, even if its significance has become somewhat abstracted. In the 1901 *Fragmente* notebook, Warburg writes: “Das Früchte tragende Mädchen ist: Greif-Schmuck Tanz-Hieroglyphe / Tragen-Bringen mimisch opfern / dynamisches Wertzeichen, das zur statischen Bestimmung angeeignet wird. Der Übergang vom Bild zum Zeichen ist so zum ersten Mal festzustellen.” (The fruit-carrying woman is: grasp-ornament dance-hieroglyph / carrying-bringing mimetically sacrificing / dynamical sign of value that is appropriated as a static determination. The transition from image to sign can thus be detected for the first time.)⁹⁴

What might be meant by this last portentous claim and by the word “Eilbringitte” in the *Überschrift* is clarified if we turn back to 1901, to an unpublished dialogue cast as an actual epistolary correspondence in which Warburg, with André Jolles’s help, tries in a more sustained manner to understand “die Nymphe der Frührenaissance” and, more specifically, the “Laufende Frau” in Ghirlandaio’s fresco.⁹⁵ The *Ninfa fiorentina*, as the text is titled, consists mainly of an exuberant *laudatio* of the nymph by Jolles and then Warburg’s more sober reply.⁹⁶ The text, in effect, informally rehearses the material that will form the bulk of the 1902 essay on Sassetti and his circle. As for Jolles’s contribution, Gombrich opines that his letter is really an expression of Warburg’s own thoughts: “The formulation is certainly his, but it seems that the ideas are mainly Warburg’s; Jolles put them on paper to help

93. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, 219. The translators note that “many Renaissance artists decorated birthing trays (*deschi da parto*), upon which these traditional gifts would be presented” (ibid., 544). But this does not explain why the woman appears to be pregnant. Bauerle writes that panel 46 “soll zeigen, wie es möglich wurde das diese Figur [i.e., the nymph] erlaubtermaßen das Geburtszimmer einer christlichen Legende betreten durfte” (*Gespensstergeschichten*, 117).

94. Cited in Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 119, from the *Fragmente* notebook. The same quote appears almost verbatim in Warburg, *Symbolismus*, 91.

95. Gombrich explains: “Warburg now had a name for this apparition that had captivated his imagination more than thirty years earlier. Warburg also calls her in his notes the ‘Eilsiegebring’ the ‘hurrying victory-bringer’ or, in an even more untranslatable punning condensation, ‘Eilsiegebringitte’, ‘hurried-victory Bridget’. The screen was to tell the ‘fairytale of Miss Hurrybring’ (*Das Märchen vom Fräulein Schnellbring*)” (*Aby Warburg*, 297). In the *Tagebuch*, Bing writes: “Die Eilsiegebringitte als Friedensvermittlerin! Energetische Inversion der Triumph-Idee. Aus dem gemeinsamen Erlebnis in seinem sachlichsten Aspekt wächst die Kraft zur Überwindung der persönlichsten Nöte” (*GS*, VII:501).

96. Warburg and Jolles, *WIA*, III.55.1, *Ninfa fiorentina*, fols. 1–12. The cover in vellum, stamped with “Debitori e creditori,” is adorned with a cut-out picture of Ghirlandaio’s nymph from the Tornabuoni Chapel. There is an edition of Jolles’s letter in *André Jolles (1874–1946), “Gebildeter Vagant”: Briefe und Documenten*, ed. Walter Thys (Amsterdam; Leipzig: Amsterdam University Press; Leipzig Universitätsverlag, 2000), 218–224. Jolles was an art historian, literary critic, and linguist.

Warburg in formulating his answers."⁹⁷ Warburg, that is, surmounts here the difficulties he was having putting his thoughts in traditional scholarly, discursive garb. Or more generously, the *Ninfa fiorentina* is a crucial heuristic exercise in which Warburg finds new solutions to old conundrums.

Jolles's praise of Ghirlandaio's enigmatic figure smacks, purposefully I take it, of *Schwärmerei*: "A fantastic figure walks into the room with a freely blowing veil, now a servant woman, now a classical nymph, carrying on her head a tray with splendid southern fruit."⁹⁸ He sees "etwas Überirdisches" (something otherworldly) in her but then wonders about the incongruity of her wind-blown appearance in the room where Saint Elizabeth has just given birth to the future John the Baptist. Such is his exuberance that Jolles then tries to temper his hyperbole:

Perhaps I make her more poetic than she actually is—which lover does not do that—but I had from the first moment that I saw her that peculiar feeling that sometimes comes over us when looking at a gloomy landscape, reading a great poet, or when we are in love: the feeling of "where have I seen you before."⁹⁹

Then, further upping the ante, Jolles describes his encounter with the nymph as "etwas (lache nicht) Mystisches" (somewhat [don't laugh] mystical). And while from an iconographic perspective, he discovers in the figure of Ghirlandaio's nymph the concealed figures of Salomé, Judith, and Tobias,¹⁰⁰ from the metaphorologist's point of view, she seems the very personification of an *epiphora*: "I lost my reason. She was always the one who brought life and movement to otherwise calm thoughts [ruhige Vorstellungen]. Yes, she appears as embodied movement [die verkörperte Bewegung] . . . but it is very unpleasant to have her as a beloved."¹⁰¹

In his reply Warburg first would moderate his alter ego's enthusiasm by insisting on "the philological gaze."¹⁰² But then he cultivates a theatrical metaphor to help him negotiate the larger cultural-historical questions raised by the Tornabuoni Chapel. He struggles to reconcile, that is, the frescoes' inveterate paganism with the demands placed on Ghirlandaio by his bourgeois patrons who wanted their piety and power represented.¹⁰³ Referring to *Angel Appearing to Zechariah*, Warburg muses: "The words of the Gospel fill the room. . . . What does the Tornabuoni family now think of this religious drama?"¹⁰⁴ His first response is more

97. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 107.

98. Warburg and Jolles, *Ninfa fiorentina*, fol. 3.

99. Ibid., fols. 3–4.

100. Ibid., fol. 4.

101. Ibid., fol. 5.

102. Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 113.

103. See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 121.

104. Warburg and Jolles, *Ninfa fiorentina*, fol. 8; the full passage is quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 115–116.

or less iconographic: he tries to identify each historical figure in the fresco, a task no previous art historian had attempted. He also notes, as he will again in the 1902 essay, that these realistic portraits may have a symbolic, religious function, similar to that of the votive images in wax of patrons that filled Florentine churches, images whose hyperrealism served a neomagical function of protecting the depicted in the afterlife.

To explain this essential balancing act he solicits Jean Paul's notion of metaphor:

Bei unserem Versuche, eine Zeit nachzuerleben, wo festlich spielender Gestaltungs-trieb und künstlerisch spiegelnde Kraft "noch (um sich . . . Jean Pauls Worte[n] zu erinnern) auf einen Stamm geimpft blühen," ist dieser Theaterzettel kein gewaltsam herangezogene pikanter Vergleich, vielmehr eine wesensgleiche Metapher.¹⁰⁵

With our attempt posthumously to experience a time when the festive, ludic drive to create forms and artistic, mimetic power "still (to recall Jean Paul's words) bloom grafted onto one branch," this playbill is no violently pulled together, witty comparison, but rather much more a constitutive metaphor.

Metaphor, in brief, describes both Warburg's critical archaeology and Ghirlandaio's attempt to balance his patrons' literalist demands with his own "*festive, ludic drive to create forms*," a "*drive*" that finds its most palpable expression in the figure of the nymph. Metaphor is "constitutive" because it enables both men to give their historical intuitions immediate, vivid expression.

Then, with another remarkable metaphor, Warburg compares the nymph with "einem schönen Schmetterling, der sich seinem Griff entzieht" (a beautiful butterfly that escapes his grasp).¹⁰⁶ It also escapes his *Begreifen*, for in his next breath, Warburg refuses or is unable to see it as a transcendent figure:

I was also born in Platonía and I would like to gaze with you on a mountain's summit the circular flight of ideas, and if our striding woman [laufende Frau] arrives, joyfully float and whirl about with her. But as for such an ascent . . . it is only granted to me to gaze backward and to enjoy the butterfly's development in the chrysalis.¹⁰⁷

This insistence on the past's immanence over any transcendent future neatly anticipates Benjamin's reading of the "shock"-producing image of a woman crossing the street in Baudelaire's poem "À une passante." Like his beloved "angel of history"

105. Warburg and Jolles, *Ninfa fiorentina*, fol. 8. See Wedepohl, "Wort und Bild," on this passage. She argues that Warburg "spricht in Sinnbildern" and that he promotes "die Metapher als Denkfigur eines anthropomorphen Weltverständnisses, das noch nicht zwischen Innen- und Außenwelt unterscheidet" (40).

106. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 110. This paraphrases "various drafts" of the *Ninfa fiorentina*.

107. Cited in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 110.

modeled on Paul Klee's painting, Benjamin's dialectical image resists becoming an object by which the world is transcended, since its gaze, despite its body's forward motion, is always directed toward the past. Similarly, Warburg looks "backward" in *Mnemosyne*, where the thirst for Platonic recollection is always complicated by historical and personal contingency.

In *Mnemosyne* the God of details and the mother of the Muses join forces to forge a *syncretism*, a rhetorical means of comparing polarized things, such that images like the nymph contain multiple, competing meanings. Greek maenad, Old Testament Salomé, Roman Victoria, Ghirlandaio's servant girl, and even, we shall see, pinup girl selling vacation cruises, the nymph refuses to be a mere symbol. She becomes instead a metaphor, literally and figuratively a *translatio*, for Warburg's, and by extension our own, historical consciousness. Her inexplicably windswept veil is a *bewegtes Beiwerk* not only resembling Venus's blowing hair and Flora's flowing robes in Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, but also, as we saw in chapter 2, embodying Alberti's precepts and capturing the energy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. She shows us how we might assemble the fragments of the past, but secondly and more broadly, how learned intuition, for all its flaws and limitations, should remain the chief motor of all forms of historical comparatism. The nymph, in brief, signals the irreducible semantic and phenomenological motion in the symbolic image, which resists being imprisoned by an idea or, alternately, being branded as mere appearance. She provokes instead psychology's focus on extreme subjective states, philology's attention to the morphology of forms, history's sensitivity to the recurrence of the old and emergence of the new, and phenomenology's concern with the limits of interpretation. She is, as Agamben puts it in a small monograph dedicated to Warburg's *ninfe*, the emblem of historical memory:

The nymph is neither impassioned matter to which the artist must give new form, nor a mould [stamp] in which to form one's own affective matter [materiali emotivi]. The nymph is an indiscernible thing by virtue of innateness and repetition, by form and matter. Yet a being whose form coincides point by point with the matter and whose origin is indiscernible from its becoming is that which we call time, which Kant defined for this reason in terms of a self-attachment [autoaffezione]. The *Pathosformeln* are made of time, they are crystals of historical memory.¹⁰⁸

In *Mnemosyne*, Warburg returns to a long-standing mystery: how is the maenad, the ecstatic nymph, who for him was an embodiment of the "upward flight of the Platonic ideal," translated in the Christian Renaissance and afterward without losing her engrammatic force?¹⁰⁹ His eventual conclusion that she is a "pagan goddess

108. Agamben, *Ninfe*, 18.

109. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 297–299; but see also the section Gombrich entitles "Fragment on the Nympha," 105–127.

in exile,” the Victoria of Roman art barely transformed and veiled to meet the exigencies of Christian orthodoxy, is reached only after decades of contemplation and iconological research. And even then, as we shall see in the last sequence of panels, she remains a figure whose motion and therefore meaning can never be perfected.

Metaphor, accordingly, stresses the recursive process of metamorphosis rather than the proleptic pursuit of an unattainable *telos*. Yet in making the nymph a *Pathosformel*, Warburg spurns any claim to be a historian of origins. Rather, as Agamben forcefully argues when he contemplates panel 46, she is a “paradigm”: “Every photograph is the original; every image constitutes the arche and is, in this sense, ‘archaic.’ But the nymph herself is neither archaic nor contemporary; she is undecidable in regards to diachrony and synchrony, unicity and multiplicity. This means that the nymph is the paradigm of which individual nymphs are the exemplars. Or to be more precise, in accordance with the constitutive ambiguity of Plato’s dialectic, the nymph is the paradigm of the single images, and the single images are the paradigms of the nymph.”¹¹⁰ As a paradigm of “life in motion,” the meaning of the nymph is as unstable as the meaning of any word over time. The task of the *Atlas* is to make visible possible etymologies and connotations.

In panel 47 (fig. 11), “Ninfa als Schutzengel und als Kopffägerin. Herbeitragen des Kopfes. ‘Heimkehr vom Tempel’ als Schutz des Kindes in der Fremde (Tobiuz-zolobilder als Votivbilder)” (Nymph as guardian angel and as headhuntress. Fetching of the head. “Homecoming from the temple” as protection of the child in foreign places [Tobias images as votive images]), Warburg further widens and complicates the nymph’s ambit as one of the “Urworte” expressing human passions.¹¹¹ Here the fruit-bearing nymph assumes various, often thematically conflicting forms. These include images by Botticini (nos. 10, 15) and Guercino (no. 12) of Tobias accompanied by the angel Gabriel; a sequence of late antique, medieval, and early Renaissance images showing the young Christ either in the temple arguing with the Pharisees or returning safely home, such as Simone Martini’s *Return of Christ to His Parents* (no. 4), which presumably is the typological act (“*Heimkehr* . . .”) establishing why this *Denkraum* of “protection” and “domestication” is occupied by the (re)appearance of the classical “Nymph as protecting angel” in late quattrocento Florentine art; Donatello’s depiction (nos. 16, 17) of Salomé dancing before Herod, and an image by Pollaiuolo in which she holds John the Baptist’s severed head (no. 19); a sequence of images by Donatello and Botticelli (nos. 21, 22¹, 22², 23, 24) of Judith either holding Holofernes’ head or about to cut it off; and, finally, two versions of the same image by Ghirlandaio depicting Judith with a sword, accompanied by

110. Agamben, “What Is a Paradigm?” 29. Bauerle takes a more historicist view of Warburg’s *Nympha* (*Gespenstergeschichten*, 117).

111. See Bauerle, *Gespenstergeschichten*, 119.

a serving woman carrying the head of Holofernes in a basket atop her own head (nos. 25^a, 25^b). Warburg nowhere tells us why he repeats the image in two different sizes, though the repetition resembles how a close-up shot in film concentrates the viewer's attention. This detail from Ghirlandaio also recalls the image of Perseus holding Medusa's head in his hand from panel 2, an image that Warburg repeatedly invokes beginning with his 1912 lecture on the Schifanoia frescoes.¹¹² In any case, the panel's overall effect is discordant, for it is difficult to reconcile the nymph's dual, polar roles "als Schutzengel und als Kopfjägerin," just as the biblical images of Christ and Tobias seem at odds with the violence and sensuousness in the representations of Judith and Salomé. And if the grisaille in the Ghirlandaio painting suggests how Warburg might want to resolve such tensions, juxtaposing figures like the nymph and Perseus reminds us how difficult it is for the most dynamic polarities in art and intellectual history to achieve stable solutions.

The sequence of thirty-one images in panel 48 (fig. 12), "Fortuna. Auseinandersetzungssymbol des sich befreienden Menschen (Kaufmann)" (Fortuna. Symbol of the struggle of the self-liberating man [merchant]), presents less gruesome ways that the pagan goddess, another variation on the nymph, was adopted by Renaissance artists, writers, and printers. Many of this panel's images are taken from manuscripts and printed books, including works by Christine de Pisan, Boccaccio, Erasmus, and Boethius. While this establishes essential links between word and image, and while many of the images are transparently allegorical, the gloss suggests Warburg is more interested in creating a dialectic of symbols than explicating a static allegory about fortune. The panel shows how the symbolization of *fortuna* shifts from the medieval wheel, with its connotations of human helplessness, to a female figure whose fluttering garments resemble a ship's sails and whose hand controls the tiller of fate.¹¹³ In "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunction to His Sons," Warburg describes the function of the wind-goddess *fortuna* "as plastic formula of balance [plastische Ausgleichsformel] between 'medieval' trust in God and Renaissance man's trust in self."¹¹⁴ The panel, that is, works metaphorically rather than allegorically, since it eschews a single narrative or a set of coherent narratives about fortune's tyranny or, alternately, about the conquering of fortune by the triumphant mercantile class with their ships on the ever-changing sea. The proud merchant, Rucellai, builds a palazzo designed by Alberti in Florence, but it remains incomplete and asymmetrical (no. 9). Thus the "Wappenrelief" (relief of a coat of arms) depicting *fortuna* (no. 18), set above one of the arches of his palazzo, expresses just one possibility, while Dürer's famous engraving of Nemesis (no. 26) represents a far darker one—the merchant's ship threatens to become a ship of fools. This shifting constellation of metonymic images frustrates the allegorist's desire to find

112. See GS, I.2:466–67; RPA, 570.

113. See Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 120.

114. GS, I.1:151.

a soothing vantage point for his melancholic reflections. If there must be an allegory, it pertains to Warburg's own pathos-laden efforts to trace how "humanity liberates itself" from being a passive victim of the mythic wheel of cosmic forces to become a self-conscious master of its own fate. When the goddess is almost completely humanized, as in Guido Reni's 1623 painting (no. 29), we momentarily close the previously unfathomable *Distanz* between cosmic forces and our own desires. And yet it is still ambiguous whether she will come bearing a platter of fruit or a head on a platter. The *Wanderstraße* she treads has many twists and turns. As Warburg writes in a notebook, "From headhunting: Judith, Salomé, Maenad; via the nymph: to giver of fruit, Fortuna, the goddess of autumn [Carpō]; giver of water: Rachel at the well, the fire-dousing woman in [Raphael's] *The Fire in the Borgo*."¹¹⁵ Even the literary sources painters like Mantegna (or those in his studio) use in the depiction of *occasio* (no. 28) create ambiguity.¹¹⁶ Based, Warburg tells us, on an epigram by Ausonius, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know the result of the struggle between *occasio* and the other figure in the image, which may be *poenitentia*, *eruditio*, or *virtus*.¹¹⁷

Still, the overall movement is clear. The (minor) presence of Mantegna in panel 48 creates the metonymic link to panel 49 (fig. 13), where mediating, metaphorical distance is finally realized. Titled "Gebändigtes Siegerpathos (Mantegna). Grisaille als 'Wie der Metapher' Distanzierung" (The victor's tamed pathos [Mantegna]. Grisaille as "How of metaphor" distantiation), it contains among its thirteen images seven actual grisailles (in addition to four engravings, and just two paintings, whose colors would have a strong affective charge were they not represented here by black and white photographs). While I take Bing's phrases to indicate that the chief concern here is how Mantegna achieves "Distanzierung" from such violent, volatile content, Warburg's grisaille repeats this achievement, translating it from artistic practice to theoretical speculation. Mantegna, the panel shows, achieves "distance" by imprisoning his pagan heroes in sculptural grisailles, making thereby a vivid *Verdichtung* of historical change.¹¹⁸ While Warburg then supplements or refigures this act by inserting the symbolic content of each image beneath the banner of typology, in terms of content, the panel is startlingly diverse, as if to say that an individual self-consciousness such as Mantegna's—all but two of the images are his, and the others imitate his work—can artistically, metonymically, reconcile the

115. Warburg, WIA, III.102.4.2, *Mnemosyne: Grundbegriffe* II, fol. 71.

116. Warburg's caption below the image reads "Occasio und Poenitentia."

117. On the Ausonius epigram, see GS, I.1:151.

118. Vasari recounts how Mantegna preferred to paint using "good ancient statues" as his models, for he believed they "were more perfect and more beautiful in their particulars than anything in the natural world" (*Lives of the Artists*, 244). Discussing the frescoes on the walls of the Vatican's Belvedere Chapel (destroyed in 1780), Vasari underscores Mantegna's mastery of detail: "Among the figures there is a man who wishes to pull off a stocking clinging to his leg with the sweat and who, crossing one leg over the other, pulls it off inside out with such violent effort that both pain and discomfort clearly appear in the expression on his face: this ingenious detail amazed everyone who saw it in those days" (247).

death of Orpheus (no. 9), the Madonna with Child (no. 6¹), Roman senators, with knives drawn, about to murder Caesar (no. 1¹), a bacchanalia (no. 8), the warring sea-gods (nos. 7¹, 7²), and a portrait of the Gonzagas (no. 5), one of the most prominent families in late fifteenth-century Italy and for whom Mantegna painted. With this panel less cluttered than the previous panels and arranged in a relatively more ordered pattern, it is as if here Warburg, in the sequence's last act, were refining all previous complications and entanglements, enabling us to see only the essential—that is, to see metaphorically.

As for form, if we recall Agamben's take of *Pathosformel* as "an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula," then here the victor's pathos is contained by the iconography of the grisaille such that contemplative "Distanzierung" results. In this, Warburg's stance recalls that of Blaise Pascal, who, when contemplating rhetorical and typological figures, momentarily considers the visual image: "Un portrait porte absence et présence."¹¹⁹ Similarly, quoting Mantegna quoting classical imagery and gestures, Warburg translates the viewer to a place of mediation where, for example, Bacchus is no longer an immediate threat but retains the ability to disrupt the pursuit of *Besonnenheit*. As Bauerle concludes, "Mantegna plays here a ground-breaking role. . . . Mantegna keeps the pictorial symbols of pagan, elementary passion at a distance [in Distanz]; he does not permit himself—as does Ghirlandaio, for example, in *The Massacre of the Innocents*—to be overwhelmed by their expressive force [von ihrer Ausdrucksgewalt überwältigen] . . . the revenants are mastered."¹²⁰ Given the explicit violence in some of the images—the photographs from Abu Ghraib would not be out of place next to the cowering figure in the *Death of Orpheus*—such "distantiation" must occur on a conceptual, second-degree level. In other words, the "Vernichtungspathos" of panel 41, which contains also a German imitation of the *Death of Orpheus*, has been (re)transformed by the subsequent, metonymic sequence of nine panels and their pendular movements. Writing in a late notebook, Warburg distills his ideal: "Metamorphose—Metempsychose—das "wie" der metaphorischen Distanz."¹²¹ Warburg the metaphorician, the metamortician, shores the fragments against his and our ruin.¹²²

In retrospect, then, the psychological dialectic of proximity and distance is already in full operation in the 1907 essay on Sassetti and Ghirlandaio. After insisting there on Sassetti's exemplary role in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, Warburg begins to adumbrate his vision of how comparison might pro-

119. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Philippe Sellier (Paris: Bordas, 1991), 275.

120. Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 122.

121. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 59.

122. For metaphorologists as "metamorticians" or excavators of dead metaphors, see Wayne C. Booth, "Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation," *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (1978): 49–72.

ceed with symbols or, if you will, visual sememes. He intimates, too, how Sassetti serves as his *Doppelgänger* in pathos:

Thus the apparently bizarre incompatibilities between the shepherds' Flemish garb and the panoply of the Roman general, between God and Fortune, between David with his sling and the centaur, between "*mitia fata mihi*" and "*à mon pouvoir*," between the death of the Saint and the death of Meleager, may therefore be viewed together; likewise, they can be understood as the organic polarity that existed within the capacious mind of one cultivated early Renaissance man—a man who strove for steadfast reconciliation in the age of the metamorphosis of energetic self-consciousness [der im Zeitalter der Metamorphose des energetischen Selbstbewußtseins charaktervollen Ausgleich anstrebte].¹²³

Briefly put, these images have metaphor's *energeia*. But they mark as well the metaphoric "Polarität" and "Ausgleich" that Warburg finds redemptive.

In *Allgemeine Ideen*, Warburg hints at a similar transformation: "Der Kampf mit d. Monstrum als Keimzelle (Monade?) der logischen Construction" (The battle with the monster as the germ cell [monad?] of the logical construction).¹²⁴ To transform originary "force" (*Wucht*) is the task of self-consciousness, whether it occurs in cosmology, art, psychology, or a philosophy of symbolic forms. Rather than turning to philosophy and the comforts of teleology, Warburg endeavors foremost to explore what metaphor can and cannot do. Thus it is crucial that "energetischen" modifies "Selbstbewußtseins" in the passage above, since earlier we saw it modify "Ausgleichssymbole." That *Ausgleich* may mean not only "reconciliation" and "agreement" but "replacement," "compensation," and "balance" indicates exactly what dynamism is lost with the "Verlust des 'Wie der Metapher.'" The "Wie der Metapher" aspires to a broad historical self-consciousness—one aiming synoptically to encompass the old and the new, to juxtapose wildly divergent pagan and Christian content, but also to attend to the "organic" necessity of form, thus compensating for the inevitable loss of sensuous experience as well as the belatedness of artist and critic. But as Warburg admits at the end of the first Sassetti essay, his study of late quattrocento Florentine painting is a "certainly problematic attempt [Versuch] at a synopsis of a feeling for life and of an artistic style [Lebensgefühl und Kunststil]."¹²⁵ Twenty years later Warburg was still trying to bring together and balance the parts. His "Versuch" remained unfinished, spectral panels still seeking to redeem the "Verlust des 'Wie der Metapher.'"

123. *RPA*, 249 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:158.

124. *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 19.

125. *GS*, I.1:158.

TRANSLATING THE SYMBOL: WARBURG AND CASSIRER

Beyond Iconology

It bears repeating: *Mnemosyne* is largely divorced from iconology as practiced by Warburg's chief successors, who turn rather to his earlier work for their methodological inspiration.¹ Briefly put, iconology aims to explicate the significance of an individual artwork through the interpretation of the symbolic values attached to compositional or iconographic features. To decipher these contingent features, imbricated as they are in a medieval or humanist culture long since past, great erudition is usually demanded. Yet to grasp next the meaning of the work's symbolic values, interpretation becomes mostly an intuitive act. This is because iconology tends to regard the individual artwork, its form and its details, as symptomatic of more general tendencies of the period and culture in which it is produced. Indeed, it is this attempt at historical synthesis rather than iconology's reliance on intuition per se that ultimately distances Warburg from the method he invented.

Gombrich, in "Aims and Limits of Iconology," insists: "Iconology must start with a study of institutions rather than with a study of symbols."² The visual symbol, that is, must first undergo an iconographical analysis, where texts and contexts

1. See Peter Schmidt, *Aby M. Warburg und die Ikonologie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993).

2. Gombrich, "Aims and Limits of Iconology," 21.

are adduced to track its possible references; subsequently, though, an iconological “synthesis” is sought that would leave particulars behind. As Panofsky writes in his programmatic essay, “Iconography and Iconology”: “Iconology is the identification of ‘intrinsic meaning or content,’” which is “apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion—qualified by one personality and condensed into one work.”³ To exemplify such meaning, he points to how in “the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries . . . the traditional type of the Nativity with the Virgin Mary reclining in a bed or on a couch was frequently replaced by a new one which shows the Virgin kneeling before the Child in adoration.” In addition to signaling changes in compositional style, this gesture “reveals a new emotional attitude peculiar to the later phases of the Middle Ages.”⁴ Here, in effect, we see a permutation of one of Warburg’s *Pathosformeln* cast as evidence of a definitive historical judgment. This contrasts, though, with how panel 43 (fig. 7) of the *Atlas* juxtaposes Ghirlandaio’s *Adoration of the Shepherds* with his brother Benedetto’s *Adoration of the Child* (ca. 1490), where the Child lies on the Virgin’s lap and is surrounded by various figures whose size, as typical in much medieval art, is symbolically reduced. By showing how two different compositional styles can exist synchronically in the same milieu, even among brothers, Warburg complicates, even frustrates, the kinds of generalizations about styles and periods promoted by iconology. His visual metonymy, in brief, challenges *avant la lettre* Panofsky’s search for “intrinsic meaning or content,” to say nothing of the narrative of historical progress dear to most forms of *Geistesgeschichte*.

Notably, Panofsky credits his attempts to isolate and therefore fix symbolic meaning to Cassirer’s influence: “In thus conceiving of pure forms, motifs, images, stories and allegories as manifestations of underlying principles, we interpret all these elements as what Ernst Cassirer has called ‘symbolic’ values. . . . The discovery and interpretation of these ‘symbolic’ values (which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call ‘iconology.’”⁵ How, then, do the “‘symbolic’ values” prized by Panofsky and Cassirer differ from those discovered by Warburg in *Mnemosyne*?⁶ And how do the “discovery and interpretation”

3. Erwin Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 30. Iconology aims for “synthesis rather than analysis. And as the correct identification of motifs [or images] is the prerequisite of their correct iconographic analysis, so is the correct analysis of images, stories and allegories the prerequisite of the correct iconological interpretation” (ibid., 32). In the “Introductory” to *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (1939) (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), Panofsky writes: “Iconography is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter of meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form” (3).

4. Panofsky, “Introductory,” 7.

5. Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology,” 31.

6. Like Panofsky and Cassirer, Gombrich, in an essay on Alberti’s symbolization of light, “Visual Metaphors of Value,” in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), tends to historicize such “symbolic values” without asking what they might mean

sought by the iconologist and philosopher of symbols differ from the *syncrisis* and *synderesis* cultivated by the self-nominated "Psychohistoriker" who diagnoses "die Schizophrenie des Abendlandes" through its images? In this and the book's remaining chapters, I will endeavor to show why Warburg is keener to underscore the psychological play of polarities than to insist on their resolution into a stable third term. I would illustrate, in other words, why and how he cultivates *syncrisis* rather than synthesis. Furthermore, that he comes to view as decisive his discovery of Giordano Bruno's notion of *synderesis*, or the intuitive faculty that belongs to the ethical-religious conscience, marks an iconoclastic or ironic stage in his thinking, whose metaphorics, though, also forges new comparatist perspectives.

Panofsky contends that the iconologist, even as he mines "literary sources" and other discursive materials to fashion interpretations, depends on the "mental faculty" of "synthetic intuition." But because such intuition can become circular if not solipsistic, it must "be corrected by an insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, the general and essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts."⁷ In terms of method, then, Panofsky's inquiry into what Cassirer calls forms of symbolic thought has enormous consequences not only for art historians but for all comparatist, interdisciplinary scholarship:

The art historian will have to check what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of the work, or group of works, to which he devotes his attention, against what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of as many other documents of civilization historically related to that work or group of works, as he can master: of documents bearing witness to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation. Needless to say that, conversely, the historian of political life, poetry, religion, philosophy, and social situations should make analogous use of works of art. It is in the search for intrinsic meanings that the various humanistic disciplines meet on a common plane instead of serving as handmaidens to each other.⁸

By contrast, Warburg's *Mnemosyne* drastically condenses this careful to-and-fro movement between the part and the whole, between various discourses and modes of representation. By replacing the sequence of sentences constituting iconology with a sequence of images, and then sequences of panels of images, *Mnemosyne* enables (or restores) the *Erlebnis* of the sensuous in the task of interpretation. It revives the *Nebeneinander* of seeing and demotes the *Nacheinander* of reading. Designed as a space for metaphoric intuition, *Mnemosyne* avoids, at least provisionally, the need for the kind of discursivity that characterizes Panofsky's and Cassirer's approach to

for the critic's own existence. For recent analysis of how the theory and practice of iconology chez Warburg, Panofsky, and Cassirer converge and diverge, see John Michael Krois, "Cassirer's 'Symbolic Values' and Philosophical Iconology," *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 101–117.

7. Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology," 38.

8. *Ibid.*

symbolic forms. If iconology tries to paraphrase an artwork's meaning, *Mnemosyne* embraces the concision, ambiguity, and instability of metaphoric expression. The former leans more toward the *Begriff*; the latter hopes for the immediacy of a *Griff* or *Greif*.⁹ *Mnemosyne* condenses the historical and conceptual circumscriptions undertaken by iconologists (including the early Warburg). Such *mnemische Verdichtung* would not furnish its spectators with "intrinsic meanings" or "pure" symbolic values. To make visible *Ausdruckswerte*, it would instead reshape and remember the initial experience that the ideal spectator (or reader) has of suddenly intuiting how and why a multiplicity of artistic and historical details can be reconciled with the unity of perception. It does so on the basis of the idea that certain kinds of human expression continue—despite the enormous gaps in space and time that may separate them—to provide the possibility of grasping the unity of self and world, content and form.

Götternamen

As we glimpsed in chapter 3 (viz. "Dank an Usener!"), Warburg eagerly acknowledges his intellectual debts to Hermann Usener (1834–1905), who was, along with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, the leading classical philologist of the period and often regarded as "the founder hero of the modern science of religion."¹⁰ While studying at the University of Bonn in 1886–87, Warburg attended Usener's course on comparative mythology. This had far-reaching consequences for Warburg's conception of intellectual history and, more specifically, his ideas about metaphor.¹¹ While perpetuating the great nineteenth-century German philological tradition, Usener was also in the vanguard of those wanting to apply the nascent sciences of psychology and anthropology to the study of the classics and religion. As was to be the case with Warburg, Usener dedicated his career to undertaking "a comparative science of culture [Kulturwissenschaft]" by finding or, if you will, inventing the means of moving from significant details to more general theoretical considerations.¹² For Usener, philology is "nicht Wissenschaft, sondern Kunst."¹³

9. In *Überschriften*, Warburg plays with these terms: "Unter dem dunkel surrenden Flügelschlage des Vogels Greif erträumen wir—zwischen Ergreifung und Ergriffenheit—die Begriffe vom Bewußtsein" (fol. 28). On *greifen*, *begreifen*, and proper and improper meanings, see Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. Duncan Large (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 82–83.

10. Roland Kany, "Hermann Usener as Historian of Religion," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 6 (2004): 159. See also GS, VII:392, where, referring to Cassirer and himself, Warburg writes: "Usener als unser gemeinsamer Protektor!"

11. In "Aby M. Warburg (1866–1929)," in *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*, ed. Axel Michaels (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), 133–157, Hartmut Böhme views Usener's efforts in comparative religion as crucial to Warburg's *Bildung*.

12. Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 75–76.

13. Hermann Usener, "Philologie und Geschichtswissenschaft" (1882); cited in Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 77. In a passage of great syncretic power, toward the end of the *Trauerspiel* study, Benjamin crowns his invocation of Usener's *Sondergötter* by citing Warburg's Luther essay, where the "demonic" and "Olympian" aspects of the *Nachleben der Antike* in the cinquecento are described. Benjamin, *Origin*, 223–225.

The writing of the history of religion (or mythology, as he usually called it), which initially depends largely on philological knowledge, thus requires inordinate intuition, as the historian seeks to move from particulars to generalities. As a form of subjective *Erinnerung*, history is phenomenological; the etymological details Usener notices and emphasizes are not only a product of his training, intellectual milieu, and the sources he chooses, but also self-consciously solicited by his comparatist vision of history's vast scope.¹⁴ As a *Kulturwissenschaft* that would construct universal structures out of a "Mosaik von Trümmern" (mosaic of rubble), history requires that the historian be, as Wilhelm Dilthey (who was Usener's colleague) phrases it, "ein geschichtliches Wesen."¹⁵

In his invaluable study of Usener, Warburg, and Benjamin, Roland Kany suggests that Usener's greatest work, one that took decades to refine, *Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (1896), even prefigures, with its unsynthesized wealth of philological detail, the montage technique of *Mnemosyne*.¹⁶ Further, Usener's thoughts on metaphor there clearly influenced Warburg's. Comparing linguistic details of Greek, Roman, and Lithuanian religious thought, Usener posits that abstract concepts descended from originary *Augenblicksgötter* (occasional gods) and then later *Sondergötter* (special gods). These latter deities were given metaphoric names, which personified natural phenomena such as lightning or childbirth, thus beginning the abstract process of classifying them.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Usener's account of the origins of the names of the *Sondergötter* is indebted to Vico's narrative in the *New Science* of how metaphor allowed humans to first speak about and ascribe meaning to natural phenomena that they considered divine (e.g., lightning was called Jupiter; the storm became Neptune). Usener's Viconian take on metaphor and myth is also filtered through the work of Tito Vignoli (1828–1914) and Alfred Biese (1856–1930).¹⁸ And while, like Vico, Usener views the history of civilization as evolving from a culture of myth and metaphor to one prizing reason's abstractions, in practice his focus is much narrower. At the outset

14. See Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 78.

15. Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 2, 81.

16. *Ibid.*, 85.

17. Kany neatly explains the transition from "momentary gods" to "special gods": "The best example is a flash of lightning which would be beheld as a divine power by a human being in these archaic times. Later on, when memory and abstraction had improved, a concept for such repeated experiences could be fixed. So *Keraunos* would become the god not only of this lightning here and now, but of every flash of lightning. All religions, Usener thought, had a large number of such gods with special functions. He calls them *Sondergötter*, which he intends to be a translation of Varro's *di certi*." Kany, "Hermann Usener," 161–162.

18. Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 79–83. See Tito Vignoli, *Mito e scienza* (Milan, 1879); Alfred Biese, *Die Philosophie des Metaphorischen* (Hamburg, 1893). Vignoli sought to reconcile Vico and Darwin with a kind of evolutionary psychology of myth. He argues by analogy that just as animals react to environmental stimuli by assuming that what moves is alive, so humans ingeniously ascribe mythic and metaphoric qualities to natural phenomena. Biese's notion of metaphor as a "notwendige Form der Anschauung" (cited in Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm*, 80) also relies heavily on Vico's account of myth and civilization's origins.

of the *Götternamen* he sketches five aspects of what he calls the “grundlegende Wissenschaft der Mythologie”: (1) “religiöse Begriffsbildung”; (2) “die elementaren oder unbewussten Vorgänge der Vorstellung,” that is, (a) “die Beseelung (personification)” and (b) “die Verbildlichung (Metapher)”; (3) forms “der Symbolik”; (4) forms “des Mythos”; and (5) forms “des Cultus.”¹⁹ But within this schema, Usener concentrates primarily on concept formation in religion. This he colorfully figures as an archaeological dig in cultural memory—as if to say that even if he does not make metaphor a principal object of his inquiry, comparative thought, as was the case with the religious imagination, cannot do without it:

Since we initially find no fact in our consciousness by which the spiritual movements and developments of prehistorical humans can become clear, so a speculative operation, such as the so-called philosophy of religion employs, is out of the question. Only by sinking devotedly into this vanished time’s spiritual traces, that is, through philological work, are we capable of cultivating a feeling for it after the fact. Then kindred strings can gradually sound and sing within us [allmählich verwandte Saiten in uns mit Schwingen und Klingen], and we can discover in our own consciousness the threads that bind the old and new. Richer observation and comparison permit us to go further, and we raise ourselves from the particular to the whole, from appearance to the law. Human science would be in an evil plight if when we researched the particular, it wore bonds that prevented it from striving toward the whole. The deeper one digs, the more one will be rewarded with greater universal knowledge.²⁰

In this manner, the history of particulars and “appearances” may yield the apprehension of universal laws. But such apprehension is also subjective. Usener’s vivid musical metaphor indicates that one’s own “consciousness” is the keenest arbiter in history’s attempt to reconcile “old and new.”

As for Warburg, the “deeper one digs” in historical memory, the more one confronts the “volle Wucht der leidenschaftlich-phobischen” (full force of the affective-phobic).²¹ The artist, cosmographer, and *Kulturwissenschaftler* are charged with trying to put this irrational, improper, but all-too-human “force” in metaphoric motion without formally tying it off from its origins. Refusing to repress or sublimate it, they attempt instead “die Darstellung bewegten Leben” (the representation of life in motion) by translating the formal, gestural language inherited from classical traditions.²² Such a “depiction” eschews the typical *stasis* of “representation”; it aims instead to be, as Agamben writes, “an indissoluble intertwining

19. Hermann Usener, *Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1896), vi.

20. Usener, *Götternamen*, vii.

21. *GS*, II.1:3.

22. *Ibid.*

of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula."²³ In short, the pathos formulas mapped by *Mnemosyne* are not distant, historicist creatures; they are not Usener's "special gods" who once allowed humanity to understand its place in the cosmos and who can be recalled only if we plumb the mind's strata. Neither are they Goethean symbols, wherein "Erscheinung" becomes "Idee," which becomes a concrete, timeless, universal *Bild* available to all with wit enough to apprehend it.²⁴ Rather, they are metaphors animating symbolic gestures within a broad typological scheme to establish *Distanzierung* between spectator and object even as they, in the best Aristotelian tradition, ultimately narrow that distance to spur recognition and learning.

Such a dynamic, I would add, signals what Paul Ricœur, Max Black, and other metaphorologists identify as the difficult, but uniquely rewarding cognitive process native to metaphor whereby we learn to balance the conflicting claims of literal and figurative meanings.²⁵ As their play of repetition and difference becomes slowly visible, Warburg's pathos formulas fuse content with form, historical event with timeless structure, and, more ambitiously still, a universal notion of human consciousness with culturally specific stylistic elements. They show how the passage of time can be, in defiance of Lessing's famous dictum, spatialized, and so concentrated in visual, aesthetic form. Summing up this double effect, Didi-Huberman dubs Warburg's project an "atlas du symptôme," for it has "subtly composed the order of a limited space containing the chaos of a rhizomatic and, rightfully, infinite domain."²⁶

Cassirer's Symbolic Forms

If the subtle compositional logic of the *Atlas* may be said to anticipate Gilles Deleuze's concept of "rhizomatic," immanent expression, then there is another

23. Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science," 90.

24. In *Maximen und Reflexionen*, in *Sprüche in Prosa: Sämtliche Maximen und Reflexionen*, ed. Harald Fricke (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), Goethe writes: "Die Symbolik verwandelt die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild, und so daß die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt, und selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen doch unaussprechlich bleibe" (2.72.2). Compare with *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 75, where Warburg explicates the motives behind the symbol. For more on Warburg's debts to Goethe, including, arguably, his concept of *Polarität*, see Andrea Pinotti, "Symbolic Form and Symbolic Formula: Cassirer and Warburg on Morphology (Between Goethe and Vischer)," *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 119–135. Zumbusch ("Der *Mnemosyne*-Atlas") compares Warburg and Goethe insofar as the former's "symbolische Wissenschaft" may be indebted to the latter's natural history (but not his ideas of symbolism).

25. The best account of the so-called interactive model of metaphor is Max Black's "More about Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd ed., ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 19–41.

26. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 462–463. Kofman diagnoses the symptom: "Nietzsche brings about a highly symptomatic reversal in the relationship which he establishes between metaphor and concept: metaphor is no longer referred to the concept, as in the metaphysical tradition inherited from Aristotle, but rather the concept is referred to the metaphor" (*Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 14–15).

discourse, much closer to home as it were, that illuminates and shadows Warburg's theory and practice. Ernst Cassirer developed his theory of symbolic forms only after he came to Hamburg in 1919 to teach at the newly founded university, and after he began a close association with the Warburg circle in the course of mining the Library's riches.²⁷ His work on the philosophy of symbolic forms initially took the form of articles and lectures sponsored by the K.B.W.; these in turn provided the impetus for his monumental *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, whose three volumes appeared in 1923, 1925, and 1929.²⁸ (A fourth volume, begun in 1928 but never completed, was published as *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms* in 1995).²⁹ Here and in the epitome *Language and Myth* (written between the second and third parts of the original trilogy), Cassirer invests the symbol and its mediating "functions" in myth, language, art, and science with enormous phenomenological and cultural significance.

The symbol serves as the engine for a complicated narrative of historical progress, which in practice at least tends to owe more to the trajectory of Hegel's dialectical reason than to Kant's timeless schemas.³⁰ Pondering, therefore, whether Cassirer's account of the development of symbolic thought (that is, of language out of art and myth, and then of mathematics and theoretical reason out of language) is more teleological or hierarchical than simply causal is essential if we are to appraise what Warburg in fact owed to his friend and colleague. Indeed, given how skilled hermeneuts such as Edgar Wind and more recently Martin Jesinghausen-Lauster, Bernd Villhauer, and Cornelia Zumbusch treat the symbol as the organizing principle of Warburg's thought, the question becomes whether it can (or should) be disentangled, first, from Cassirer's notion of the symbol and, second, from what Warburg calls metaphor. Briefly put, how does Cassirer's *form* compare with Warburg's *formula*?

27. McEwan reports Cassirer's immediate enthusiasm for the Library ("*Wanderstraßen der Kultur*," 20, 22).

28. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 vols., trans. Ralph Mannheim; intr. Charles W. Hendel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973) (hereafter cited as *PSF*). All English citations are from this edition. The titles of the three volumes are *Language, Mythical Thought*, and *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*. For a recent comprehensive reevaluation of Cassirer's thought, see Hans Jörg Sandkühler and Detlev Pätzold, eds., *Kultur und Symbol: Ein Handbuch zur Philosophie Ernst Cassirers* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2003).

29. Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Metaphysik der symbolischen Formen*, ed. John Michael Krois (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995); Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 4, *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, trans. J.M. Krois; ed. J.M. Krois and Donald Phillip Verene (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

30. See Donald Verene, "Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer: The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30.1 (1969): 33–46. But Enno Rudolph, "Bild und Symbol," *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 137–144, defends Cassirer from the teleological reading. Cassirer's symbol theory strongly influences Panofsky's early essay *Idee: Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie* (1924), where it becomes the centerpiece of a much more systematic version of iconology than Warburg ever practiced.

Associated early in his career with the neo-Kantian Marburg school, whose work had strong affinities as well with the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, Cassirer greatly broadens the scope of his thinking in the early 1920s. Remaking now Kant's transcendental schemas, which would mediate between the understanding and sensuous intuition (that is, between the universal and the particular), he constructs a more culturally and historically contingent means of comprehending the diverse, inevitably symbolic forms of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) offering themselves to consciousness.³¹ Like Warburg and, as we shall see, Nietzsche, Cassirer defines the symbol, or, more properly, the symbolic form as the means of mediating the "energy" of originary, sensuous experience: "Beneath a 'symbolic form' every mental energy [Energie des Geistes] may be understood through which a mental vessel of meaning [geistiger Bedeutungsgehalt] is tied to a concrete, sensuous sign and inwardly made more appropriate to this sign."³² No longer basing his epistemology solely on Kantian categories or modern mathematical science's demonstrable successes, Cassirer turns to or, if you will, remembers other forms of thought to compass the whole. He would reconcile the critique of reason and the critique of culture by showing the continuity and interdependence of symbolic forms.³³ Thus he regards myth, religion, art, language, and science as kindred symbolic forms that the mind (*Geist*) creates in different historical periods and circumstances to mediate between itself and the world. Cassirer spurns, in short, metaphysical solutions. His phenomenology does not say why man is an *animal symbolicum* rather than an *animal rationale*;³⁴ nor does it step outside its own analysis to confirm the being (or nonbeing) of certain forms. Instead, he presents his philosophy as inextricably immersed in the immanent, evolving totality of symbolic forms.³⁵ In this respect, it is a hermeneutics as much as a phenomenology:

In speaking of a phenomenology of knowledge I am using the word "phenomenology" not in its modern sense but with its fundamental signification as established and systematically grounded by Hegel. For Hegel, phenomenology became the basis of all philosophical knowledge, since he insisted that philosophical knowledge must encompass the totality and since in his view this totality can be made visible only in the transition from one form to another. The truth is the whole—yet this whole cannot

31. In his introduction to vol. 1 of Cassirer, *PSF*, Hendel stresses the centrality of the *Critique of Judgment* to Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms (20).

32. Quoted in Krois, "Cassirer's 'Symbolic Values,'" 108. See Cassirer's 1937 essay "Ziele und Wege der Wirklichkeitserkenntnis," in *Nachgelassene Manuscripte und Texte*, ed. K. Ch. Köhnke, J. M. Krois, and O. Schwemmer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1999), 2:172–173, where he calls *Pathosformeln* "Energie-symbole" that allow for the intensification of expression.

33. See the introduction to Cassirer, *PSF*, 1:46–47.

34. Cassirer, in *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), asserts: "Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as *animal symbolicum*" (26).

35. See Cassirer, *PSF*, 4:49–50.

be presented all at once but must be unfolded progressively by thought in its own autonomous movement and rhythm. It is this unfolding which constitutes the being and the essence of science.³⁶

Crucial, then, for an understanding of Cassirer's "science" and its influence on Warburg is the extent to which it shares Hegel's faith in the teleology of scientific phenomenology. Cassirer explicitly rejects Hegel's ambition to know "the *telos* of the human spirit"; nonetheless, like Hegel (and Plato) he would "provide the individual with a ladder which will lead him from the primary configurations found in the world of the immediate consciousness to the world of pure knowledge."³⁷ In emphasizing the process or "autonomous movement and rhythm" of truth's unfolding, he indicates that his tale of progress or ascent has no predetermined denouement. Still, it is a narrative of progress all the same, and one that throws Warburg's *Mnemosyne* into stronger relief. Indeed, if one form of symbolic thought, for instance, quantum mechanics, is viewed as epistemologically superior to another, say, Renaissance painting, then *Mnemosyne* becomes more of an exercise in anachronism if not atavism. Conversely, if myth, magic, and unscientific thinking constantly threaten to recur, and if, as Warburg writes at the end of his essay on astrology in sixteenth-century Germany, "Athen will eben immer wieder neu aus Alexandrien zurückerobert sein" (Athens wants again and again to be recaptured from Alexandria), then *Mnemosyne*'s epistemological claims are as urgent as they are recursive.³⁸

By attending to the diversity of symbolic "functions" throughout his trilogy, Cassirer largely abandons the developmental, triumphalist account of intellectual history propelling his early studies of Leibniz and epistemology.³⁹ No longer making the acme of human thought the development of "modern philosophical idealism" (as promoted especially by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant, but drawing also on Plato's theory of forms and, alternately, inspired by the successes of modern theoretical physics in abstracting fixed laws from the messy flux of physical phenomena), Cassirer now undertakes something akin to a "philosophic anthropology":

36. Cassirer, *PSF*, 3:xiv.

37. See Cassirer, *PSF*, 4:xv; also 1:83–84.

38. *GS*, I.2:534; *RPA*, 650. The full passage is remarkable for its sweeping historical and theoretical claims: "Die Wiederbelebung der dämonischen Antike vollzieht sich dabei, wie wir sahen, durch eine Art polarer Funktion des einführenden Bildgedächtnisses. Wir sind im Zeitalter des Faust, wo sich der moderne Wissenschaftler—zwischen magischer Praktik und kosmologischer Mathematik—den *Denkraum der Besonnenheit* zwischen sich und dem Objekt zu erringen versuchte. Athen will eben immer wieder neu aus Alexandrien zurückerobert sein." On the problem of anachronism and temporality more generally in Renaissance painting, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

39. For how Cassirer addresses *Das Erkenntnisproblem* via Leibniz, see *Leibniz' System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen*, in *Gesammelte Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998) (hereafter cited as *GW*).

For [symbolic forms] indicate to us the level of intelligence in human action, and they contain the universal defining elements of this level. In the medium of language and art, in myth and theoretical knowledge, that turnabout or intellectual revolution takes place which permits mankind to set the world aside in order to draw it closer. By virtue of these "forms" mankind attains proximity to the world and a distance from it which no other creature possesses. If we are to identify this process of delimitation, to draw a line of demarcation between mankind and the totality of the world of living things, this can occur only by taking the concept and structure of this configuration as a starting point, and by trying to grasp not so much its development as its content.⁴⁰

At first blush, this dialectic of "proximity" and "distance"—one we have seen to be essential to Warburg's thought as well—is given a decidedly ahistorical cast; or, at the very least, it devalues the question of "origins" (and so perhaps of memory) and which symbolic form(s) or elements within a particular symbolic form should have priority:

No metaphysics and no empirical fact will ever be in a position to illuminate the "origin" of this configuration in the sense that it puts us back at the temporal starting point, that it permits us to eavesdrop on its beginning. . . . We cannot put our finger on the place at which language or myth, art or knowledge "arose." For we know them all only as something already existing, as closed forms in which each particular carries the whole and is carried by it, and in which we therefore cannot indicate what is "earlier" or "later," temporally "first" or "second." All that remains open to us is the return from the relatively complex to relatively simpler configurations of a particular form-world, yet in every such simple configuration, the law of formation of the whole is already present and in effect.⁴¹

Cassirer thus goes to great lengths to argue that despite the triadic structure of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, with its progression from myth to language to science (a progression, admittedly, already confounded by the fact that language is the subject of the first volume), each "particular" or "point" in his system may contain and so reveal the whole.⁴² In notes for the concluding chapter of the unfinished *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, after considering how "physics creates a different kind of world of things," and that this might "conflict" with how myth and language, respectively, express and represent the "sensory qualities" of things, Cassirer remarks:

For us, from the standpoint of the philosophy of symbolic forms, this competition and conflict do not exist. The philosophy of symbolic forms seeks out the *entirety* of

40. Cassirer, *PSF*, 1:38.

41. Ibid. In the introduction, though, Hendel underscores aspects of the "historical-minded Cassirer" (*PSF*, 1:35).

42. In "Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer," Verene makes the case for a nonteleological reading of Cassirer's system (44–45). Likewise, see Cassirer, *PSF*, 4:xviii.

the perspectival views in which reality is disclosed to us. It does not begin with a prejudice about the character of their reality, but seeks to understand *every view* according to its own norms. Each form or “view” carries in itself the measure of its reality. We must first find this measure and learn to understand it—the measure of language, myth, science. For us true reality is the subject which is capable of all these “views.”⁴³

Despite this desire to achieve a synchronic but subjective perspective, and thereby to avoid the “prejudice” of hierarchical, teleological thought, clearly some moments in Cassirer’s phenomenology do supersede others.⁴⁴ Consisting of three main stages, its progression, while far less systematic than Hegel’s, would still in typical dialectical fashion reach eventually an epistemological vantage point where the subject can glimpse the rewards of a scientific worldview of pure relational thought.⁴⁵ As such, history is treated as if it were itself a symbolic form capable of revealing immanent rather than transcendental truths to twentieth-century readers. But before exploring this third stage in which symbolic thought has strictly a “conceptual function” (*Bedeutungsfunktion*)—the stage corresponding with his own writing—Cassirer attends to the two modes of symbolism that maintain intuitive connections with the world of things: namely the “expressive function” (*Ausdrucksfunktion*) and the “representative function” (*Darstellungsfunktion*). It is when attending to these modes, which encompass myth, art, and literature, that he finds the historical and cultural riches in Warburg’s Library so invaluable.

The initial, foundational stage of symbolic meaning corresponds to thought’s *Ausdrucksfunktion*. Here thinking, unable to distinguish clearly between appearance and reality, self and world, views the surrounding world as overflowing with magical and mythical significance. Such meaning has immediate emotional and affective value for “mythical consciousness,” whose symbolic forms also include what will come to be called aesthetic objects. (It is all the more regrettable and puzzling, then, how little space the trilogy devotes to discussing art; even if *An Essay on Man* remedies somewhat this neglect.)

The second principal symbolic form corresponds to thought’s *Darstellungsfunktion*. Here consciousness intuits the autonomous existence of substances and objects in a methodical, consistent manner. Phenomena previously appearing to belong to a mythic continuum running from the animal to the divine are now reified in repeatable forms of representation. Natural language, accordingly, becomes the most characteristic symbolic form used to interact with the world pragmatically, instrumentally.⁴⁶ Here, though, Cassirer reorients Kant’s “transcendental unity of

43. Cassirer, *PSF*, 4:211–212. Similarly, see *PSF*, 1:78, 93.

44. Analogously, for Leibniz some monads are more expressive than others.

45. Verene cautions that “Cassirer . . . does not regard consciousness in its actual development as having a smooth progress from stage to stage; it undergoes various types of oppositions and sudden reversals” (“Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer,” 40).

46. This is to be distinguished from the version of natural language promoted in some forms of Renaissance hermetic philosophy.

apperception" to give individual, intuitive perceptions of things and events greater weight over a priori, logical concepts that might give them form. While thus welcoming Kant's "Copernican revolution" (which essentially shifted philosophy's attention toward how we know and away from what we know), he still praises how "sensory intuition" may fuel "forms of spiritual vision" in language and myth, immune from the claims of the exact sciences, but able to "mark off, and give life to, the flowing, ever indifferent sequence of phenomena."⁴⁷

What matters most about these two "forms" or functions for a reading of Warburg is the manner in which Cassirer systematically invests the symbol with the full weight of the history of consciousness and culture. Thus from a Cassirerian perspective Warburg's pathos formulas and emphasis in *Mnemosyne* on tracing the survival of classical *Ausdruckswerte* in art and cosmology might be said to blur the symbol's *Ausdrucksfunktion* and *Darstellungsfunktion*. I say this even though in *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (1926) Cassirer embraces the term "Pathosformel" to interpret the battle between Fortuna and Hercules as depicted in Bruno's *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, like Bruno, but unlike Cassirer, Warburg balks at stripping symbols of their sensuous, affective, or historical content; indeed, in his inveterate conflation of *Wort* and *Bild*, Warburg self-consciously forfeits any theoretical or schematic clarity.⁴⁹ If Cassirer systematically investigates the processes native to different species of symbolic forms, Warburg, as his metonymic Library and *Bilderatlas* confirm, treats such systematization as antithetical to the expressive nature of pathos formulas, with their ability still to surprise and move the belated spectator. Summing up their divergent approaches, Didi-Huberman charges: "Ultimately, everything that Warburg envisaged from the angle of a perpetual and anachronistic movement of *dissemination* (the same one that we experience simply when we leaf through the plates of *Mnemosyne*), Cassirer restituted with the usual historical and encyclopedic *classification* in the Hegelian manner."⁵⁰ Similarly, Jesinghausen-Lauster argues that Cassirer, notwithstanding his great enthusiasm for its holdings and organization, uses the K.B.W. largely to furnish proof and ornament, and not ultimately as a place of discovery or the means of tempering his penchant for metaphysics.⁵¹

47. See Cassirer, *PSF*, 4:14.

48. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 74–75. See Lorenzo Bianchi, "Warburg, Cassirer et Bruno: Quelques remarques sur *Individu et cosmos*," *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008), who argues that Cassirer applies the *Pathosformel* "comme métaphore de la pensée de la Renaissance dans laquelle on retrouve un état de tension et une nouvelle dynamique" (151).

49. In *Aby Warburgs Theorie der Kultur: Detail und Sinnhorizont* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), Bernd Villhauer observes: "Für Warburg bleibt das Symbol immer der Einfühlung und dem sinnlichen Umgang offen" (66).

50. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 440.

51. Jesinghausen-Lauster, *Die Suche nach der symbolischen Form*, 57–104. In "Art, esthétique et Geistesgeschichte: À propos des relations entre Warburg, Cassirer et Panofsky," *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 77–100, Fabien Capeillères argues that many of the key concepts fueling *The Philosophy of Symbolic*

For his part, Warburg was unequivocal in his enthusiasm for Cassirer as a potential ally for his and the Library's intellectual endeavors, especially when Cassirer turned his attention to Renaissance cosmology.⁵² In a *Tagebuch* entry glossing the *Atlas* and its aims, Warburg affirms: "Individuum und Kosmos—eben Thema auch das meinige. Reformationsversuch der heidnischen Ekstase durch metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung" (Individual and cosmos—exactly also my theme. Attempt at reformation of pagan ecstasy through metaphoric determination of scope).⁵³ Or as Cassirer himself writes, his book aims "to answer the question: whether and to what extent the movement of thought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries constitutes a self-contained unity despite the multiplicity of starting points and the divergence of solutions to the various problems posed."⁵⁴ Rather than seeking the most appropriate symbolic form, Renaissance philosophy for Cassirer is dominated by "the problem of self-consciousness."⁵⁵ For Warburg, on the other hand, Renaissance thought—a more fluid, capacious category than Renaissance philosophy—is the individual's symbolic struggle to establish contemplative "distance" from the world while also maintaining vital, sensuous relations with it. In this sense, achieving "metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung" for Warburg involves all three symbolic forms described by Cassirer.

Glossing the cardinal notion of "Umfangsbestimmung" in the notebook *Symbolismus aufgefaßt als primäre Umfangsbestimmung* (1896–1901), Warburg underscores the psychological and dialectical qualities involved in such "determination of scope." He downplays, though, its Kantian connotations, which might cast it as an a priori act of consciousness: "Durch bewußte subjektive Verkörperung wird die Entfernung wirklich zerstört aber im Geist als Bewußtsein wieder gewonnen, das Entfernungsbewußtsein setzt sich im Gehirn als Gedächtnis ab." (Through conscious, subjective incorporation distance is really destroyed, though it is regained

Forms were developed before Cassirer began visiting Warburg's Library. He contrasts "la dimension psychologique du projet warbourgeois" with "le projet strictement *transcendental* de Cassirer" (81). But Jürgen Habermas views Cassirer's time spent in Warburg's Library as crucial to the making of the philosophy of symbolic forms. See Habermas, "Die befreiende Kraft der symbolischen Formgebung: Ernst Cassirers humanistisches Erbe und die Bibliothek Warburg," in *Ernst Cassirers Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Dorothea Frede and Reinhold Schmücker (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 79–104.

52. In "*Per monstra ad sphaeram*," Warburg is quoted as waxing mystical at the possibility that Cassirer might leave Hamburg in 1924: "Dass Cassirer nur so kurz bleiben will, ist vor dem Forum der Geistesgeschichte—ich drücke mich ungewöhnlich feierlich aus, weiss aber warum—unverantwortlich. Fatum des modernen Eilmenschen, der postpaketlich befördert wird und nicht wandert, sich seine Zusammenkünfte nicht 'ergeht.' Denn ich habe von ihm—und er von mir—soviel zu erfahren, was Boll, Cassirer, Warburg zu einer höheren Einheit verknüpfen würde: Die Entstehung der Ausdrucksweise des geistig sich orientierenden Menschen aus der Erfahrung seiner kosmischen Totalität, die zur un menschlichen Last wird durch das Bewusstsein seiner absolut verhängten Unterwelts-Todesfahrt. Die orphische Klage gegen platonische Schau als unbegreifliche Polarität" (42).

53. GS, VII:436.

54. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, 6.

55. *Ibid.*, 123.

in the mind as consciousness; consciousness of distance deposits itself in the brain as memory.)⁵⁶ Instead of leading to the formation of concepts, the metaphoric act forges the dynamic space of memory and self-awareness. This treasured “Entfernungsbewußtsein” coincides with a loss of “identification” between self and world and the progressive attainment of “determination of scope.” Indeed, the latter produces technology, art, and the language with which we think and, crucially, remember. Specifically, Warburg adumbrates three moments belonging to *Umfangsbestimmung*: “angleichende” (adapting, approximating), “ausgleichende” (balancing, compensating), and “vergleichende” (comparing).⁵⁷ Each creates “distance” as well as a “determination of scope,” and each is essential to culture in general and to Warburg’s hermeneutics more particularly. In the “approximating determination of scope” humanity produces “ornament” (*Schmuck*) and “instrument” (*Gerät*); in the “compensating determination of scope” it cultivates “pictorial art” (*bildende Kunst*); and in the “comparing determination of scope” it discovers the linguistic means to evaluate, critique, and remember. Later in the same text, Warburg draws up a table showing these three modes:

I	II	III
greifend-aneignend	abtastend-bildend	sprechend-schreibend ⁵⁸
I	II	III
grasping-appropriating	searching-depicting	speaking-writing

These modes correspond, in turn, to three types: “Greifmensch,” “Künstler,” and “Denkmensch.”⁵⁹ Then, however, Warburg indicates that the “distance” created by the second type, the visual artist (rather than, say, that forged by the engineer or philosopher), promises him the greatest possibility of accomplishing a synchronic, comparatist vision. Already by 1901, that is, he concludes that it is not with language, but images, very specific images, that his version of intellectual history will be realized:

Die Ny[mpha] als Umfangsbestimmung endlich zusammen.

Von Darwin über Filippino zu Botticelli durch Carlyle und Vischer zum Festwesen zu den Indianern und durch die Tornabuoni mit Ghirlandajo wieder zur Nympe.⁶⁰

56. Warburg, *Symbolismus*, 86. For interpretations of this elliptical text, see Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 229–246; Villhauer, *Aby Warburgs Theorie der Kultur*, 67–70.

57. Warburg, *Symbolismus*, 86.

58. *Ibid.*, 91.

59. *Ibid.*, 90.

60. *Ibid.*, 89. In “Wort und Bild,” Wedepohl situates this passage in the context of the *Ninfa fiorentina* and the early essays on Sassetti and Ghirlandaio (32–40).

The Ny[mph] as determination of scope finally together.

From Darwin to Filippino to Botticelli through Carlyle and Vischer to festival culture to the Indians and through the Tornabuoni with Ghirlandaio again to the Nymph.

This maps the circular itinerary of Warburg's intellectual career to date—a *Wanderstraße* to be repeated, with myriad detours and culs-de-sac, over the last three decades of his life. Again, the nymph, or as she is called on the last page of *Symbolismus*, “das fruchttragende M.,” will serve as his constant touchstone even as he widens the scope of his historical metaphors to include figures like Rembrandt, Manet, and Bruno.⁶¹

It is no hyperbole, then, to say that the conceptual key to understanding the process of symbolization and how Warburg transforms symbol into metaphor is found in the notion of *Umfangsbestimmung*, which Gombrich defines as the act of determining “an extension of a class,” an act crucial for Kant, at least, in the logical formation of concepts.⁶² Gombrich cites a passage, entitled “Interjection, Comparison, Judgement,” from an 1890 notebook of Warburg's in which an intuition of an object (e.g., a pine is “there”) yields to a simile (e.g., “Like a man, a pine seeks self-preservation”) and then becomes a classificatory judgment (“The pine is a tree”). That this progression pivots on an anthropomorphism is characteristic of Warburg's preoccupation with *Orientierung* as a psychological-spiritual task. Thus it differs from Gombrich's more abstract explanation of this *Umfangsbestimmung* where a child's schematic drawing of a tree is meant to represent any and every kind of tree; for Warburg's simile remembers or delineates the moment when the *pine* is both like a man (or an elm, maple, or mulberry bush) and different from him. His simile functions like a diagrammatic drawing showing how two different classes of things (say, a tree and a bush) can share common traits (e.g., both have roots) and yet retain distinct “contours” (*Umfänge*).⁶³

But, again, if Warburg borrows from interpretations of Kant's project of critical reason for his nascent symbol-theory, then it is not ultimately for logical or transcendental reasons. Expanding greatly on Gombrich's brief comments on the matter, Zumbusch traces how Warburg “prägt . . . den Begriff der ‘Umfangsbestimmung’” for his own ends:

Kant uses the determination of scope [Umfangsbestimmung] almost as a synonym for his project of a critique of reason, which is supposed to circumscribe cognition's

61. Warburg, *Symbolismus*, 91.

62. For more on Warburg's *Umfangsbestimmung*, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 77. In *Symbolismus*, Warburg also makes *Umfangsbestimmung* synonymous with “Umschreibung” (79).

63. Compare this with metaphorology's typical use of sets and models, especially in the work of Black and his successors.

boundaries. By the "scope" of a cognition or of a judgment is meant its sphere of validity, which is critically determined through a perimeter or border. A similar achievement, Warburg's rendering implies, occurs with the drawn contours of a form. . . . The drawn contours determine the subject matter and range of a thing [den Gegenstandsbereich und die Reichweite einer Sache]. Warburg thus employs the concept of the determination of scope in a manner similar to that of "periphrasis," the replacement of a thing through a sign. With the concept of the determination of scope Warburg can make good on two basic assumptions of his theory of symbols. Insofar as he underscores the visual lines and contours by talking of scope, Warburg attaches his symbol theory to the visual symbol. At the same time this graphic "determination of scope" accomplishes a cognitive achievement: it carries out a "comparison" in the Warburgian sense of a conscious preparation of a perception. Thus in the concept of the "determination of scope" Warburg's notion of the cognitive potential of the visual image as an independent "stage of thought" is directly articulated.⁶⁴

Zumbusch's interpretation of Warburg's symbol theory is groundbreaking in several respects. First, it helps bolster her compelling comparison of Warburg's symbol with Benjamin's *dialektisches Bild*, which serves as the linchpin for juxtaposing the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* with the *Passagen-Werk*.⁶⁵ Second, by situating the *Symbolismus* text within turn-of-the-century German discussions of the symbol, and by highlighting how the younger Warburg tends to borrow his concepts and terms from the natural sciences and psychology (but not from Freud), she confirms what we already saw manifest in the talk on Hopi rituals: namely that *Umfangsbestimmung* is a fundamental "Prozeß" and a form of "bewußte Wahrnehmung" (conscious perception) not limited to aesthetics.⁶⁶ To this I would add, considering the language of the introduction to *Mnemosyne*, that Warburg continues to rethink the notion of *Umfang* in his last years, especially as it informs the central cartographical conceit of his *Atlas*.⁶⁷ Third, Zumbusch tries to clarify how the apprehension—it should not be termed a concept or idea—of the symbol's "Umfangsbestimmung" relates to Cassirer's theory of the primacy of symbolic forms in human thought.

While comparing the brief, fragmentary *Symbolismus* text with Cassirer's exhaustive, systematic trilogy published some twenty years later is certainly tricky, especially as it runs the risk of reifying Warburg's thought at an early stage of his

64. Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 239. Zumbusch is quoting from WIA, III.43.1.2.1.

65. Zumbusch stresses the primacy of *Anschaulichkeit* for Warburg and Benjamin as they construct their "Wissenschaft in Bildern" (*Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 4–5).

66. Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 238. See also Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, 50.

67. In the *Einleitung* to *Mnemosyne*, the word *Umfang* is variously deployed to describe both the scope of Warburg's materials and the range of his theoretical ambitions. For example, while underscoring "in welchem Umfänge diese vom Norden importierten Bildträger in den italienischen Palazzo einbrachten," he wants also to underscore how the "Bildersprache der Gebärde . . . verstärkt . . . durch die unzerstörbare Wucht ihrer Ausdrucksprägung zum Nacherleben menschlicher Ergriffenheit in dem ganzen Umfänge ihrer tragischen Polarität" (5).

career, still, Zumbusch's careful reading argues not only that Warburg equates symbol with *Ausdruck*, but that, like Cassirer, he sees the symbolic act as containing many "forms" of mediation between the self and the world.⁶⁸ That this mediation occurs in stages and through images is paramount, for as the subject wins increasing autonomy, signaled by the all-important "Distanzgefühl" from the "Intensität" of the immediate, sensuous world and its objects, the symbol's degree of abstraction also increases. As Zumbusch neatly formulates the conceptual tensions in *Symbolismus*, "The more intensive and worldly these interposed symbols are, the smaller is the act of distancing [Distanznahme]; the more differentiated and abstract the signs, the more stable is the constructed distance. The event of symbolization thrives on the paradox of proximity and distance."⁶⁹ Like Hölderlin's God ("Nah ist / und schwer zu fassen"), Warburg's symbol is riddled by this all-too-human spatial and conceptual "paradox." By the time he undertakes *Mnemosyne*, this paradox, rather than promising some stable synthesis under the banner of triumphant *Geist*, becomes a *Pendelbewegung* that aims toward establishing a provisional *Mitte* or "Zwischenstand" between the intensity of the sensuous world and self-conscious abstraction. Such oscillation, therefore, contrasts sharply with Cassirer's idea(l) of epistemological progress and methodological unity. Didi-Huberman dramatically paints—perhaps too dramatically—this divergence as caused by differences in character and by clashing views of the value of Enlightenment thought:

Cassirer searched for the unity of *function* where Warburg had only found a dialectic of irremediably contradictory *forces*. . . . For Cassirer the *symbolic* function is never without the unity and the "legality" of its functioning, which he well named the "unique system of the mind's activities." Whereas the function of symbols for Warburg is never without the *disfunction* that the *survivances* bring to the regular development of forms in history, the Cassirerian model would be that of the circle compassing diversity: a *synthesis* minimizing the ambivalences of meaning within the unity of the function. The Warburgian model is that of an intrusion never appeased: the *symptom* intensifies ambivalences to the point of ruining all functional unity.⁷⁰

Yet Cassirer does sometimes attend to those symptomatic elements of culture, those "*forces*" signaling the limits of Enlightenment hopes for a lasting "synthesis." In the last chapter of *Language and Myth*, Cassirer, revisiting Usener's *Götternamen*, hails "*metaphorical thinking*" as the source, the "common root," "the

68. For both Warburg and Cassirer, "das Symbol ist ein abgerundeter, weiterentwickelter Ausdruck" (Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 240). And while Zumbusch emphasizes how Warburg derives his symbol theory not just from his research on Renaissance art, but also from theories and schemas of sense perception taken from the natural sciences, she contends: "Warburg und Cassirer treffen sich in der Annahme eines aktiven Weltzugangs im Akt des Symbolisierens" (241).

69. Zumbusch, *Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 242.

70. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 442.

intellectual link" (*das geistige Band*) guaranteeing the unity of language and myth. But it also, he hastens to add, is the cause of "their difference."⁷¹ Like Vico before him (and here he cites Vico's ardent reader, Herder), Cassirer treats metaphor as the cognitive means by which primitive man shapes the categories of his thought, categories that eventually yield language and myth. Initially, he distinguishes between the linguistic or "*conscious*" metaphor of the poet, who might, say, compare Ares' shield to Dionysius's wine cup, or the evening sky to a patient etherized on a table, and the "radical metaphor" or "*fundamental metaphor*" that Cassirer views not only as undergirding all mythic-verbal thought, but as forming the very categories constitutive of all thought.⁷² Once this distinction is fleshed out, though, the need to choose between these two modes is quickly rejected. While "radical metaphor" has logical precedence over "linguistic metaphor," it does not have temporal precedence, and thus a "common origin" is posited to explain the "significance and power" of metaphor.⁷³ Intriguingly, Cassirer also seems to echo Jean Paul's *Doppelzweig des bildlichen Witzes* when he asserts: "Language and myth stand in an original and indissoluble correlation with one another, from which they both emerge but gradually as independent elements. They are two diverse shoots from the same parent stem, the same impulse of symbolic formulations."⁷⁴ In short, for Cassirer the interpretative logic of *pars pro toto* spurring metaphoric thinking continues to fuel most linguistic acts.⁷⁵ And while the carefully structured comparisons of discursive metaphor may differ from the identities claimed by mythic metaphor—the former establish hierarchies, the latter condensation—and while discourse's "extension," comparable to Warburg's "metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung," is distinct from myth's "intension," Cassirer would still synthesize these modes: "Again and again . . . myth receives new life and wealth

71. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 84. Tellingly, not only does the German title, *Sprache und Mythos: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Götternamen*, allude directly to Usener, but Cassirer also draws on comparative mythology, anthropology, and linguistics for his evidence. See Cassirer, *GW*, 16:299.

72. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 86–87. These are my examples, taken, respectively, from Aristotle and Eliot. For his part, Cassirer invokes Quintilian to argue for the essential role of metaphor in all human speech and points to Hölderlin and Keats as keeping myth alive in lyric poetry. In short, for Cassirer, lyric language, rather than visual art, serves as the primary "avenue of artistic expression" (99).

73. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 89.

74. *Ibid.*, 88. One also thinks of Gadamer's "fundamental metaphoric," as described in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999), whereby in human understanding the improper of metaphor precedes the proper of "conventional" language (429). As for the symbol, it once served an "anagogic function" and thus "the modern concept of symbol cannot be understood apart from this gnostic function and its metaphysical background" (73)—which helps explain Gadamer's preference for metaphor over the *Symbolbegriff*.

75. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 92. In *Individuum und Cosmos* (*GW*, 14:122), Warburg's "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten" is cited to support the claim that astrology has "ein geistiges Doppelantlitz" of magic and reason. Thus Cassirer echoes Warburg's invocation of Jean Paul's "Doppelzweig des Bildlichen Witzes" to capture how astrology and culture in general oscillate between "Tropus und Metapher."

from language, as language does from myth. And this constant interaction and interpenetration attests the unity of the mental principle from which both are sprung, and of which they are simply different expressions, different manifestations and grades.”⁷⁶ However, insofar as he fashions himself as a successor to Kant and as Einstein’s contemporary, Cassirer insists in the book’s closing pages that language must ultimately answer to logic’s stringencies as well, if there is to be the progress, “the advance of human mentality,” he envisions.⁷⁷ For the “Begriffsraum der Logik” is better illuminated than the “Anschauungsraum des Mythos und der Sprache,” where the “*Umfangsverhältnisse der Begriffe*” hold little sway.⁷⁸

Still, visual art does play an instrumental role in Cassirer’s historical narrative of “constant palingenesis”:

Myth, language and art begin as a concrete, undivided unity, which is only gradually resolved into a triad of independent modes of spiritual creativity. Consequently, the same mythic animation and hypostatization which is bestowed upon the words of human speech is originally accorded to *images* [Bilder], to every kind of artistic representation. . . . The image, too, achieves its purely representative, specifically “aesthetic” function only as the magic circle with which mythical consciousness surrounds it is broken, and it is recognized not as a mythico-magical form, but as a particular sort of *formulation* [Gestaltung].

But although language and art both become emancipated, in this fashion, from their native soil of mythical thinking, the ideal, the spiritual unity of the two is reasserted on a higher level. If language is to grow into a vehicle of thought, an expression of concepts and judgments, this evolution can only be achieved at the price of forgoing the wealth and fullness of immediate experience. In the end, what is left of the concrete sense and feeling content it once possessed is little more than a bare skeleton.⁷⁹

The historical trajectory runs here from *Bild* to *Gestaltung*, from “word magic” to “the expression of concepts and judgments.” By contrast, while Warburg also rues the loss of “the wealth and fullness of immediate experience,” his *Atlas* tries to keep the *Erlebnis* of the image constantly before our eyes.⁸⁰ The *Atlas* characteristically complicates “modes of spiritual creativity” by transforming “Bilder” into a montage of pathos formulas, those culturally contingent yet recursive achievements of metaphoric distance. By finding metaphors rather than concepts in Kant’s *Umfangsbestimmungen*, Warburg achieves a now-synchronic, now-diachronic mode of

76. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 96.

77. *Ibid.*, 97.

78. Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos*, in *GW*, 16:305.

79. Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 98; Cassirer, *Sprache und Mythos*, in *GW*, 16:310.

80. Cassirer’s memento mori has a compelling parallel in Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 215–220.

comparison without relying on transcendental or teleological reason to rescue him from irrational or sensuous experience. He embraces instead a mode of thought in which extremes are constantly mediated but never resolved into pure forms.⁸¹ Just as with the improper or disjunctive meanings cultivated by metaphor, extremes persist in Warburg's *Atlas* because the psychology of perception it fosters attends to differences as much as similarities.

I do not mean to suggest, however, that Warburg eschews the term "symbol" in his last years and in the materials for *Mnemosyne*. As Wind and others following his lead have shown, Warburg's debt to F.T. Vischer's theory of the symbol was considerable and lasting.⁸² Yet by the advent of the *Mnemosyne* project he had greatly refined, even transformed, Vischer's notion of the symbol as a *Mitte* between image (*Bild*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*). Refusing to treat it as a vehicle of immediate apprehension, a mark of genius, or a step in concept formation, he progressively strips the symbol of most of its romantic connotations. Refining it in his later years with the notions of the "how of metaphor" and "metaphoric distance," he treats symbolic expression as a form of "energetic inversion," which self-consciously mediates between inherited historical forms and the recursive demands of psychic "engrams." Warburgian metaphor creates nonconceptual "distance" and so also a mutable, vital *Denkraum* in which the otherwise ineffable content of the human "Gebärdensprache" can be self-consciously translated into symbolic forms available to the artist, priest, cosmographer, and, ultimately, critic. What Aristotle calls the "strange" or "foreign" element inherent in all lively metaphor is condensed and recharged by the *Atlas*, whereas Cassirer, though also striving to show why the symbol is the most dynamic form of meaning, dilates and thus to a certain extent dilutes the force of this "otherness" in the epistemological narrative he tells.⁸³

81. In "Symbolic Form and Symbolic Formula," however, Pinotti contends that judgments about Cassirer's "linear" philosophy of history and Warburg's "circular" are too absolute. Ferretti argues that for Cassirer "the symbol is rather the very source of change and temporal becoming, because in it there occurs the continuous and necessary ascent from the bonds of the sensory to reach the purely intelligible and dwell in the utmost abstraction, where its true freedom manifests itself as its ideal essence" (Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg, 5).

82. Wind, "Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*," 26–31. Wind asserts that Vischer's 1887 essay "Das Symbol" "offers the best approach to the study of Warburg's conceptual system as a whole" (27). See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 67–85, on the influence of Vignoli and Vischer on Warburg; but Wind, "On a Recent Biography of Warburg," in *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 108, argues that Gombrich unduly ignores Vischer's influence on Warburg. In "From Symbol to Allegory," Rampley buttresses the claim that Warburg was heavily indebted to Vischer and the romantic preference for the living symbol, with its ability to contain contradictions, over allegory's abstractions. Yet for reasons that will become manifest below I think Rampley wrongly ascribes to the symbol a dialectical quality and ability to create "distance" that Warburg in fact ascribes to metaphor.

83. A significant exception to this dilution is Cassirer, *PSF*, 3:40–41, where Kleist's "On the Marionette Theater" is invoked to argue that even though "the paradise of immediacy is closed" to "philosophical thinking," we must still try to "embrace the whole of the *globus intellectualis*: we must seek not to determine the nature of theoretical form through any one of its particular achievements, but rather to keep its total potentialities constantly in mind."

Notably, Cassirer felt most indebted to Warburg in the broader realm of intellectual history and comparative scholarship, and not in the neo-Kantian thickets of symbol theory. Dedicating *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* to Warburg, Cassirer asserts:

I could not have completed the work, had I not been able to enjoy the constant stimulation and encouragement of that group of scholars whose intellectual centre is your Library. Therefore, I am speaking today not in my name alone, but in the name of this group of scholars, and in the name of all those who have long honoured you as a leader in the field of intellectual history. . . . With a forcefulness that is rare, [the Library] has held up before us the principles that must govern such research. In its organization and in its intellectual structure [geistigen Struktur], the Library embodies the idea of the methodological unity of all fields and all currents of intellectual history. . . . May the organon of intellectual-historical [geistesgeschichtlicher] studies which you have created continue to ask us questions for a long time. And may you continue to show us new ways to answer them, as you have in the past.⁸⁴

The Library is at once the locus, “organon,” and “idea” making possible the “methodological unity of all fields and all currents of intellectual history.” And if such praise nearly eclipses Warburg’s own writings, it sets the stage for an analogous, but perhaps even more ambitious “organon,” the *Atlas*, which I take to be his implicit response to Cassirer’s last sentence. Yet in positing a single method to ponder both cosmology and art, as well as the *translatio* of meaning from antiquity to the present, from east to west and north to south, the *Atlas* also makes clear the extent to which Warburg spurns Cassirer’s largely linguistic, semiotic approach to the symbol.⁸⁵ In the *Atlas* the symbolic image, conceived as a nondiscursive form of metaphor, as an immanent, recursive, if also historical process rather than as step toward formal abstraction, is (re)appropriated for the visual arts, cosmography, intellectual history, and comparatism more generally.⁸⁶ If Cassirer’s comprehensive *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* ultimately sublimates the image into an abstract symbol, Warburg’s unfinished *Mnemosyne* project stubbornly refuses to do so.

84. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, xv; Cassirer, *GW*, 14:xi.

85. For more on Cassirer’s dependence on a linguistic paradigm, see Barbara Neumann, *Poetik und Philosophie des Symbols: Cassirer und Goethe* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999). In “Cassirer’s ‘Symbolic Values,’” Krois concludes that “Cassirer upholds a semiotic conception of philosophical iconology” (109).

86. “Für Cassirer führt die Symbolisierung zu immer stärker Formalisierung, zu einer Abstraktion, die das sinnlich Erfahrbare hinter sich lässt. Für Warburg bleibt das Symbol immer der Einfühlung und dem Sinnlichen Umgang offen” (Villhauer, *Aby Warburgs Theorie der Kultur*, 66). Didi-Huberman argues that Cassirer forgets the “revenants” and the “retour” of the engrammatic (*L’image survivante*, 444–446). And yet as the first volume of *PSF* concludes, Cassirer still clings to the “sensuous” in language: “The characteristic meaning of language is not contained in the opposition between the two extremes of the sensuous and the intellectual, because in all its achievements and in every particular phase of its progress, language shows itself to be *at once* a sensuous and an intellectual form of expression” (*PSF*, 1:319).

With this said, when it comes to the task of comparing different media and assessing historical change, Cassirer embraces Warburg's approach. For instance, when discussing how in the career of the humanist philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) ideas about freedom and necessity became increasingly conflicted, Cassirer cites as a parallel how Warburg, with his notion of inversion, shows in the realm of the visual arts that the medieval concept of fortune is transformed, and “imbued with a new spirit and new life.” Likewise: “In the realm of thought . . . new solutions are not immediately achieved. Before that can happen, it is necessary to create, so to speak, a new *state of tension* in thought. There is no real break with the philosophical past; but a new *dynamic* of thought announces itself, a striving—to speak with Warburg—for a new ‘energetic state of equilibrium.’”⁸⁷

Despite such affinities, with their respective notions of metaphor and symbol, Warburg and Cassirer respond quite distinctly to Hegel's historical dialectics. Cassirer's three stages of symbolic thought, Donald Verene remarks, “stand in a dialectical relationship to each other.”⁸⁸ The third stage of pure relationality, epitomized by the flourishing of the mathematical sciences as the symbolic means of making sense of the world—Einstein is exemplary in this respect—signals an essential progression of *Geist*, one culminating in Cassirer's own lifetime. But for Warburg, ancient Greece, quattrocento Florence, and late sixteenth-century Europe (as epitomized by Kepler and Bruno) represent the most vivid if also spectral apotheoses. Warburg prizes Renaissance humanism because, as Petrarch was the first to recognize on the page, its many forms of *translatio* are directly or indirectly, but always affectively, shaped by historical consciousness. And though Warburg's vision of the Renaissance eschews the teleology informing Hegel's phenomenology, “readers” of *Mnemosyne* likewise are able to experience such historical moments or *Augenblicke* vicariously. Or to borrow Cassirer's terms, artists like Ghirlandaio and Raphael self-consciously bring together expression (*Ausdruck*) and representation (*Darstellung*) such that this convergence still has meaning (*Bedeutung*) for belated spectators like himself. But again, Warburgian metaphor installs as the engine of historical dialectics a nonconceptual, nonsystematic mode of thought that never sublates the disruptive claims of sensuous experience. Indeed, the treatment of the image in *Mnemosyne*, which presumes and makes visible continuous metamorphosis, may ultimately be read as exploding or suspending—via an *epochē*—any historical or philosophical-critical narrative.⁸⁹

87. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, 75–77. The interpolated quote is from Warburg's “Francesco Sassetti's letztwillige Verfügung.”

88. Verene, “Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer,” 38.

89. Imbert addresses the Cassirer-Warburg relationship briefly and suggests that it was effectively a two-way street. She sees the presence of Kepler's ellipse on panel C as an “homage to Cassirer” and opines that “Cassirer's patronage opened up a not-yet-imagined cartography, founded upon a continuity between the symbolic form and the *Pathosformel*” (“Aby Warburg,” 26).

In any case, the “carrying-over” or *translatio* synonymous with metaphor is paradigmatic of the way both artists and cosmographers organize a chaotic, cultural-historical *Denkraum*, and thus paradigmatic, too, of Warburg’s own comparatist efforts. Juxtaposing the images of Florentine painters and those of Renaissance astrologers and astronomers, Warburg urges that a fresco by Ghirlandaio and a diagram of the solar system by Kepler have a common metamorphic, metaphoric trajectory: both place a *Pendelbewegung* before the spectator’s eyes.⁹⁰ The introduction to *Mnemosyne* details this transformative “Prozeß” all too briefly:

Der Entdämonisierungsprozeß der phobisch geprägten Eindruckserbmasse, der die ganze Skala des Ergriffenseins gebärdensprachlich umspannt, von der hilflosen Versunkenheit bis zum mörderischen Menschenfraß, verleiht der humanen Bewegungsdynamik auch in der Stadien, die zwischen den Grenzpolen des Orgasmus liegen, den Kämpfen, Gehen, Laufen, Tanzen, Greifen, jenen Prägrand unheimlichen Erlebens, das der in mittelalterliche[r] Kirchengzucht aufgewachsene Gebildete der Renaissance wie ein verbotenes Gebiet, wo sich nur die Gottlosen des freigelassenen Temperaments tummeln dürfern, ansah. Der Atlas zur Mnemosyne will durch seine Bildmaterialien diesen Prozeß illustrieren, den man als Versuch der Einverseelung vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens bezeichnen könnte.⁹¹

The de-demonization process of the phobic stamped legacy of impressions, which compasses in gestural speech the entire scale of being emotionally moved and overwhelmed, from helpless depression to murderous cannibalism, contributes to the human dynamic of motion also in those states that lie between the limiting poles of orgy—fighting, walking, running, dancing, grabbing. This edge is stamped by uncanny experience, an experience that someone educated in the Renaissance with medieval Church discipline regarded like a forbidden realm, where only the godless with unconstrained temperaments might frolic. The atlas for *Mnemosyne* wants to illustrate this process through its pictorial material, which one could call the attempt of spiritualizing and internalizing previously stamped expressive values for the representation of life in motion.

The “human dynamic of motion” comprises both an internal (emotional) and external (gestural) “process.” Such a dynamic unfolds as a historical *translatio*, as a transition from medieval prohibition to Renaissance liberation. And crucially, this *translatio* is presented as an *unheimlich* one, as a return to and agonistic struggle with forgotten or repressed movements, rather than as the discovery of something new.

90. This pendular motion is for Warburg, Zumbusch contends, the key phenomenon allowing him to distinguish between the extremes of symbol as pure presence and the abstract claims of allegory (*Wissenschaft in Bildern*, 18).

91. GS, II.1:3.

Again, Warburg dramatically dubs this spiritual “process,” especially as it concerns astrology, the *Dialektik des Monstrums*. In his last years he loved to repeat the adage *per monstra ad sphaeram*.⁹² Derived from Kepler (whose *per aspera ad astra* probably is adapted from Seneca the Younger), by way of Franz Boll, the phrase epitomizes the fears and hopes he associated with celestial images and the imagination that produced them.⁹³ Beginning with his 1912 lecture, which interpreted the astrological fresco cycle at the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara (painted ca. 1470), and culminating with the many panels on cosmographical themes in the *Atlas*, Warburg found in the *Sphaera barbarica* an ineluctable *Denkraum* fateful not only for Western intellectual history but also for his own attempts to forge a synthesis of “Wort und Bild.”⁹⁴

In his struggle with metamorphic *monstra*, Warburg also found Cassirer's timely assistance to be crucial. Their first meeting, which took place in April 1924 while Warburg was still in the Kreuzlingen sanatorium, turned on the figure of Kepler. As Saxl recounts,

In the years of isolation, Warburg's thought, which had never been arrested by illness, had centered on Kepler. Warburg had come to the conclusion, although separated from his books, that modern thought was born when Kepler broke the traditional supremacy of the circle, as the ideal form in cosmological thought, and replaced it with the ellipse. Cassirer, who never took notes but possessed a memory of almost unlimited capacity, at once came to Warburg's aid, giving chapter and verse for this idea by quoting from Kepler. It was, probably, Warburg's first ray of light in those dark years. He learnt through Cassirer that he had not wandered in a pathless wilderness, but that his scientific thought was at least sane. Cassirer's memory was always miraculous; but it had never worked as miraculously as it did on that day.⁹⁵

92. The Latin *monstra* literally means “things shown”; in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, *monstrum* could mean a “marvel,” “wonder,” or “unnatural portent.” For the dynamic of “horror, pleasure, and repugnance” associated with early modern monstrosity, see Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1700* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 173–214.

93. See Franz Boll, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung: Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie*, 6th ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974). In their edition of Warburg's lecture commemorating Boll's death, Stimilli and Wedepohl trace the phrase's genesis (Warburg, “*Per monstra ad sphaeram*,” 22). They also detail how the *Bilderreihe* method is first methodically deployed in the Boll lecture (*ibid.*, 24–25). In his peroration, Warburg writes: “*Per monstra ad sphaeram!* Von der terribilität des Monstrums zur Kontemplation in der Idealsphäre heidnisch gelehrter Betrachtung. Das ist der Zug in der Kulturentwicklung der Renaissance, den die Bilderreihe von heute Abend beleuchten soll” (*ibid.*, 89).

94. In “Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara” (GS, I.2:465), Warburg glosses the oft-used phrase *Sphaera barbarica* as “eine durch ägyptische, babylonische und kleinasiatische Gestirnnamen bereicherte Fixsternhimmelsbeschreibung.” Boll's 1903 edition of various Greek astrological texts, along with a translation of Abu Ma'shar's influential ninth-century astrological treatise, greatly influenced Warburg.

95. Quoted in Krois, “Cassirer's ‘Symbolic Values,’” 105. Krois comments: “Warburg's interest in Kepler's discovery of the elliptical paths of the planets stemmed from the fact that divergence from inescapable circular paths symbolized liberation from the inexorable force of the stars. The liberation from fear, rather than the question of beauty, was what drew Warburg to Kepler” (104). Concerning Cassirer's and Warburg's correspondence about Kepler during this period, see Maurizio Ghelardi, “Das Klopfen auf der anderen Seite des Tunnels,” *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 157–171, esp. 158–159.

Warburg thinks intuitively, in figures, while Cassirer prodigiously, deductively remembers. But it is Kepler, backed by Cassirer's authority, who helps to illuminate Warburg's dark night of the soul—though Saxl perhaps exaggerates somewhat, as Warburg had given his *Schlangenritual* talk a year before the two men met for the first time. Still, as we saw in chapter 1, *Mnemosyne's* opening sequence of panels casts Kepler as the key, liminal figure in the history of cosmographical images, as a bridge between the astrological and astronomical worldviews. Further, the 1925 Boll lecture (*Vortrag in Gedenken an Franz Boll*) occasions the first public use of the *Bilderreihe* technique.⁹⁶ Here Warburg deploys his words and images to herald how Kepler's calculation of the elliptical orbit of Mars "meant the inward and outward overcoming of the *Sphaera barbarica*" (*die Ueberwindung der Sphaera barbarica innerlich und äusserlich bedeutete*).⁹⁷ Kepler's "Ueberwindung" synchronically coincides with Warburg's own.

Warburg's attraction to and repulsion from the mystical, astrological worldview are exemplified for him by the way in Alexandrian Greece the "Entdämonisierungsprozeß" was curtailed by the facile externalization, allegorization, of *monstra*. Earlier in his career, the other pole, "barbaric anti-classicism," was generally represented by *Magie* (magic); but by the advent of the *Atlas*, Warburg, thanks in part to Saxl, had broadened and diversified his thinking about these countercurrents.⁹⁸ If, as exemplified by Alexandrian culture, monsters are allegorized too quickly and thus "tied-off" from empirical circumstances, then the psychological value of the "process" is nullified or occluded. By contrast, in the Schifanoia lecture, Warburg observes: "The grandeur of the new art, as given to us by the genius of Italy, had its roots in a shared determination to strip the humanist heritage of Greece of all its accretions of traditional 'practice,' whether medieval, Oriental, or Latin."⁹⁹ An initial attempt to fuse his art-historical and cosmographical interests, this lecture also expresses his own "determination" to "enter the shadowy nether regions of astral superstition" that he might thereby overcome them to better understand "the stylistic evolution of Italian painting."¹⁰⁰ And if he appears, even as he painstakingly attends to their details, to devalue along the way medieval astrological thought

96. Stimilli, *Einleitung* to Warburg, "Per monstra ad sphaeram," 24–25. Later, the *Bilderreihe* for the Hamburg Planetarium exhibition was explicitly designed to show Kepler's cardinal place in early modern intellectual history.

97. Warburg, "Per monstra ad sphaeram," 124.

98. So in the *Einleitung*, Warburg writes: "Diese zwei Masken sehr heterogener Herkunft, die jene humane Umrißklarheit der griechischen Götterwelt verdeckten, waren die nachlebenden monströsen Symbole der hellenistischen Astrologie und die im zeitgenössischen bizarren Realismus des Mienenspiels und der Tracht auftretende Gestaltenwelt der Antike alla francese" (GS, II.1:5).

99. Warburg, "Italian Art and International Astrology in Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara," RPA, 586. The passage continues: "It was with this desire to restore the ancient world that 'the good European' began his battle for enlightenment, in that age of internationally migrating images that we—a shade too mystically—call the Age of the Renaissance."

100. RPA, 563.

and imagery, or to regret “how symbols for the fixed stars . . . in their wanderings through Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Spain . . . lost their Grecian clarity of outline,” it is because his “iconological analysis” aims to show more than the mere migration of styles and beliefs. Already here, that is, Warburg aspires to a “historical psychology of human expression.”¹⁰¹ Or, as he writes seventeen years later, his overriding concern is that the “Prozeß” of “Einverseelung” become visible. And it is the *Denkräume* of High Renaissance Italian culture that afford him the most familiar, energetic expression of this uncanny motion.

Mutatis Mutandi

That Warburg found modernity's most realized, luminous, dialectical relationship with ancient Greece in quattrocento art did not prevent him from dedicating a significant portion of his published writings and a fair number of *Mnemosyne's* panels to exploring, on the one hand, the intellectual and cultural relations between the so-called Northern and Southern Renaissances, and, on the other, the afterlives in Europe of Alexandrian and Near Eastern astrological and astronomical thought. As for the North-South question, his concern is less that of influence, though this certainly is scrutinized; rather, Warburg's comparative focus remains fixed on mapping what, in the light of Usener's, Darwin's, and Nietzsche's influence on him, might be called the philology of human expression.¹⁰² In “Peasants at Work in Burgundian Tapestries” (1907), he discovers the same “language of gestures,” albeit in “degraded form,” that he celebrates in quattrocento Florentine art: “If we refuse to be distracted by the influential border surveillance [Grenzwächtertum] in contemporary art-historiography, then it becomes evident that monumental pictorial forces are at work within this ‘inferior’ region of Northern European applied art.”¹⁰³ The essay begins and ends, accordingly, by underscoring the essential role that French and Flemish portable tapestries and engravings played in the evolution of Florentine pictorial style. “These mobile, albeit, costly, iconographic vehicles” must be tracked if one is to understand the meaning (or tenor) of the nymph and the satyr in Florentine painting.¹⁰⁴

A fervent avatar of his own intellectual nomadism, Warburg aims in the *Bilder-atlas* to show in broad, synoptic strokes the “Stilbildung als ein Problem des Austausches solcher Ausdruckswerte” (stylistic formation as a problem of the exchange of such expressive values).¹⁰⁵ Building on iconological insights won earlier, he treats

101. *RPA*, 565, 585.

102. But see Jan Ziolkowski's warnings about the use and abuse of the term “philology” in “Metaphilology,” *Journal of English and German Philology* 104.2 (2005): 239–272.

103. *RPA*, 319 (translation modified); *GS*, I.1:227.

104. *RPA*, 315.

105. *GS*, II.1:5.

Ausdruckswerte and their pathos-laden content as universal, recurring constants, as combinatorial pieces, in the history of artistic styles. But again, to wrestle dialectically with the monsters of human consciousness requires a “vergleichende Betrachtung.” More particularly, it demands that scholarship narrow the gap between how linguistic expression occurs and how expression functions pictorially.

The introduction to *Mnemosyne* points to a recent development in comparative linguistics that serves as a model for Warburg’s own *Kulturwissenschaft*. As Anna Guillemin has argued, Hermann Osthoff’s 1899 lecture, “Vom Suppletivwesen der Indogermanischen Sprache” (On Suppletion in Indo-Germanic Language), plays a heuristic role not just in the comparatism fostered by the *Atlas* but also in Warburg’s thinking as early as the essay on Dürer, where he first introduces the notion of the *Pathosformel*.¹⁰⁶ Osthoff contends that certain sets of words (such as *good, better, best or father, mother, sister, brother*) may owe their irregularity, their “suppletion,” to how they denote experiences of extraordinary intensity, or extremely familiar persons or objects. Though barely remaining within morphological conventions, language is able to give expression to the most intense emotions. This is especially true when comparative and superlative forms are concerned. Further, verbs expressing motion and energy also tend to display the phenomenon of suppletion. In a *Zettel* concerning Osthoff, Warburg lists some of these: “essen, geben, gehen, laufen, nehmen/ tragen, bringen, legen, schlafen, sehen, sein/ werden.”¹⁰⁷ While this nicely dovetails with Warburg’s focus on “bewegtes Leben,” Osthoff’s methodological importance for Warburg, Guillemin notes, lies in how Osthoff provides a model to gauge the ways individual expressions of emotion, however irregular or stylistically idiosyncratic they might seem at first glance, can thrive within the larger conventions and rules governing the creation of meaning.¹⁰⁸

In the 1905 essay on Dürer (based on a lecture that Warburg, wandering again across disciplinary boundaries, gave to the Hamburg Philological Society), even as he introduces the notion of the *Pathosformel*, Warburg links it to the linguistic, stylistic process of intensification. He traces the *translatio* or “long migration” of “antique superlatives of gestures from Athens, by way of Rome, Mantua, and Florence, to Nuremberg and into the mind of Albrecht Dürer.”¹⁰⁹ In this way, the notion of linguistic intensification helps clarify how variations of the same *Pathosformel* emerge diachronically as well as why they may exist synchronically. Explaining how van der Goes’s and Ghirlandaio’s *Adoration* paintings could exist in such close

106. Anna Guillemin, “The Style of Linguistics: Aby Warburg, Karl Vossler, and Herman Osthoff,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69.4 (2008): 605–626.

107. Quoted in Guillemin, “Style of Linguistics,” 615.

108. Guillemin recounts how Warburg first noticed Osthoff’s essay/lecture in 1899 and was considering it again in 1903 (“Style of Linguistics,” 615–616). Kany quotes Warburg’s letter to Wilamowitz-Möllerndorff where the *Pathosformeln* are called “Superlative leidenschaftlich bewegter Gebärdensprache der Antike,” which “auf die Formensprache der Renaissance eingewirkt haben” (*Mnemosyne als Programm*, 169).

109. *RPA*, 558.

temporal and ultimately spatial proximity, Warburg conflates, in an unpublished manuscript (the *Festwesen*, written during the same period as the Dürer essay), Osthoff's notion of the suppletion with the *Pathosformel*: "I do not want to overrate the formula I have found for it, but there exists in the field of the visual arts a phenomenon, which is the same as the one Osthoff has observed in linguistics—a switch and supplementation of the roots used in the superlative."¹¹⁰ Osthoff's linguistic research thus provides a scientific model to help justify the more inexplicable aspects of migrating *Pathosformeln*, which like suppletion fuse extreme subjectivity (*Pathos*) with historical forms (*Formeln*) whose origins and variations can be objectively demonstrated.

Osthoff also plays an important supporting role in the *Einleitung*. There he is credited with showing Warburg how "der Eintritt eines fremdstämmigen Ausdrucks eine Intensifikation der ursprünglichen Bedeutung bewirkt" (the entrance of an expression from a foreign source causes an intensification of the original meaning).¹¹¹ By analogy, then, just as in the genealogy of words, the history of images carries furtive energies, occluded memories that include both native and foreign forces. Expression of intense psychological states is the common task of language and the visual arts. Moreover, that both forms of expression can incorporate foreign, irregular elements even as they preserve abstract rules, conventions, and notions of genre closely resembles how metaphor juggles the improper and proper. Pursuing "die *Wie* der Metapher," Warburg turns from linguistics to art history:

Mutatis mutandi läßt sich ein ähnlicher Prozeß auf dem Gebiet der kunstgestaltenden Gebärdensprache feststellen, wenn etwa die tanzende Salome der Bibel wie eine griechische Mänade auftritt, oder wenn eine fruchtkorbtragende Dienerin Ghirlandajos im Stil einer ganz bewußt nachgeahmten Victoria eines römischen Triumphbogens herbeieilt.¹¹²

Mutatis mutandi a similar process can be observed in the sphere of the artfully formed language of gestures, when the dancing biblical Salomé appears like a Greek maenad, or when a servant girl carrying a basket of fruit by Ghirlandajo hurries by in the style of a fully conscious imitation of a Victoria on a Roman triumphal arch.

110. Quoted in Guillemin, "Style of Linguistics," 616–617; and in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 178–179.

111. GS, II.1:3. As Forster explains, "Osthoff observed and closely analyzed the phenomenon whereby the Indo-European languages sometimes express a degree of intensification not by adding a comparative suffix but by introducing a completely different root, because this expresses the intensification better than the basic form: *agathon*, *ameinon*; *bonum*, *melius*; *good*, *better*. These comparatives and superlatives have survived as 'disjunct' expressive forms alongside the regular forms created by inflection; but the intensifying-impulse that prompted the initial change of root has remained unconscious" (RPA, 456).

112. GS, II.1:3.

The analogy succeeds because the “process” in both spheres concerns motion between the strange and the familiar. Lively expressions from foreign languages enter native tongues just as dynamic figures in motion from one culture are welcomed into the art of another. Thus Warburg’s study of the metamorphoses of figures like the nymph resembles how a philologist contemplating a word’s morphology relies on both intuition and empirical rigor.¹¹³ He views the “fruchtkorbtragende Dienerin” both as a significant detail and as effectively signaling a universal syntactical form whose recursivity and expressive power art historians have hitherto neglected. Not only does she bear sensuous, almost tangible fruit, but she accomplishes a *translatio* across time, space, and cultures.

For the “dynamograms” of repetition and difference traced in the *Atlas* to yield any lasting insights, they must somehow be tethered to, or framed by, a larger vision, a *theoria* that will prevent the spectator from falling into the well of particulars. If Cassirer pursues a philosophy of symbolic forms in order to widen the scope of Kant’s aesthetic judgments and complicate his predecessor’s timeless schemas with cultural and historical contingencies, then Warburg’s comparatist cartography would map an “Ikonologie des Zwischenraums” between self and world in various forms of expression in order to track the persistence of timeless *Ausdruckswerte*. To do so he would ground or, to borrow one of his favorite words, *orient* his intuition by returning constantly to this phenomenological, psychological space where specific figures like the nymph, Perseus, or the astrological demon are transformed by constant human need into new but still recognizable forms.

To effect a *translatio* between the mass of historical and philological knowledge and the more panoptic, ineffable flashes of intuition is of course the *Erlebnis* that fueled the vision of comparative literature as practiced with such tangible, objective results by E. R. Curtius, Leo Spitzer, and Erich Auerbach. And yet obviously these comparatists also had all-too-human needs and perspectives shaping their choice of details and the scope of their intuitions.¹¹⁴ Moreover, given Warburg’s fascination with “jene[m] Prägrand unheimlichen Erlebens,” it should not surprise that the task of translating this *Erlebnis* into verbal form never satisfied him. Symptomatic of this discontent is how in his notebooks and the *Tagebuch* the

113. Kany compares Warburg’s iconology to Usener’s etymology, classifying them both as a kind of “ars inveniendi” (*Mnemosyne als Programm*, 165). Salvatore Settis, “Pathos und Ethos, Morphologie und Funktion,” *Vorträge aus dem Warburg Haus* 1 (1997), reads the *Atlas* as an attempt “ein morphologisches Klassifikationssystem aufzubauen, das die Pathosformeln aufnimmt und zu einen Corpus vereinigt, um daraus auf ‘etymologische’ Weise den Kern zu gewinnen” (51).

114. See, for instance, Leo Spitzer, “Linguistics and Literary History,” in *Representative Essays*, ed. Alban K. Forcione et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). Agamben briefly discusses Spitzer in the context of Warburg in “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 92. For a consideration of the contingencies informing Auerbach’s scholarship, see Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, “The Touch of the Real,” in *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 20–48.

movement between analysis and synthesis is frequently interrupted by diagrammatic drawings ("Gedankenbilder") troubling the distinction between word and image.¹¹⁵ Indeed, while Warburg was able to intuit analogies between linguistic phenomena and art-historical ones, it was much more difficult for him to prove them. Tellingly, he characterized the lifelong difficulties he had in finding the proper written form of expression as being cursed with an "eel-soup style" (*Aalsuppenstil*). Gombrich suggests this alludes to the heaviness and concentration of one of the mainstays of Hamburger cuisine, but just as likely it refers to the fact that such soup contained motley ingredients, which, traditionally, did not include eel.¹¹⁶ Warburg, in other words, felt his essays had not succeeded in reconciling the multiplicity of historical detail and the plethora of specific insights with the need for a seamless, easily digestible prose style. Details for him, in his scattered writings and infrequent seminars, are invitations to explore contexts, subtexts, and intertexts. They urge the avoidance of the kind of formalism that dominated German art history and *Geistesgeschichte* around the turn of the century.¹¹⁷ In this respect, however, they are also the greatest obstacles to a "comparatist view" on a subject. This is why metaphoric *Verdichtung* must work hand in hand with metonymic *Verschiebung* in the *Atlas*. If it did not, the *Atlas* would resemble much more those voluminous humanist encyclopedias written by Konrad Gesner or Athanasius Kircher or, more ominously still, those infinite, paradoxical ones imagined by Borges.

115. See the *Einleitung* to the *Tagebuch* (GS, VII:xxxvii). I will focus on an extended example of Warburg's *Gedankenbilder* in chapter 6.

116. "Indem ich mir vorbehalte, diesen gedrängten Aalsuppenstil spätestens bis Ende April in dünnflüssige Suppe aufzulösen, möchte ich nur noch einmal skizzieren . . ." Warburg to Saxl, 3/8/1929; quoted in Ghelardi, "Das Klopfen," 22. Here Warburg tries to explain the growing importance of Bruno's thinking for his intellectual projects. See also Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 14–15.

117. Wind's "Kritik der Geistesgeschichte," in *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliographie zum Nachleben der Antike* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1934), 1:vii–xi, is a fine account of Warburg's divergence from the reigning formalism of his times.

METAPHOROLOGIES: NIETZSCHE, BLUMENBERG, AND HEGEL

Nietzsche: Waking the Dead (Metaphor)

As he tried to widen the scope and refine the method of his *Kulturwissenschaft*, Warburg wrestled with giants whose historiographies had shaped the fields he hoped to map. To begin with, there was J. J. Winckelmann (1717–56), whose neo-Stoic, decidedly aesthetic interpretations of Greek culture and its imitators found “edle Einfalt und stille Größe” not only in the Laocoön statue and Plato’s philosophy, but also in Raphael’s painting.¹ Partly to shake free of Winckelmann’s constricting influence on German art history, Warburg turned to Jacob Burckhardt, whose enormously influential account of Italian Renaissance culture had been increasingly eclipsed in the early decades of the twentieth century by more formalist approaches.² Yet in grappling with the psychological and phenomenological tensions shaping Renaissance appropriations of classical art and cosmology, Warburg darkened somewhat Burckhardt’s grand vision of how individuals, by reviving the classical tradition, freed themselves from medieval shackles. He complicated

1. J. J. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1969), 22.

2. Already in the “Prefatory Note” to “Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoise,” Warburg declares his hope of supplementing Burckhardt’s *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) by interpreting “visual art” with reference to the “psychology of the individual in society” (RPA, 186).

his encounter with Burckhardt's Renaissance, that is, by involving his own self-consciousness, for, again, the *Nachleben der Antike* was for Warburg a vital problem demanding an ethical response as much as an intellectual-historical one. Thus the dynamics of *ethos* and *pathos* strongly shapes his reception of Burckhardt. Fittingly, it colors more strongly still his judgments about Burckhardt's one-time colleague, and author of *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, Friedrich Nietzsche.³

When Warburg gave seminars on Burckhardt at Hamburg University in the summer semester of 1927 and winter semester of 1927–28, he devoted his last session to a comparison of Burckhardt and Nietzsche. Portions of his notes for this session survive, and they greatly illuminate the contours of his late thinking. Warburg's vivid metaphors gives direct expression to those same historical and psychological polarities he tries to chart, and thereby resolve, in *Mnemosyne*:

Wir müssen Burckhardt und Nietzsche als Auffänger der mnemischen Wellen erkennen und sehen, dass das, was sie als Weltbewusstsein haben, sie beide in ganz anderer Weise ergreift. . . . Beide sind sehr empfindliche Seismographen, die in ihren Grundfesten beben, wenn sie die Wellen empfangen und weitergeben müssen. Aber ein grosser Unterschied: Burckhardt hat die Wellen aus der Region der Vergangenheit empfangen, hat die gefährlichen Erschütterungen gefühlt und dafür gesorgt, dass das Fundament seines Seismographen gestärkt wurde. Er hat zu den äussersten Schwingungen, obgleich er sie erlitt, nie völlig und unbedenklich ja gesagt.⁴

We must recognize Burckhardt and Nietzsche as receivers of mnemonic waves, and we have to see that what they possess as world-consciousness, they grasp in completely different ways. . . . Both are very sensitive seismographs, which shake in their foundations when they receive and have to retransmit the waves. But there is a huge difference: Burckhardt received the waves from the region of the past; he felt the dangerous trembling and therefore took care that his seismograph's foundation was strengthened. He never fully and unhesitatingly affirmed the most extreme oscillations, although he suffered them.

To have a finely attuned "consciousness of the world" (*Weltbewusstsein*) is to be sensitive to history's recurring ruptures, polarities, and processes, but it also is, as Warburg's observation about the way Burckhardt avoids representing "the most

3. Before Nietzsche left academia, he and Burckhardt taught in the early 1870s at the University of Basel. Nietzsche sent copies of all of his books to Burckhardt, seeking, without success, the historian's approbation. And when he fell into madness in Turin in 1889, Nietzsche addressed some of his most desperate, unbalanced, but astonishingly lyrical letters to the much older Burckhardt.

4. Warburg, WIA, III.113.2.3, *Schlussitzung der Burckhardt Übungen*, fol. 1. On what technology may inform the seismograph metaphor, see Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 117–125. *Schlange nri-tual* (107) offers an earlier use of the metaphor at a moment when Warburg was literally trying to prove his own reliability-objectivity as a scientific "seismograph."

extreme oscillations” suggests, to make strong, self-reflective judgments about the past. Thus even as the seismographic Warburg produces graphic, metaphoric dynamograms, he slyly warns against the extreme psychological effects, what Didi-Huberman treats as the “symptoms,” of attending closely to historical processes like *Entdämonisierung*. Both Burckhardt and Nietzsche are “prophetic”; but the former, as a “necromancer,” is willing to accept his vocation as a “simple teacher,” whereas the latter unwisely, maniacally, pins his hopes on the future, which dooms him to suffer:

Nietzsche ist vollkommen dem religiösen Wahnsinn verfallen. Der Mann, dessen Einziges die unbedingte Hingabe an den Glauben des Grossen der Zukunft ist, ist bei diesem Versuch das Opfer seiner eigenen Idee geworden. . . . Es ist eine Wunschatmosphäre, in der er nicht leben konnte. . . . Er, der so oft über die Passion des Menschen geschrieben hatte und das Privileg des Darüberstehens gefordert, liegt da—ein furchtsam, weggekrümmter Wurm.⁵

Nietzsche completely succumbed to religious madness. The man, who was singularly, unconditionally, inclined toward the belief in the future’s greatness, became the victim of his own idea with this effort. . . . It is an atmosphere of wishing in which he was unable to live. . . . He who so often had written about human suffering and who demanded the privilege of standing above it, lies there—a timorous, wriggling worm.

The pathos evoked by this remarkable image involves not just Nietzsche. It concerns Warburg as well, who in the drama of his version of intellectual history knew, despite his best efforts to construct what Beatrice Hanssen calls a “prophylactic memory image,” that he could never quite secure for himself Burckhardt’s comforting “foundation,” nor make his own *Denkraum* or *Wunschraum* immune from Nietzsche’s “Wunschatmosphäre.”⁶ Increasingly turning (or turning back) to religious questions in his last years, Warburg, too, sought lasting ways to mediate the “violent passion of humans”—thus his fascination with the image of Neptune as “the breaker of waves,” that is, with how the (art) historian sublimates the waves of violent images that the past washes over him. In tracing the *Nachleben* of “pre-stamped” images, Warburg, like Nietzsche, the philologist and philosopher of the “last man,” searched for metaphors that would lend redemptive meaning to the present and the future, to say nothing of the past.

Contrasting Nietzsche’s “loneliness” as he lost his sanity with the “cool irony” Burckhardt adopted toward his former colleague, Warburg casts these two men as “uralten Sehertypen” (ancient types of prophets): Nietzsche is a “Nabi . . . der

5. Warburg, *Schlussitzung*, fol. 3.

6. Hanssen, “Portrait of Melancholy,” 183.

auf die Straße läuft, sich die Kleider zerreißt, Wehe schreit, und das Volk vielleicht hinter sich her leitet" (Nabi . . . who runs through the street, tears his clothes, screams woe, and perhaps leads the people behind him), or he is like a maenad, "who tears apart her son"; whereas Burckhardt is like the "prophetess Veleda," perched in her tower, affected only by "Gestaltung" (form) and "not mystical drama."⁷ This bizarre typology conforms with Warburg's habit—one certainly marked by his reading of Nietzsche—to cast intellectual problems, at least initially, in terms of stark dichotomies or polarities:

Wir sehen auf einmal den Einfluss der Antike in den beiden Strömungen, der sogenannten apollinischen und der dionysischen. Welche Rolle in der Entwicklung der seherischen Persönlichkeit spielt die Antike? Agostino di Duccio und Nietzsche stehen auf der einen Seite, die Architekten und Burckhardt auf der anderen: Tektonik gegen Linie.⁸

We see at once the classical influence in both currents, in the so-called Apollonian and the Dionysian. What role does antiquity play in the development of the prophetic character? Agostino di Duccio and Nietzsche stand on one side, the architects and Burckhardt on the other: tectonics versus the [architectural] line.

Amplifying the seismograph metaphor to reconceive the Dionysian-Apollonian split, Warburg draws an unambiguous line between those who are merely prey to history's forces and those who, by manipulating architectural lines, are able to shape them.

Reading such passages, Gombrich would further insulate Warburg from Nietzsche's fate. To this end he quotes from another late notebook where Warburg melodramatically paints himself as a Dante-like figure forced to traverse "die Region der ewigen Unruhe" (the region of eternal unrest) to achieve the "historian's vocation."⁹ Conversely, among the considerable achievements of Didi-Huberman's *L'image survivante* is its reassessment of the affinities Warburg had with *both* Burckhardt and Nietzsche, and alternately how his principal successors, Panofsky and Gombrich, tended to highlight the former and discount the latter.¹⁰ Gombrich,

7. Warburg, *Schlusssitzung*, fols. 4–5. Also, echoing again Jean Paul: "Nietzsche hat stark um Burckhardt geworben. Burckhardt hat sich vom ihm abgewendet wie einer, der in Jerusalem einen Derwisch laufen sieht. Veleda gegen ein Amokläufer. Sie blühen, auf einem Stamm geimpfet, weiter" (fol. 5).

8. Warburg, *Schlusssitzung*, fol. 6. Warburg also sees Burckhardt, in his praise for Rubens, as fusing "Leben" and "Bändigung" (fol. 5). Duccio figures prominently in panels 41 and 47.

9. See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 254–259.

10. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, esp. 91–190. On Gombrich's and Panofsky's "saving" of Warburg from Nietzsche's clutches, see Margaret Iverson, "Retrieving Warburg's Tradition," *Art History* 16.4 (1993): 541–553. A detailed comparison of Warburg and Nietzsche, their interpretations of opera, methods, views of myth, etc., is offered by Helmut Pfotenbauer, "Das Leben der Antike: Aby Warburgs Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche," *Nietzsche Studien* 14 (1985): 298–313.

Didi-Huberman asserts, even “invents a ‘Hegelian’ Burckhardt” to protect Warburg and the study of the Renaissance from the “specter” of Nietzsche.¹¹ But if this was in fact his motive, it was a conflicted one, since in the 1969 text to which Didi-Huberman refers Gombrich proves just as allergic to the Hegelian (or Dilthean) brand of *Geistesgeschichte*.¹² Moreover, as I shall try to demonstrate below, the prospect of interpreting Warburg’s historical consciousness through a Hegelian prism yields fascinating results, even if they prove to be more symbolic than synthetic.

As for Nietzsche, Didi-Huberman convincingly argues that one of the most important debts Warburg owed him was the concept of historical *Geburt*, with all its ecstatic, tragic connotations.¹³ A way of rethinking the idea of origins outside the harmonious narrative of continuity proposed by Winckelmann, such “birth” is as much a forgetting as a re-membling. For Warburg and Nietzsche this forgetting is tragedy’s essence, a truth that Cassirer ignores at his peril. Thus the “tragedy of culture—is the tragedy of its memory. It is the tragedy of our faulty memory of the tragic.”¹⁴ And while *Gedächtnis* for Warburg does savor slightly of the Platonic ideal of recollection in that he names *sophrosyne* as his epistemic, spiritual goal, the content of such recollection remains decidedly worldly and mutable. To remember is to rely on intuition and the capacity to create “metaphoric distance”; it is to attend to consciousness’s originary “engrams” and the historical forms by which they present themselves rather than to embrace dialectical reason’s teleological motions. It is, in the end, not to make something higher of the world and our symbolic relations to it.

At the conclusion of his seminal 1873 essay on metaphor, “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn” (“On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense”), after tracing how quotidian and philosophic discourse is riddled with dead metaphors or how catachreses become even deader concepts, and after lamenting how metaphor has lost its heuristic and “intuitive” (*anschaulich*) force, Nietzsche paints an alternate vision of how the metaphorician experiences the shipwreck of history:

That vast assembly of conceptual beams and boards [Jenes ungeheure Gebälk und Bretterwerk der Begriffe] to which needy man clings, thereby saving himself on his journey through life, is used by the liberated intellect as a mere climbing frame and plaything on which to perform its most reckless tricks; and when it smashes this framework, jumbles it up and ironically re-assembles it, pairing the most unlike things and dividing those things which are closest to one another [das Fremdeste paarend und das Nächste trennend], it reveals the fact that it does not require those makeshift aids of neediness, and that it is now guided, not by concepts but by

11. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 142–143. Hans Baron and Cassirer, Didi-Huberman suggests, also tried to disassociate Burckhardt from Nietzsche.

12. See E. H. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

13. Didi-Huberman, *L'image survivante*, 147–149, 187.

14. *Ibid.*, 152.

intuitions [Intuitionen]. No regular way leads from these intuitions into the land of ghostly schemata and abstractions; words are not made for them, or he will speak only in forbidden and unheard-of combinations of concepts so that, by at least demolishing and deriding old conceptual barriers, he may do creative justice to the impression made on him by the mighty, present intuition [der mächtigen, gegenwärtigen Intuitionen].¹⁵

Playfully reassembling the flotsam and jetsam, the old “beams and boards” of philosophy and theology, is the task of the ironic, “liberated intellect,” who, “guided . . . by intuitions,” constantly creates new metaphors and thus new momentary truths. Such an intellect refuses to wear a mask, yet is still subject, Nietzsche hastens to add, to the same tragic fate as protagonists in Greek drama. This “man of intuition” is a heuristic, artistic creature. He refuses to learn from experiences fossilized in concepts—as a result he spiritually, psychologically, rises and falls more than ordinary humans. In the sense, then, that he rejects history’s accretions, the “liberated intellect” described here does not, despite their common attachment to the metonymic art of bricolage, describe Warburg, who always insists on the mother of the Muses as his guide. And yet just as Nietzsche’s intuitive man with his “drive to form metaphors” (*Trieb zur Metaphernbildung*) would usurp the place of science and history with myth—the shipwreck metaphor functions as a myth and a solipsistic one at that, though it also has the lengthiest of genealogies—Warburg’s notion of metaphor as realized in the *Atlas* is fueled by a formalist faith that metaphor can create an “organic polarity” between subjective and objective elements.¹⁶ Furthermore, it certainly is the case, as confirmed by many of his puns, neologisms, and disjunctive juxtapositions, that the metaphoric “process” for Warburg relies on irony and humor to help prevent its results from becoming just another stolid scholarly monument or conceptual scheme. If Warburg’s late writings confirm that the “*Trieb zur Metaphernbildung*” is no mere manner, but rather constitutive of his attempt to find new ways of thinking about the past, then such an attempt is thoroughly imbued with an ironic self-consciousness. In this it recalls Friedrich Schlegel’s notion of romantic irony born from the incommensurability of fragment and infinitude (*die Unendlichkeit*). Or it is, as Gilles Deleuze remarks about Nietzsche’s creative, willful language, a kind of “active philology” that disdains rhetorical conventions and inherited, conceptual frameworks.¹⁷

15. Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense,” in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 883 (translation modified); Nietzsche, “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne,” in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 1:888–889.

16. Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies,” 882; Nietzsche, “Über Wahrheit und Lüge,” 887. For the relationship between metaphor and myth in Nietzsche’s text, see Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 74–80.

17. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 74.

What, though, are the implications for Warburg's project of Nietzsche's diagnosis of dead metaphor as the surreptitious means of concept formation? Baldly stated, Nietzsche would invert the Platonic notion of recollection.¹⁸ He argues that language and its concepts are the duplicitous, metaphysical means of forgetting and concealing "what is individual and real."¹⁹ For him sensuous experience always precedes language. The senses furnish the *proper*, such as it is, given that no viable or, for that matter, desirable Kantian "thing-in-itself" exists for Nietzsche. "Was ist ein Wort? Die Abbildung eines Nervenreizes in Lauten." (What is a word? The copy of a nervous stimulation in sounds.)²⁰ As with Warburg's engrams, here a biological, ephemeral, but recursive phenomenon anchors the real. "What, then, is truth?"—Nietzsche asks, though he has already glimpsed his skeptical answer: "A mobile army [ein bewegliches Heer] of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which have been used a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding."²¹ Truths are illusions, abstractions, aporias, and sublimations of "graphic [anschaulichen] metaphors into schemas."²² To create such catachreses is "to dissolve [auflösen] an image into a concept." Nietzsche's genealogy of illusory truths, truths derived from metaphoric displacements, inversions, and abstractions, mimics Platonic recollection, but with the crucial caveat that no absolute form ultimately guarantees Truth. Such dead metaphors are metaphysical in that, to borrow Warburg's phrase, they are "tied-off" from physical, empirical *realia*. As Sarah Kofman observes, the reified and therefore deceptive concept "plays a privileged role in the forgetting of metaphor, in that it hides the metaphorical character of the process of generalization by founding it on an essential generality: the concept vouches for the 'untruth' and 'treacherness' of metaphor, ensuring their stability whilst at the same time maintaining a forgetfulness of the genesis of the process."²³ For Nietzsche, most metaphors in scientific, philosophic, political, and religious discourse are moribund or ossified. Such language, with its need for rigid classifications and stable truths, preempts the possibility of the "artistically creative subject."²⁴ It also causes historical amnesia. It obviates, in short, the kind of *Kulturwissenschaft* cultivated by Warburg.

18. See Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 876–877.

19. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 878; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 880.

20. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 876; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 878. Kofman rightly troubles the notion of the Nietzschean proper. Not surprisingly, Nietzsche influenced Semon's psychological-biological notions of the engram and mneme.

21. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 878; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 880.

22. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 878 (translation modified); Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 881.

23. Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 35.

24. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 880.

Alternately, like Warburg, Nietzsche pursues the *Mitte* as the ideal means by which expression and meaning can be obtained. The man of intuition should adopt "ein *ästhetisches* Verhalten" (an *aesthetic* attitude) toward his object, that he might offer "eine nachstammelnde Übersetzung in eine ganz fremde Sprache. Wozu es aber jedenfalls einer frei dichtenden und frei erfindenden Mittel-Sphäre und Mittelekraft bedarf" (a stammering translation into a quite different language. For which purpose a middle sphere and mediating force is certainly required which can freely invent and freely create poetry).²⁵ Vividly exemplifying such "translation" is a handless painter who "durch Gesang das ihm vorschwebende Bild ausdrücken wollte" (wished to express in song the image hovering before him).²⁶ The "picture" he produces is not "necessary" but rather vitally contingent. Yet if that "same picture" is produced a "million times and through many generations of men," it appears "as if it were the only necessary image." The challenge, then, for Nietzsche, as for Warburg with his pathos formulas, is how to admit the phenomenon of repetition and yet to allow the artist the possibility of finding novel metaphoric means of mediating between self and world.

For Nietzsche, the language of philosophers and priests has lost its currency: "Die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, daß sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen, in Betracht kommen." (Truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer coins.)²⁷ This economy of signs is narrowly anthropomorphic yet duplicitously hides its agency, for, spurred by ideology and self-interest, it forgets to attend to the "originalen Anschauungsmetaphern" by which the individual sought to establish real relations with worldly things and events; instead, it "sucht im Grunde nur die Metamorphose der Welt in den Menschen" (seeks basically only the metamorphosis of the world in human beings).²⁸

Intriguingly, the same coin-metaphorics is adopted in the introduction to *Mnemosyne*, which characterizes as "insufficient" any attempt to describe the "restitution of the classical" as a "doctrine of evolution" without first delving into the "Tiefe triebhafter Verflochtenheit des menschlichen Geistes mit der achronologisch geschichteten Materie" (depths of the human spirit's instinctive entanglement with achronological, stratified material). Only here in these psychological depths can one perceive the Dionysian mechanism, "das Prägework, das die Ausdruckswerte

25. Ibid.; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 884.

26. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 880; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 884.

27. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 878; Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 880–81.

28. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies," 879 (translation modified); Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Lüge," 883.

heidnischer Ergriffenheit münzt" (the mint, which mints the expressive values of pagan emotion), and which puts into circulation the forms Warburg would map.²⁹ Likewise, in a notebook we read of the "Funktion des gedächtnismäßigen Sparbanksystems für passion-gedeckte Ausdruckswerte" (function of the memory-suitable savings bank system for passion-covered expressive values).³⁰

In "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," Jacques Derrida carefully if playfully elaborates on the Nietzschean economy of metaphor and the metaphors of coinage by first observing how "we are unwitting metaphysicians in proportion to the *usure* of our words."³¹ Then he ingeniously traces how occidental philosophy, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, has made its unacknowledged reliance on metaphor seem as natural and inevitable as the rising and setting of the (Aristotelian) sun. Philosophers, Derrida urges, are really heliotropes whose rhetorical contortions falsely promise the clear and distinct light of reason; their metaphors, that is, are their most vital, if largely unacknowledged "philosophemes." With less skepticism, Warburg refigures this same heliotropism in various entries in his notebook *Mnemosyne: Grundbegriffe* I. One fragment reads: "Vom erdgebundenen Phobos zum heliotropen Excelsior / Daimon—Olympier" (From earthbound *phobos* to heliotropic *excelsior* / *daimon*—Olympian).³² An unequivocal expression of his now metaphysical (i.e., "heliotropic"), now psychological desire to transcend humanity's baser demons, this and other entries like it are also tied to his discovery, during his stay in Rome from September 1928 to June 1929, of the essential role that Giordano Bruno had to play in his *Kulturwissenschaft*. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 7, Bruno's audacious attempts to use metaphor to reorient the Renaissance cosmos via the stereoscopy of classical mythology and Copernican science resemble Warburg's in startling ways.

How, though, do Nietzsche's paradigm-shifting views on metaphor illuminate Warburg's *Mnemosyne*? In the second part of "On Truth and Lies," just before "der handelnde Mensch," "der Forscher," is described as ironically recombining the flotsam and jetsam of dead metaphors, Nietzsche calls for the intellect to participate in "Saturnalia," to cultivate new, mixed metaphors and self-consciously to embrace artistic "pretense" so that servile abstractions might be avoided.³³ Only

29. GS, II.1:4.

30. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 72.

31. Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 211.

32. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 84. See also fol. 62 and *Grundbegriffe* II, fol. 33. Compare Warburg's idealism with Kofman's claim, in *Camera Obscura: Of Ideology*, trans. Will Straw (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), that Nietzsche has "no nostalgia for clarity" (40). As Kofman tells it, Nietzschean metaphor, like a *camera obscura*, is ultimately an "*apotropeaon*," a looking away, a way of avoiding being "médusées." By contrast, Warburg never stops looking at the same images. What saves his gaze from being reified, though, is his constant manipulation, (re)combination of images, which keeps his (and our) vision in motion.

33. See Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 74–78, on Nietzsche's Saturnalia.

in this manner, he suggests, can the pathos of our shipwrecked condition be perceived.³⁴ The “drive to form metaphors” must not be denied, even as it becomes the (last) philosopher’s task to remember how humanity has purposefully forgotten its own metaphors.

Nietzsche dedicates much of his intellectual capital to curing or at least diagnosing this amnesia. From the mock epic of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* to the aphorisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he exploits myriad rhetorical forms and styles to juggling memory and metaphor. But as Warburg contends in his seminar, such efforts may also result in abject, wormlike madness for the would-be physician. Nietzsche never really wins “metaphoric distance,” mainly because he spurns all attempts to achieve a stable “metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung.” Through his metaphors and metaphorology he diagnoses but also exaggerates the “pathos of distance” by which old and new moralities are formed.³⁵ Yet if, as the observation that the man of intuition “ironically re-assembles” the linguistic debris of history and ideology suggests, Nietzsche’s *saturnalia* veers frequently toward satire and laughter, then Warburg is not without this same ironic consciousness. By insisting on his *Aalsuppenstil*, Warburg casts his intellectual efforts as a kind of twentieth-century *satura* (literally, “a mixed dish”). More tellingly still, his chief term for what happens to pagan pathos formulas in the Middle Ages, Christian Renaissance, and beyond is “inversion,” which, rather than picking up on the Latin *inversio* (allegory), is much closer to Nietzsche’s cardinal notion of a transvaluation of values, and therefore to the ceaseless perspectivism marking the philosopher’s thought and style.³⁶ But by limiting his analysis of “inversion” to the fortunes of only a few *Ausdruckswerte*, Warburg is able to make visible, as in panel 77 (see fig. 21), Western culture’s ironic, downward trajectory. Here we go from an ancient Greek nymph to a woman in a 1929 newspaper advertisement peddling vacation cruises: “Das Reisefräulein auf dem Reklamezettel ist eine heruntergekommene Nymphe, wie der Matrose eine Viktoria ist.” (The woman traveler on the advertisement handbill is a degraded nymph, like the sailor is a Victoria.)³⁷ A photograph of a woman golfer in the same panel, which “begins” with an image of Medea by Delacroix (no. 1), is wryly glossed in the *Tagebuch* as “Die Katharsis der Kopffägerin in Gestalt der Golfspielerin” (The catharsis of the head-huntress in the shape of the female golfer).³⁸ These and other juxtapositions of the antique and modern in the final panels suggest a longing for synthesis, for history to be a comedy not a tragedy. Yet as the size of the metonymic leaps increases—on the same panel there is also a fourth-century BCE

34. Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies,” 882.

35. See Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 51–52, 90–92.

36. See Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, 54–56, on this “inversion of values.”

37. Warburg, as cited in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 301. But there is no such entry on 9/20/1929 in the *Tagebuch* as Gombrich claims.

38. GS, VII:481.

image (no. 11) of a coin showing a chariot guided by Nike (on the obverse side, which is not shown, appears Arethusa, the water nymph)—so does the feeling of chaos. Rhetorical *syncretis* not conceptual synthesis is the final result.

One of Warburg's last entries in the *Tagebuch* reads: "Nietzsche spricht einmal von dem (geistigen), 'Teufelsmut der Juden.' Gestern abend habe ich wirklich empfunden, daß man schon von ihm besessen sein muß um mit diesen Problemen der Geisteswanderung anzubinden. Weiße Nekromantie = historischer Weltanschauung." (Nietzsche speaks once of the [spiritual], "diabolical courage of the Jews." Yesterday evening I really felt that one must already be possessed by it in order to engage with these problems of the spirit's wandering. White Necromancy = historical perspective.)³⁹ Reanimating the very domain that elsewhere he criticizes as lacking "balance," Warburg leans on the metaphors of magic to describe his efforts to grasp "these problems of spiritual, intellectual transformation." For his part, one of the chief metaphors Nietzsche uses to express how dead metaphors become concepts is the Roman *columbarium*, where early Christians furtively buried their dead. In other words, Warburg's and Nietzsche's common task is to make the dead, what history and duplicitous memory have buried, visible and intuitable again. For both men this task depends heavily, if not primarily, on metaphor. Yet both also espouse an idiosyncratic *Lebensphilosophie*; for Nietzsche this means heeding an originary, but always repeatable "Nervenreiz," while for Warburg it means discovering the "process" by which the originary "Wucht" (force) and its attendant engrams are converted into "life in motion," into those human gestures whose pathos art is forever finding new ways to express.

Blumenberg: Shipwreck as Pathos Formula

Beginning with his programmatic essay, "Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie" (1960), then continuing with his revision of these paradigms in "Anthropologische Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik," (1971), *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit* (1975, published posthumously in 2007), *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer: Paradigma einer Daseinsmetapher*, which appeared along with "Ausblick auf eine Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit" (1979), and *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (1981), Hans Blumenberg punctuates his encyclopedic efforts in early modern intellectual history with acute, wide-ranging meditations on the nature and function of metaphor as a vehicle for nonconceptual and nonteleological thought.⁴⁰ His attempts to forge a rigorous

39. GS, VII:553.

40. Hans Blumenberg, "Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 6 (1960): 7–142 [*Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library, 2010)]; Blumenberg, *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer: Paradigma einer Daseinsmetapher* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979) [*Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997)]; Blumenberg, *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Blumenberg, "Anthropologische

metaphorology both respond critically to the claims of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms and buttress his contention that an expanded form of *Begriffsgeschichte* can be written in which neither concepts nor for that matter origins or ends are the foci. By attending instead to metaphor's phenomenological, even anthropological dimensions, Blumenberg perceives the persistence of fundamental human relations with what he, following Husserl, calls the pre-given, pre-scientific *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld).⁴¹ Thus his historical accounts of how metaphor enables perception, meaning, and understanding precisely where concepts fail, strongly parallel how Warburg in *Mnemosyne* makes visible but also mediates historical expressions of "life in motion."

In a synoptic essay examining the arc of Blumenberg's evolving metaphorology, David Adams observes that "the core of Blumenberg's achievement has been a theory of metaphor describing the process by which man gives a total, tangible form to his experience. . . . By mediating between *Dasein* and the whole of reality, metaphor not only establishes a relation but it also preserves distance, blocking direct contact between mankind and the absolute."⁴² Familiar terms to Warburg's readers, *relation* and *distance* as constituted by metaphor are the principal phenomena that Blumenberg seeks to explicate, for they also contain the promise of knowledge, even if to know is mainly to know the limits of reason and historical memory.

Blumenberg critiques the symbol's "distance" in "Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality" as a part of his larger critique of Heidegger and Kant. The former makes a symbol out of "Dasein," the latter out of "freedom." As such, "The symbol is powerless to communicate anything concerning its referential object. Hence it stands for the non-depictable, without helping us reach it. It maintains distance in order to constitute between subject and object a sphere of nonobjective correlates of thought, the sphere of what can be represented symbolically. It is the possibility of a mere idea having an effect—an idea as the sum of possibilities—just as it is the possibility of value."⁴³ To critique the symbol, then, is to doubt philosophical idealism;

Annäherung an die Aktualität der Rhetorik," in *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981) ["An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric," in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 429–458]; Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981). For an overview of Blumenberg's evolving metaphorology, see Anselm Haverkamp, "Metaphorologie zweiten Grades: Geld oder Leben," in *Metaphorologie: Zur Praxis einer Theorie*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp and Dirk Mende (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 237–255; see also the chapter Haverkamp dedicates to Blumenberg in *Metapher: Die Ästhetik in der Rhetorik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2007).

41. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 103–114.

42. David Adams, "Metaphors for Mankind: The Development of Hans Blumenberg's Anthropological Metaphorology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52.1 (1991): 155. In his afterword to *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* Robert Savage offers a more recent "guide" to Blumenberg's metaphorology.

43. Blumenberg, "Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality," in *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 98. See also "Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie," 131, where Blumenberg rejects the notion of the symbol to explain the rhetoric of Neoplatonic metaphysics.

it is to privilege the proximity inherent in immanence over the “distance” created by transcendence, though for Blumenberg such immanence is apprehended and expressed mainly through language (rather than, say, via the visual arts).

Unlike the symbol, metaphor need not “block” relations with the ephemeral world of referents. To illustrate this, *Shipwreck with Spectator* traces the history of a single metaphor to show how humanity’s relation with the lifeworld has changed. A permutation of the metaphor Nietzsche uses to describe how the “man of intuition” relies on metaphor to survive the shipwreck of moribund concepts and ideologies, the shipwreck “paradigm” proves to be a dynamic, discursive field in which Blumenberg can reflect on his evolving theory of metaphor. Offering at once “cultural criticism” and a phenomenology of metaphor, Blumenberg shows that the metaphors of seafaring and shipwreck is much more than a recurring topos to be re-membered or catalogued by the metaphorologist. It serves instead as a nonconceptual mode of thought enabling writers in different cultures and historical periods to explore their ambiguous ontological place in nature and history. Such metaphors helps us contemplate our still more ambiguous epistemological role as spectators who must grapple with the difficulty of demarcating limits between self and world, the familiar and the strange.⁴⁴ Ranging from Hesiod and Lucretius all the way to Burckhardt and Valéry, Blumenberg charts how the shipwreck metaphor acquires new, often contradictory meanings even as it repeats the same fundamental structure of trying to reconcile what Warburg would call the *Gegensatz* of a catastrophic event in the theater of nature and a self-conscious spectator who observes the event and with his metaphoric art tries to appropriate it. The vivid result of this historical analysis is that a constellation of metaphors emerges such that a shifting “paradigm” rather than a reified *Begriff* is made available for philosophical speculation.⁴⁵ In this respect, Blumenberg’s reading of a metaphor’s *Nachleben* closely resembles how individual panels of the *Atlas* display an image’s shifting shapes as variations on a *Pathosformel*. Both critical montages are fueled by the nonconceptual logic of similarity and metonymy. And both invite contemplation of how self-consciousness interacts with a world that resists being abstracted into mere ideas.

Furthermore, by nonconceptuality Blumenberg is invoking a stance dear to Husserlian phenomenology, one that would chart a domain of thought prior to the “horizon” of reason and logic. Nonconceptuality insists on the primacy of the event in which thinking encounters the world and the world encounters thinking. Thus like *Mnemosyne*, which would inventory the “Einverseelung vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte,” Blumenberg’s encyclopedic efforts to write a history and theory

44. See Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 8.

45. Insofar as Blumenberg’s analysis is phenomenological or philosophical, it differs from the history of topoi traced by Curtius, though Curtius may be said to provide the material out of which a Blumenbergian problem or “paradigm” emerges.

of nonconceptuality perforce remain incomplete. *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* offers a groundbreaking “typology of metaphor histories” that describes how certain “absolute metaphors” are immune to paraphrase and not reducible to any logical formula.⁴⁶ These “Grundbestände” (basic elements) of philosophical speech are “improper”; they cannot be replaced by other metaphors, even if they also deceptively claim to represent the absolute “How” and “What” of our orientation in the world.⁴⁷ “Ihre Wahrheit ist, in einem sehr weiten Verstande, *pragmatisch*. Ihr Gehalt bestimmt als Anhalt von Orientierungen ein Verhalten, sie geben einer Welt Struktur, repräsentieren das nie erfahrbare, nie übersehbare Ganze der Realität.” (Their truth is *pragmatic* in a very broad sense. By providing a point of orientation, the content of absolute metaphors determines a particular attitude or conduct; they give structure to a world, representing the nonexperienceable, non-apprehensible totality of the real.)⁴⁸ Absolute metaphors such as the force of truth, time as a stream, thinking as fire, darkness as ignorance, the world as a book, and transcendence as ascent reveal the “Wie eines Verhaltens” (how of an attitude) before the “Was” of the whole may be perceived.⁴⁹

Nineteen years later, in “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” Blumenberg reconsiders his emphasis on absolute metaphor as a mode of concept formation. Now he views such metaphor as a “limited special case of non-conceptuality,” which, when interpreted correctly, can make immanent “the connection with the life-world as the constant motivating support of all theory.”⁵⁰ Quoting Husserl, he asserts that metaphor more generally is a “resistance to harmony.”⁵¹ In brief, metaphor’s “imprecision,” its fertile but fuzzy relationship with truth, is its richest heritage. Metaphor usually does not increase the clarity of an idea, nor is it strictly functional. Yet it can still create consensus. Thus it retains its rhetorical function as well as insisting on its historical origins.⁵² For example, the metaphor *fluxus temporis* (the flow of time) has remained vital from Heraclitus through to Bacon

46. Blumenberg, “Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie,” 84; *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, 77.

47. *Ibid.*, 21.

48. *Ibid.*, 20; *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, 14 (translation modified).

49. “Eine Frage wie ‘Was ist die Welt?’ ist ja in ihrem ebenso ungenauen wie hypertrophen Anspruch kein Ausgang für einen theoretischen Diskurs; wohl aber kommt hier ein implikatives Wissensbedürfnis zum Vorschein, das sich im Wie eines Verhaltens auf das Was eines umfassenden und tragenden Ganzen angewiesen weiß und sein Sich-einrichten zu orientieren sucht. Dieses implikative Fragen hat sich immer wieder in Metaphern ‘ausgelebt’ und aus Metaphern Stile von Weltverhalten induziert. Die Wahrheit der Metapher ist eine *vérité à faire*” (Blumenberg, “Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie,” 20–21).

50. Blumenberg, “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” 81. Adams argues that Blumenberg’s early history of “paradigms” never really scrutinizes whether metaphor itself sets a task at odds with the concepts of reason (“Metaphors for Mankind,” 156–157).

51. Blumenberg, “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” 83.

52. Even as Blumenberg argues for metaphor’s “originality” and, adapting Wittgenstein, its ability to refresh the understanding, he insists that “metaphor retains the wealth of its heritage, which abstraction must deny” (“Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” 85).

(and, I would add, Nietzsche and Warburg). By tracing how such a metaphor has been employed in theology, philosophy, science, and literature, Blumenberg discovers at once not only the enormous scope of human curiosity as expressed via images but also that to be human is to be a “Mängelwesen” (creature of deficiency), whose “relation to reality is indirect, circumstantial, delayed, selective, and above all ‘metaphorical.’”⁵³ This anthropological insight has far-reaching rhetorical and philosophical consequences. For example, as the semantics of Heraclitus’s fragments confirms, the metaphor of time’s flow cannot be reduced to stable concepts. It represents, Blumenberg affirms, “inexpressibility itself in language.”⁵⁴ Indeed, such a metaphor initially seems to promise the intuition a clear path to follow, but as analysis digs deeper, it is confounded and hence must learn to accept the limits of theoretical understanding—if we still wish to claim the insights afforded by Heraclitus’s metaphor. Such limits are crucial to maintaining metaphor’s vital relations with the lifeworld. In this respect, metaphor differs significantly from the symbol and the concept. “What binds concept and symbol together is their indifference to the presence of what they represent. Whereas the concept tends potentially toward intuition and remains dependent on it, the symbol, in the opposite direction, disengages itself from what it stands for.”⁵⁵

Both Blumenberg and Warburg decry such disengagement. In *Mnemosyne: Grundbegriffe* I, Warburg asserts that the symbol can serve only as the starting point for interpretation: “Hinter jedem Symbol *steckt* eine aufgehobene (verlorene) *zweigliedrige Handlungsgebundenheit*, die aber unausgesprochen erweitert wird u. z. Ausdruck gebracht werden kann durch Besinnung auf sich selbst.” (Behind every symbol *lurks* a sublimated [lost], *double-jointed restriction of action*, which though can be silently expanded and expressed by reflecting on itself.)⁵⁶ In this regard, his self-reflective task is to re-expand the sphere of such restricted action, where the engrammatic meets formal constraints, the *Umfangsbestimmungen*, that define artistic form, by choosing, arranging, and rearranging the images and panels of the *Atlas*. Whether contemplating Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* or Ghirlandaio’s frescoes, Warburg examines the symbol for its ability to achieve “metaphoric distance” in a way that does not negate the presence of “life in motion.” Indeed, *Besonnenheit* for Warburg means contemplation of this fleeting, contingent achievement as captured by sundry *Pathosformeln*.

In *Shipwreck with Spectator*, Blumenberg writes a metaphor’s history with enormous implications for theory’s practice—the theory of metaphor as well as, more broadly speaking, any discourse with theoretical or conceptual ambitions. In fact,

53. Blumenberg, “Anthropological Approach,” 439. Blumenberg’s “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality” describes a similar bind (96).

54. Blumenberg, “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” 90.

55. *Ibid.*, 97. For related reasons, Blumenberg critiques Cassirer’s notion of the symbol in “Anthropological Approach.”

56. *Grundbegriffe* I, fol. 75.

theoria and metaphor largely perform the same speculative function. Blumenberg thus charts the history of shipwreck metaphors partially to ask what it means “to see” when seeing is so integrally connected with the contemplative act, and when contemplation so frequently concerns the nature of contemplation.⁵⁷ “Shipwreck, as seen by a survivor, is the figure of an initial philosophical experience.”⁵⁸ To sound this experience Blumenberg turns to the opening lines of book 2 of *De rerum natura*, where Lucretius declares:

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est. (1–4)

It is sweet to watch from land the great struggle of another on the great sea with the winds troubling the waters; not because it is a joyous delight for someone to be vexed, but because it is sweet to perceive the ills from which you yourself are free.

More an image than a metaphor proper, these lines are meant to begin the process of teaching the value of *ataraxia* or that freedom from worry that Stoics and Epicureans associated with happiness. To invoke Warburg's key term, this image urges *Distanzierung*. Instead of evoking sympathy for the drowning “other,” Lucretius heightens the contrast between self (spectator) and world (nature) in order to lessen the awful *affectus*, the pathos that one would normally feel when confronted with such a catastrophe. It does so, however, in a one-sided manner, forestalling any real metaphoric circulation between self and world. If this is a *Pathosformel*—the subsequent lines suggest it functions as one of several analogical instances—it verges on eliminating the subjective, pathos-laden element and replacing it with an entirely “aesthetic” one. As Blumenberg's gloss concludes, “The contradiction consists in this: what the spectator enjoys is not the sublimity of the objects his theory opens up for him but his own self-consciousness.”⁵⁹ To gaze (*spectare*) is as sweet (*suave*) as the contemplation attending it.

This equivocal scene is treated as the beginning of a historical process, or as the first pendular movement of a metaphor that in Western literature and thought repeatedly demonstrates the impossibility of remaining (just) a spectator when writing history or theory. Adopting as the essay's epigraph Pascal's “Vous êtes embarqué . . .” from the so-called wager (*pari*), Blumenberg bets metaphor cannot do

57. See Blumenberg's *Das Lachen der Thraikerin: Eine Urgeschichte der Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987).

58. Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 12.

59. *Ibid.*, 26.

without the connections with the lifeworld, as these dynamic, unstable elements of existence are precisely what prompts us to ask theoretical questions in the first place.⁶⁰

More to the point, in charting this metaphor's variations the *Shipwreck* essay functions like one of Warburg's panels. As I discussed briefly in chapter 1, panel 61–64 gives expression to a Virgilian topos, “Quos ego . . .” (*Aeneid* 1.135), where Neptune calms nature's fury and saves Aeneas and his men from a storm.⁶¹ But Warburg here and in panel 60 (fig. 14), “Festwesen Norden, höfisch. Seebeherrschung—Zeitalter der Entdeckungen. Vergil. Fortuna des Seefahrers, brutales Ergreifen (Rubens)” (Northern courtly festival culture. Domination of the sea—age of discovery. Virgil. The navigator's *fortuna*, brutal grasp [Rubens]), also deduces a sequence tracing both the *Nachleben* of a classical pathos formula in the late Renaissance and how the *translatio* of *Ausdrucksuerter* between northern and southern Europe served ideological as well as artistic needs. Consisting mainly of Italian (nos. 1¹, 1², 3, 6), French (nos. 2, 4), Dutch (nos. 5, 8, 9, 10), and English (no. 11) engravings of triumphal processions, the historic and metaphoric motions displayed in panel 60 are never allowed to realize the tragic implications that the *Überschrift*'s last phrase promises. Instead, Rubens makes his first appearance in the subsequent panel in the form of two images (nos. 12^a, 12^b), both of which are annotated as “‘Quos ego’ (Neptun besänftigt die Wogen),” and whose Baroque style imitates and outbids Italian models: an image of a Vasari fresco (no. 2) shows Cosimo I inspecting a fortress with Neptune and the figure of Securitas in the background (in the sea and in grisaille); an engraving after Raphael features Neptune calming the waves.⁶² By way of counterpoint, though, Warburg also indicates that the pathos formula retains unmediated Baroque excess both stylistically and in terms of human suffering. Engravings of Neptune's abduction of Psyche (no. 15) and Europa (no. 18) may be said to end the *Bilderreihe* and therefore complicate (Warburg's) desire for *Ausgleich*. Rubens and most of his contemporaries were, as we shall see below, too attached to “superlatives” to yield the *Besonnenheit*, the speculative energy that Warburg and Blumenberg find and prize in their paradigmatic figures.

While the richness of Blumenberg's *Leidschatz* is specifically linguistic rather than visual, his sequence of “case histories” functions metonymically like a

60. Pascal, *Pensées*, 467–471. Blumenberg shows that Pascal's metaphor, while a “Daseinsmetapher,” is also diachronic, imbued with historical consciousness—a product, in short, of *imitatio*. In this it resembles how, pace Warburg, elements in Ghirlandaio's and Mantegna's paintings reimagine Roman funerary sculpture.

61. Analogously, Blumenberg alludes to the fourth *Eclogue* and the end of seafaring in light of a new golden age (*Shipwreck with Spectator*, 10).

62. See Warburg and Saxl, “*Wanderstraßen der Kultur*,” 64, which cites a letter to Saxl in which Warburg expresses his keen interest in the sources for the metaphors “Neptuns als Rossebändiger in der Antike” and “Meereswoge gleich Ross” as found in works such as Titian's *Religion Succored by Spain*.

sequence of panels in *Mnemosyne*—both are arranged in a manner designed to lessen difference in order to elicit a larger pattern of cause and effect. Blumenberg, too, allows for inversions and ironic reversals even as he discerns what is common to a metaphor's different iterations. His *Shipwreck* constructs a historical narrative demonstrating how by the nineteenth century the shipwreck metaphor was no longer related to nature per se—it was “tied-off,” as Warburg would say. It had become more a form of self-consciousness than of historical consciousness. Quoting Burckhardt's remark that “we ourselves are these waves,” Blumenberg meditates on how nature had become completely instrumentalized as history's oscillating process had brought the metaphor to a crisis point: “The impossibility of the spectator, and the near impossibility of the historian, is the concluding point of Burckhardt's paradoxical sharpening of the metaphorical theme.”⁶³ But of course this is not the last word in the metaphor's history. Burckhardt's young, Dionysian colleague lurks on the horizon, celebrating his “man of intuition,” eager for the shipwreck and the creative possibilities it affords. And after both comes Warburg, who renews the possibilities of spectatorship by metaphorically condensing and metonymically arranging and rearranging history's flotsam and jetsam. For its images to become the subject of theoretical introspection, for them to be the basis for the kind of *Unbegrifflichkeit* Blumenberg forges from metaphor, Warburg's nearly wordless *Atlas* exploits the same humanist library that Blumenberg mines. And as with Blumenberg, the metaphoric is both Warburg's subject matter and his epistemological ideal. As Ulrich Raulff contends, Warburg makes heavy if implicit epistemological demands on metaphor.⁶⁴ He asks metaphor to make the “dialectic of the monster” visible, but also that it become an object of self-reflection. He demands, in effect, that the spectator become himself metaphorical, in order to balance the experiences of proximity and distance. In this he finds a theoretical ally in Blumenberg, who sees this balancing act as the metaphorologist's greatest achievement.⁶⁵

Hegel's Fruit-Bearing Girl

In his *Aesthetics* (1835), G.W.F. Hegel offers what Peter Szondi, Paul de Man, and others have rightly termed a rather unsatisfying discussion of metaphor.⁶⁶

63. Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 69–71.

64. See Ulrich Raulff, “Der Teufelsmut der Juden: Warburg trifft Nietzsche,” in *Sprache der Geschichte*, ed. Jürgen Trabant and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2005), 137.

65. Adams finds in Blumenberg's works a “double movement . . . toward distance and immediacy in relation to the metaphors” (“Metaphors for Mankind,” 163).

66. See Paul de Man, “Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*,” in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). De Man cites Szondi's *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 390–396.

Twentieth-century literary critics, that is, read in vain Hegel's treatment of metaphor for confirmation of the heuristic and philosophical importance of the figure central to the aesthetics of their own time. Yet Hegel does ascribe to metaphor some essential dialectical qualities, which may, I think, illuminate Warburgian metaphor. Hegel treats metaphor not only as a tool of comparison, but also as a means by which the individual can create unity out of multiplicity by attending to phenomenological differences between how the image is initially apprehended and what ultimately it is taken to mean. Indeed, the cognitive motion precipitated by metaphor is clearly a spiritual (*geistig*) one that would aid Hegel's readers in liberating themselves from the chains of mere externality.

Although treated as an initial and therefore inferior stage in Hegel's progressive philosophical narrative, art is praised in general terms as "an immediate and therefore sensuous knowing, a knowing in the form and shape of the sensuous itself, in which the absolute is presented to contemplation and feeling."⁶⁷ Thus the beautiful is especially prized as the "sensory appearance [*Scheinen*] of the idea." Religion, by contrast, is "pictorial thinking" (*vorstellende Bewußtsein*), less tied to individual objects and therefore also less dependent on the artist's tastes and will.⁶⁸ Ideally, then, artistic form is able to provide glimpses, but only symbolic glimpses, of the absolute.

The discussion of metaphor in the *Aesthetics* occurs in the context of Hegel's larger treatment of the forms of symbolic art, and then, more narrowly, within the section *Conscious symbolism of the comparative art-form* (*Die bewußte Symbolik der vergleichenden Kunstform*), and then, more narrowly still, within the subsection entitled *Comparisons which start from the meaning in the image-making* (*Vergleichungen, welche in der Verbildlichung mit der Bedeutung den Anfang machen*).⁶⁹ What this amounts to is that metaphor for Hegel is a symbolic form of comparison in which *Bild* and *Bedeutung* are fused. Such fusion remains, however, essentially a subjective form of ornament, despite the fact that it mimics Spirit's fundamental dialectical motion: the reconciliation of content and form, self and world. Art's task, Hegel famously insists, is to set forth in sensuous terms the reconciled opposition of the particular and universal. The primary difference between artistic and religious experience is thus a formal one. With this said, art

67. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 1:139; Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1:101. I must leave it to others to give an account of Hegel's *Symbolbegriff* in II.1 (*Die symbolische Kunstform*) and II.2 (*Die Symbolik der Erhabenheit*) of the *Vorlesungen*, a theory that also heavily influenced E. T. Vischer, who in turn helped shape Warburg's early thinking. See Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 188, for Hegel's view of the symbol as a "kind of 'pre-art' [Vorkunst]," which belongs mainly to the Orient. Briefly put, for Hegel art begins with what he calls unconscious symbolism.

68. Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 1:139; Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:101.

69. Specifically, pt. 2, sec. 1, chap. 3, subsec. B.

and religion (to say nothing of Hegel's philosophy) are both "absolute" activities; they are the means by which, respectively, the Idea and God are made available to consciousness.⁷⁰

In preparing to discuss the "shape" (*Gestalt*) of "comparisons"—riddle, allegory, metaphor, simile, and image (*Bild*)—that use sensuous imagery as vehicles for abstract meaning, Hegel begins by stating his ideal, though he quickly settles for something less:

The *absolute* shape has the connection of content and form, soul and body, as concrete ensoulment [Beseelung], as the unification of both, grounded absolutely in the soul as in the body, in the content as in the form. Here, however, the separatedness of the two sides is the presupposition and therefore their association is (a) a purely subjective enlivenment [bloß subjektive Verlebendigung] of meaning . . . and (b) an interpretation of a real existent equally subjective.⁷¹

Poetic metaphor, for instance, cannot offer direct access to "*absolute* shape" as "concrete ensoulment." Instead, it subjectively ornaments those truths that, for its part, philosophical dialectic uses objective forms or concepts to describe. In this, at least, Hegel may be said to anticipate Nietzsche and Blumenberg in stressing the ability of rhetorical "comparisons" to represent *realia*.

More concretely, whereas simile employs "like" or "as" to separate its terms, and thus distances the poet somewhat from the image he creates, the image supplied by metaphor is not separated at all from the discursive context in which it occurs.⁷² This lack of what Warburg would call *Distanz* initially earns Hegel's praise: "The range [Umfang], the variety of form, of metaphor is infinite, yet its definition [Bestimmung] is simple. It is an entirely compressed and abbreviated comparison, in that it does not oppose image and meaning to one another but presents the image alone; the *literal* sense of the image, however, it extinguishes [tilgt] and it makes the actually intended meaning recognizable at once in the image through the context in which the image occurs, although this meaning is not expressly stated."⁷³ While contemporary metaphorologists from Ricœur to Lakoff rightly reject the notion that the image's "literal" sense can be completely extinguished as metaphor's cognitive task proceeds, Hegel's main point here and subsequently is that metaphor's "infinite" *Umfang* corresponds to the endless human desire to transform, ennoble, or what for him is the same thing, anthropomorphize, and thereby understand the

70. See Charles Karelis, "Interpretative Essay," in Hegel, *Introduction to Aesthetics*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), xxvii.

71. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:396; Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 1:508. Warburg's neologism of the *Einverseelung* of "expressive values" recalls Hegel's *Beseelung*.

72. See Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:403; *Ästhetik*, 1:517.

73. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:403–404; *Ästhetik*, 1:517.

world. Through metaphor we transform “lower” inorganic objects into “loftier” organic ones. And while this description of metaphor’s powers echoes Kant’s discussion of the symbol’s schematic role, it also points to a more general conception of metaphor as a cardinal form of comparison, even if that comparison is usually an invidious one.

Given Warburg’s focus on the Renaissance, it is curious that Hegel’s primary examples of such metamorphoses are taken from Shakespeare’s *Richard II* and Calderón’s *La devoción de la cruz*.⁷⁴ But then Hegel insists that metaphor’s “liveliness” (*Lebhaftigkeit*) and ability to reveal “something spiritual” by anthropomorphizing objects in these plays “may easily degenerate into preciousness, into far-fetched or playful conceits” (*können leicht ins Pretiöse, Gesuchte oder Spielende ausarten*).⁷⁵ Metaphor must be used sparingly; it “cannot claim the value of an independent artistic representation” but rather depends on context to acquire meaning. Likewise, dead metaphors—one example is *begreifen*!—require a historically sensitive interpreter who can distinguish between “sensuous” and “spiritual” meanings. Yet notwithstanding these cautions metaphor participates in, or at least mimics, the philosopher’s conceptual-historical search for unity out of the welter of worldly multiplicity: “Therefore the sense and aim of metaphorical diction in general . . . must be found in the need and power of Spirit and heart [*das Bedürfnis und die Macht des Geistes und Gemüts*] which are not content with the simple, customary, and plain, but place themselves above it in order to move on to something else, to linger over various things, and to join together two things into one.”⁷⁶ Echoing Aristotle’s description of the universal thirst for the “foreign” (*to xenikon*), a thirst that in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* is said to be most skillfully satisfied by metaphor, Hegel ensures metaphor’s synthetic powers are not alien to Spirit’s more critical task of reconciling opposites or, as Warburg might put it, polarities.⁷⁷

As for content, Hegel regards the beautiful depiction of the human form as best suited to enable art’s task of reconciling the sensuous and the Idea. Precisely what is meant here by the beautiful, beyond what has already been indicated, I must leave to others to explicate. Nor is this the place to consider why Hegel finds the depiction of “human excellence” to be art’s most valuable content or why he finds

74. He quotes *Richard II* (5.1.44–48). As for *La devoción de la cruz*, Hegel sees ll. 805–812 and ll. 1605–1612 (Schlegel’s translation) as exemplifying how “durch sinnliche Vergrößerung” extreme emotional states can be brought “zur Anschauung” (*Ästhetik*, 1:521).

75. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:403; Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 1:519. But the Greek avoidance of metaphor is praised (“Thre plastische Strenge und Gediegenheit duldet keine solche Vermischung”), while Schiller’s metaphoric excesses are excused given his philosophical aims (*Ästhetik*, 1:522).

76. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:406; Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 1:520–521.

77. For a Warburgian essay on metaphoric polarities, see Saxl’s “Veritas filia Temporis,” in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 197–222.

this ideal best expressed in ancient Greek sculpture of the human body.⁷⁸ I would stress only that the “philosophical Concept of the beautiful,” like the ideal form of art itself, aims at a synthetic reconciliation of opposites or leveling of differences (“bei Verschiedenem”). Even the extreme, antithetical notions of duty to family and duty to state as represented in *Antigone* can be reconciled via the aesthetically perfect form of Sophocles’ play. More particularly, the violence and extreme passions made into a spectacle (*opsis*) there are justified because they allow spectators to see their own internal world as externalized, as a mere object, thus also enabling them to transcend it. Conflating the agency and experience of the *dramatis personae*, actors, and spectators, Hegel concludes: “The mitigation of the power of the passions therefore has its universal ground in the fact that man is released from his immediate imprisonment in a feeling and becomes conscious of it as something external to him, to which he must now relate himself in an ideal way.”⁷⁹ Not quite an Aristotelian *catharsis*, but rather a step closer to the Concept, this dialectical motion is repeated, psychologized, and made the engine of spiritual “beauty” when another motive is ascribed to metaphor: “A *second* reason for the metaphoric lies in the fact that when Spirit [der Geist] is plunged by its inner emotion into the contemplation [innere Bewegung in die Anschauung] of cognate objects, at the same time it still wishes to free itself from their externality, because in the external it seeks *itself* and spiritualizes [begeistigt] it; and now by shaping itself and its passions into something beautiful, it evinces its power to bring into representation [zur Darstellung] its elevation above everything external.”⁸⁰

Given the enormous influence that Hegel’s notion of self-actualizing Spirit exercised on subsequent generations, but particularly on Wilhem Dilthey’s promotion of *Geistesgeschichte* in response to positivism, how, we might ask, does this dialectic inform or resemble Warburg’s own *Dialektik des Monstrums*? Aside from Warburg’s disinterest in the “beautiful” per se, what manner does this *geistige*, metaphoric motion “zur Darstellung” compare to the attempts in *Mnemosyne* to represent “life in motion” in Renaissance art and cosmology?

Concerning Warburg and dialectic, Michael Diers observes: “The ‘to and fro’ of humankind between affect and rationality, between myth and logos, is one of the central theoretical figures of a Warburgian ‘dialectics of enlightenment.’”⁸¹ Yet I wonder, given the irreducibility of the extreme *affectus* cultivated by so many of the images in the *Atlas*, and given that Warburg makes it his primary task to describe how the “conscious creation of distance” by Renaissance artists and cosmographers

78. See Karelis, “Interpretative Essay,” xxxii–xxxiii. Such excellence is of course related to the notion promoted by Plato and Kant that the beautiful symbolizes the good. In any case, clearly Hegel’s emphasis on the human form influenced Warburg and/or Warburg’s teachers.

79. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:49; see also Karelis, “Interpretative Essay,” lviii.

80. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:407 (translation modified); Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 1:522.

81. Diers, “Warburg and the Warburgian Tradition,” 68.

tries “diese Erbmasse phobischer Engramme einzuverseelen,” whether this dialectic should be anachronistically stamped with the mark of the Enlightenment, that is, be subject to what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno disdainfully label as “classifying reason.”

In the introduction to *Mnemosyne*, immediately after comparing his genealogy of forms to Osthoff's suppletion, and after revisiting his beloved example of Ghirlandaio's servant girl carrying a basket of fruit, Warburg maps an agonistic, neo-Nietzschean dialectic that seems purposefully to flout any notion of Enlightenment progress:

In der Region der orgiastischen Massenergriffenheit ist das Prägework zu suchen, das dem Gedächtnis die Ausdrucksformen des maximalen inneren Ergriffenseins, soweit es sich gebärdensprachlich ausdrücken läßt, in solcher Intensität einhämmer, daß diese Engramme leidenschaftlicher Erfahrung als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut überleben und vorbildlich den Umriss bestimmen, den die Künstlerhand schafft, sobald Höchstwerte der Gebärdensprache durch Künstlerhand im Tageslicht der Gestaltung hervortreten wollen. . . . Der Triumph der Existenz trat, von der Antike plastisch präfiguriert, in der ganzen erschütternden Gegensätzlichkeit von Lebensbejahung und Ich-Verneinung vor die Seele der Nachfahren, die sie auf den Heiden-sarkophagen Dionysos im Taumelzuge seines orgiastischen Gefolges erblickten und auf den römischen Siegesbögen den Triumphzug des Imperators.⁸²

The stamped work, which hammers into the memory with such intensity forms expressing the experience of being seized by great inner feeling, is to be sought in the realm of orgiastic, mob emotion. The work does this—insofar as the language of gestures can express it—to let these engrams of passionate experience survive as a memory-preserved legacy. And ideally, these engrams determine the outline on which the artist's hand labors, as soon as the extreme values of the language of gestures configured by the artist's hand want to step forward into the daylight. . . . Prefigured by classical sculpture, the triumph of existence stepped, with its full, tremulous oppositionality of life-affirmation and self-denial, before the souls of successors, who beheld Dionysius among his orgiastic followers on pagan sarcophagi and at the emperor's victorious procession on Roman triumphal arches.

In this now traumatic, now ecstatic dialectic of “Lebensbejahung und Ich-Verneinung,” in the “metaphoric distance” mediating emotion and thought, the artist and, ideally, the spectator self-consciously if vicariously experience their place in history. Such a realization defies historicism's strictures, as it rests on what several paragraphs later

82. GS, II.1:3–4. For an alternate translation-reading of this passage, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 245.

is called “achronologisch geschichteten Materie” (achronological, stratified matter). Here we better understand what Warburg meant earlier with his “tectonics” metaphor; for though memory is his dialectical muse, she is, notwithstanding her mastery of historical details, a synchronic creature as well, one able to fuse different historical moments into a single vision.

Warburg's *Mnemosyne* aspires to *Geist*, but without embracing the kind of sublimating teleology envisioned in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1805). Still, the latter contains a vivid dialectical “moment” in *The Revealed Religion* section that offers an uncanny perspective on Warburg's treatment of the image as occupying a place “between religion and artistic production.”⁸³ And though many of Hegel's concerns there are foreign to Warburg, it is precisely such differences that make their momentary convergence in the passage I will cite and discuss below so compelling.

In *Religion in the Form of Art*, Hegel has just finished contemplating how self-consciousness as Spirit in ancient Greek culture tries to express itself first as abstract sculpture, then as poetic hymn, and, in its later stages, successively as epic poetry, tragedy, and comedy. As reductive as this account might seem, the self's struggle to find a satisfactory way of externalizing itself and the divine vision it possesses is anything but straightforward. Initially, self-consciousness passes through a mystical stage of the Cult “in which it has ‘pathos’ within it and is not in need of anything,” and where the “fruits” of nature have no real otherness as the self loses itself in Bacchic revelry.⁸⁴ Alternately, when he turns to the “picture-thinking” (*Vorstellung*) native to epic, which uses language to forge a “synthetic combination of the universal and the individual,” Hegel admires the “pure intuition” of the Minstrel (i.e., Homer), even though his self-consciousness is lacking: “His ‘pathos’ is not the stupefying power of Nature but Mnemosyne, recollection and a gradually developed inwardness [die Besinnung und gewordene Innerlichkeit], the remembrance [die Erinnerung] of essence that formerly was directly present. He is the organ that vanishes in its content; what counts is not his own self but his Muse, his universal song.”⁸⁵ For all the potentially redemptive power of “Mnemosyne” here, it is too undeveloped either to solace the epic poet or to balance the effect of his “content,” which concerns divine irrationality. To remedy this, Hegel turns (again) to tragedy, where divinity becomes Fate or “abstract Necessity,” and the self who acts, like the spectator who watches the self

83. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 89. See also Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science,” 91. With their emphasis, respectively, on the symbol and metaphor, Cassirer and Vico also promote this mediating role.

84. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 436–438. Hegel also decries (457) the mystical solution to Spirit's travails—an objection shared in his own manner by Warburg throughout his work.

85. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 441; Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), 475. It bears repeating: Warburg was also captivated by the Muses. Panel 50–51 of the *Bilderatlas* is partially dedicated to the transformation of the nine Muses.

(Antigone again is exemplary), is self-conscious of being a “universal individuality.” For all its knowledge, though, such a tragic self is only a “negative power,” forced to confront immediate contingencies. Meanwhile, the “Chorus, or rather the crowd of spectators,” comes to see the self as “a mask and the actor.”⁸⁶ Tragedy thus yields to the “irony” of comedy, which in terms of the Religion of Art signals an advance for Spirit, though at the cost of making all Substance into Subject: “In Spirit that is completely certain of itself in the individuality of consciousness, all essentiality is submerged.”⁸⁷ This marks a solipsistic moment of “alienation,” where, despite its “Stoic independence,” the self surrenders its vision of “divine being.” In brief, Hegel regards this moment as a partial return to an earlier stage of *Geist*, the Unhappy Consciousness, which is “the tragic fate of the certainty of self that aims to be absolute. It is the consciousness of the loss of all *essential* being in this *certainty of itself*, and of the loss even of this knowledge about itself—the loss of substance as well as of the Self, it is the grief which expresses itself in the hard saying [das harte Wort] that ‘God is dead.’”⁸⁸ And while Nietzsche, for one, insists on this “harte Wort,” neither Hegel nor, in his own way, Warburg is content to leave the dialectical balance weighted so much on subjectivity’s side. More to the point, both their corrections are freighted, if not actually shaped, by the dynamics of metaphor.

Hegel’s remarkably lyric description of Unhappy Consciousness’s travails addresses the very question of the *Nachleben der Antike* to which Warburg dedicates all his intellectual and spiritual energies. Accordingly, I will quote it at length.

For the Unhappy Consciousness [t]rust in the eternal laws of the gods has vanished, and the Oracles, which pronounced on particular questions, are dumb. The statues are now only stones from which the living soul has flown, just as the hymns are words from which belief has gone. The tables of the gods provide no spiritual food and drink, and in his games and festivals man no longer recovers the joyful consciousness of his unity with the divine. The works of the Muse now lack the power of the Spirit, for the Spirit has gained certainty of itself from the crushing of gods and men. They have become what they are for us now—beautiful fruit already picked from the tree, which a friendly Fate has offered us, as a girl might set the fruit before us [wie ein Mädchen jene Früchte präsentiert]. It cannot give us the actual life in which they existed, not the tree that bore them, not the earth and the elements which constituted their substance, not the climate which gave them their peculiar character, nor the cycle of the changing seasons that governed the process of their growth [den Prozeß ihres Werdens]. So Fate does not restore their world to us along with the works of antique Art, it gives not the spring and summer of ethical life in which they blossomed and ripened, but only the veiled recollection

86. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 450.

87. *Ibid.*, 453.

88. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 455; Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 490.

[eingehüllte Erinnerung] of that actual world. Our active enjoyment of them is therefore not an act of divine worship through which our consciousness might come to its perfect truth and fulfilment; it is an external activity—the wiping-off of some drops of rain of specks of dust from these fruits, so to speak—one which erects an intricate scaffolding of the dead elements of their outward existence—the language, the historical circumstances, etc. in place of the inner elements of the ethical life which environed, created, and inspired them. All this we do, not in order to enter into their very life but only to possess an idea of them in our imagination. But, just as the girl who offers us the plucked fruits is more than Nature which directly provided them [welche sie unmittelbar darbot]—the Nature diversified into their conditions and elements, the tree, the air, light, and so on—because she sums all this up in a higher mode, in the gleam [Strahl] of her self-conscious eye and in the gesture [Gebärde] with which she offers them, so, too, the Spirit of the Fate that presents [darbietet] us with those works of art is more than the ethical life and the actual world of that nation, for it is the *inwardizing* [Er-*Innerung*] in us of the Spirit which in them was still [only] *outwardly* manifested; it is the Spirit of the tragic Fate [tragischen Schicksals] which gathers all those individual gods and attributes of the [divine] substance into one pantheon, into the Spirit that is itself conscious of itself as Spirit.⁸⁹

The vivid, dual analogy of the “girl” as the “Spirit of the Fate” and her “fruit” as the “works of antique Art” functions structurally like Warburgian metaphor—it creates a *Denkraum* in which the reception, the *Ausdruckwerte*, of classical art can be thought anew, but also in which the world’s immanence can still be felt. The fruit that the girl “presents” (*präsentiert*), that Spirit ultimately “presents” (*darbietet*), is animated and becomes a form of self-consciousness, much in the same way that Warburg’s feminized *figura* or *translatio*, his nymph borrowed from Ghirlandajo, expresses a dynamic, immanent relation to the past instead of simply serving a static, mimetic, or symbolic function. Rather than marking a mere “veiled recollection,” Hegel’s analogy adds a sensuous element to the process of remembrance as “*inwardizing*” (*Er-innerung*). It suggests how central but potentially disruptive aesthetic experience is to remembering and therefore deriving meaning from (and forging systems out of) the past.⁹⁰ Yet while for Hegel memory can furnish great pathos and beauty, these phenomena ultimately belong to a historical tragicomedy whose resolution will consist in the sublimation of suffering, history, and error in the march toward the absolute. Hegel’s analogy of the girl suggests primarily the rewards of trying to reconcile the claims of external Nature and that interior world of “*Er-Innerung*.” Through it we see how unhappy consciousness yields

89. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 455; Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 490–491.

90. “For Hegel is indeed, from the relatively early *Phenomenology* to the late *Aesthetics*, prominently the theoretician of internalization, of *Er-innerung* as the ground of the aesthetic as well of the historical consciousness. *Erinnerung*, recollection as the inner gathering and preserving of experience, brings history and beauty together in the coherence of the system. It is also a part of the ideology of the symbol which Hegel both espouses and undoes” (de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, 100–101).

to self-conscious Spirit through the process of contemplating art, even as analogy provisionally acquires real dialectical and teleological force.

As for Warburg, it is sorely tempting to think of him as straddling the “thought-space” between the unhappy Consciousness and the self-conscious Spirit who sees the girl offering antiquity’s fruits. Yet in the end the dialectic he institutes with *Mnemosyne*’s images remains incomplete and unbalanced. He is, if you will, too ensnared by the gleam in the girl’s eye to reach for eternity. Indeed, the structural analogy between Hegel and Warburg starts to break down as soon as we look just beyond this passage to where Hegel further reconciles these outer and inner worlds through the figure of Christ. Nevertheless, in the *Augenblick* that Hegel gives his attention to the girl’s “gesture” as the self-conscious form through which the Spirit of Fate theatrically “presents us those works of art,” a proleptic reflection occurs of the way that Warburg hopes with the *Bilderatlas* to appreciate the *Gebärdensprache* of those artworks through, if I may borrow Hegel’s phrasing, the dialectical juxtaposition of the “intricate scaffolding of the dead elements of their outward existence” with an equally energetic, but antithetical attention to the belated spectator’s interior life of memory. Hegel paints a vision of the chief Warburgian *Pathosformel* here, but it is quickly subsumed by Spirit’s teleology.

For his part, given his oft-expressed admiration for Darwin, Warburg is hardly sanguine about such progress, to say nothing of the rationality of history.⁹¹ As Didi-Huberman observes, the history of images was a question of “life” for Warburg, as it was for Burckhardt as well, for whom culture explicitly plays the role that Hegel ultimately reserves for reason. In refusing to sublimate the affects he associates with “force” (*Wucht*), Warburg makes of “history” not a progress but “a *symptomatology*, indeed a *pathology of time*.”⁹² In short, the *Auseinandersetzung* here between classical art and the latter-day spectator collapses too quickly in Hegel’s rush toward “science.” Thus the reader is left mainly with the aesthetic and hopefully heuristic experience of the analogy, left with the persistent, dialectical image of the girl and the “gleam of her self-conscious eye.” As the entire section on religion makes clear, the “fruits” she bears are meant to be interpreted as a recursive form, which, from the perspective of philosophical Spirit, allows the phenomenological differences native to history to be sublated. While for Blumenberg “analogy is the realism of metaphor,” for Hegel analogy and metaphor are primarily means to further philosophical idealism.⁹³ For Warburg, in turn, the *Bilderatlas* is the analogical, synchronic means of linking Greek and Roman antiquity with the Renaissance and with his own historical moment. It tries to create “metaphoric distance” and

91. Gombrich discusses Warburg’s debts to Darwin in “Aby Warburg und der Evolutionismus des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Aby Warburg: “Ekstatische Nymphe . . . trauernder Flußgott”; Portrait eines Gelehrten*, ed. Robert Galitz and Brita Reimers (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1995), 52–73.

92. Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante*, 109, 112.

93. Blumenberg, “Prospect for a Theory of Non-Conceptuality,” 95.

the "space" of contemplation, a *Mitte* rather than a *telos*. The "process" it precipitates heightens pathos more than sublimates it. Historical consciousness's reliance on metaphor to bring together and compare antique and Renaissance images thus never becomes merely instrumental; instead, metaphor verges on becoming an end in itself.

In Hegelian terms, then, the question that remains is, in what sense, if any, can Warburg's project of remembrance be interpreted as an expression of "Spirit that is itself conscious of itself as Spirit"? Toward the end of the *Phenomenology* Hegel compares Spirit's "Becoming" in history (as distinguished from its "Becoming" in Nature) to "a gallery of images" (*eine Galerie von Bildern*) in which every image institutes a "slow-moving" dialectic of self and substance, a dialectic of course that ends with "absolute knowing."⁹⁴ How, then, does this compare with Warburg's "gallery of images"? Does *Mnemosyne* yield any lasting philosophical fruit?

Glossing Warburg's neologism that comes closest to capturing the dialectical motion traced by Hegel's phenomenology, Gombrich translates *Auseinandersetzungsenergie* as "the power to react."⁹⁵ Italian Renaissance artists, like Raphael and Ghirlandaio, "had the power to react against the corrupt and corrupting images of medieval astrology and to replace them with the solid, beautiful bodies taken from classical art."⁹⁶ Referring to the 1912 lecture on the puzzling astrological motifs at the Palazzo Schifanoia, Gombrich's comments seem meant to defend Warburg against the charge of having blinkered, reactionary tastes. But they do so in part by admitting a lesser charge: that for Warburg the study of art history could be a "vicarious experience" of a kind of psychological "liberation" from the demons haunting his personal life.⁹⁷ Thus despite studiously avoiding any substantial discussion of Warburg's struggles with depression and, possibly, schizophrenia in his "intellectual biography," Gombrich effectively paints the *Dialektik des Monstrums* as a thoroughly subjective one.⁹⁸ (As we shall see in chapter 7, Cassirer likewise stresses the subjectivity of Warburg's scholarship.) But again, there are good reasons for this. Recalling Warburg's years at Kreuzlingen, Saxl describes his mentor's psychological instability: "In the afternoon the professor talks about Luther . . . [and] writes wonderful pages on astrology and magic. During the morning he had been a man who believed in magic, and in the demonism of inanimate things."⁹⁹ Similarly, if from a more detached perspective, Agamben asks whether *Mnemosyne* was the means by which Warburg, "scholar and psychopath, sought to solve his personal psychological conflicts." Agamben concludes, however, that it is "a

94. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 492; Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 530.

95. Gombrich, "Aby Warburg," 276.

96. *Ibid.* (translation modified).

97. *Ibid.*, 279. In this regard, Warburg's 1912 "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoia zu Ferrara" (*GS*, I.2:459–482) marks a turning point.

98. See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 9–14.

99. Saxl, *WIA*, GC 14600.

sign of Warburg's greatness as an individual that not only his idiosyncrasies but even the remedies he found to master them correspond to the secret needs of his age."¹⁰⁰ That Warburg did not forget or seek to sublimate such "conflicts" and "idiosyncrasies" is cause enough not to call him a *Geisteshistoriker*. Indeed, that this now ecstatic, now melancholic self, armed with enormous, and enormously self-conscious, *Auseinandersetzungsenergie*, saw fit to wrestle for some four decades with the afterlife of a set of images and texts that contained, he thought, the very key to the dynamics of Western culture makes Warburg not only a very sensitive seismograph of that culture but also a trenchant critic of *Geistesgeschichte*. By attending to the undulating fortunes of dynamograms and pathos formulas rather than charting Spirit's inevitable progression, Warburg maps an agonistic, if also phenomenological history of antiquity's survival in metaphoric images. Subject always to another combinatory turn, *Mnemosyne* exemplifies just how contingent, just how dynamic dialectical thought can be.

100. Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science," 96.

EXEMPLARY FIGURES AND DIAGRAMMATIC THOUGHT

Warburg's Rembrandt

To illustrate better the motives, methods, and rhythms of *Mnemosyne*, but especially to chart more exactly its metaphoric logic, I want to turn again to the period after Warburg emerged from the sanatorium. Besides reimmersing himself in the cosmographical material that yielded, just before his breakdown, the magisterial essay on sixteenth-century German astrological imagery, Warburg began work in 1924 on a new topic, which eventually became the lecture *Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts*, given at the K.B.W. in May 1926.¹ While only a partial text of the lecture survives, it deserves attention, firstly, because it directly informs panels 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, and 75 of *Mnemosyne*; secondly, because in his *Auseinandersetzung* with Rembrandt Warburg finally unfolds his intellectual-historical approach to the Baroque and “superlatives” in art; and lastly, because it helps him forge a novel, diagrammatic form of thought that, among other things, maps a *Wanderstraße* leading to his fateful encounter with Giordano Bruno.

1. Warburg, WIA, III.101.2.1, *Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts*. Substantial sections of this text are reprinted in the chapter “Aby Warburg und Tempesta,” in Eckhard Leuschner’s *Antonio Tempesta: Ein Bahnbrecher des römischen Barock und seine europäische Wirkung* (Petersberg: M. Imhof, 2005), 562–582. My discussion of the Rembrandt lecture is indebted to Gombrich’s and Leuschner’s interpretations.

Warburg first became interested in Rembrandt and Antonio Tempesta (1555–1630) in the fall of 1924.² A pivotal point of contact for Dutch and Flemish artists visiting Baroque Rome, Tempesta worked early in his career under Vasari on the frescoes in the Palazzo Vecchio. He is best remembered, though, as an illustrator and engraver. His 150 illustrations for a sumptuous edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were reproduced and imitated throughout Europe.³ The fact that when Rembrandt died he owned some 200 of Tempesta's etchings provoked Warburg into considering the question of influence much more closely than he typically did in his later years.⁴ Saxl and Warburg corresponded throughout 1925 as they tried to formulate this question fully by assimilating current scholarship, collecting images, and grappling with various conjectures.⁵ In part, Warburg was also trying to match Saxl's expertise, as Saxl had written his 1912 dissertation on Rembrandt and had recently published the essay "Rembrandt und Italien" in a Dutch journal.⁶ In a 1925 letter, Warburg credits Saxl's research as "indirectly" bringing him to a new theme.⁷ Tellingly, he also compares there his study of Rembrandt to his much earlier investigation of Botticelli:

Despite having until now kept my scholarship quite distant from Rembrandt given my feeling of insufficiency [Unzulänglichkeit], in the course of the last months, with the quickest tempo, I gained knowledge of inner connections of a pictorial-psychological kind, which takes me back to my former days and puts me in a mood [Stimmung] similar to the one when I investigated Botticelli's relation to antiquity.⁸

The repetition of this "Stimmung" directly colors Warburg's insights in his lecture on Rembrandt. In other words, notwithstanding all the historical and cultural specificity discovered in his research on the Dutch Baroque, Rembrandt becomes exemplary for Warburg and his psychological phenomenology.

With this said, *Italianische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts* can also be interpreted as Warburg's last significant effort in iconology.⁹ As Gombrich summarizes,

2. Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta*, 562. Zettelkasten 69 is dedicated to Tempesta and related bibliography.

3. See Ovid, *Metamorphoseon, siue, Transformationum Ouidianarum libri quindecim, æeneis formis ab Antonio Tempesta Florentino incisi* . . . (Amsterdam, [1606?]).

4. See Warburg, *Italianische Antike*, fol. 13.

5. For example, they conclude that the Urbino painter Federico Barocci influences Rembrandt's use of coloration and light.

6. The dissertation, written in Vienna at the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, is titled "Rembrandt Studien"; see also Saxl's "Rembrandt und Italien," *Oud Holland* 41 (1923/24): 145–160.

7. See Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta*, 565.

8. Warburg's letter to J.F.W. Orbaan, 3/10/1925 (WIA, GC 16508, fol. 3). *Innerlichkeit* was a byword in German aesthetics since Schiller. See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 230, on Warburg's newfound interest in Rembrandt.

9. Instead of using the *Bilderreihe* method, Warburg showed almost eighty slides (*Diapositive*). The slides are identified in WIA, III.101.3.2.1, which Leuschner transcribes (*Antonio Tempesta*, 581–582).

"The lecture centered on three works, illustrating a classical subject—the 'Rape of Proserpina', the 'Claudius Civilis', and the etching 'Medea'."¹⁰ With these works as his touchstones, Warburg identifies the lecture's foci:

1. How does the figure of Proserpina appear from the realm of legend?
2. How does Tacitus's influence express itself in the realm of ancient history, and
3. How does Medea emerge before our eyes [vor unseren Augen] out of Greek tragedy?¹¹

These foci, in turn, will be reflected in several panels in the *Atlas*. Specifically, Rembrandt's *Rape of Proserpina* motivates panel 70, his *Claudius Civilis* anchors panel 72, and his version of *Medea* haunts panel 73. In this manner, Rembrandt becomes another combinatorial element in the metonymic motion of the *Atlas*, which silently sublimates many details adumbrated in the 1926 lecture.

To begin with, in tracing the intellectual and cultural contexts for Rembrandt's work, Warburg underscores the importance of two leading Dutch Baroque writers: Pieter Corneliez Hooft (1581–1647), a versatile poet, innovative dramatist, and translator of Tacitus; and Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679), the period's leading dramatist, but also a fine lyric poet. Still, judgments about the Baroque style in the Rembrandt lecture are principally about the *art officiel* style whose flamboyance in paintings, processions, and architecture served chiefly to glorify rulers and astonish the ruled. Thus, in Warburg's critical narrative, Tempesta is cast—unfairly, perhaps—as the unwitting master of Baroque "superlatives."¹² Although the lecture gives some attention to other leading early seventeenth-century Dutch artists, aside from Rembrandt, it mainly focuses on Tempesta, who is seen as influenced more by Baroque rhetoric and the Italian humanist version of antiquity than by the antique sources themselves:

For our investigation we regard him mainly as the illustrator of Ovid and Tacitus. Here his talent's limits show themselves: while his dashing, calligraphic manner [flotte kalligraphische Manier] suffices for Ovid's lively, adventurous prolixity, he becomes an incapable [unzulänglicher] theater director when he tries to embody monumentally the restrained tension of the battle for liberation [verhaltene Spannung der Befreiungskämpfe] between the Romans and Batavians.¹³

While Warburg (or for that matter recent scholarship) never contests Tempesta's popularity and influence, he does impeach the illustrator's taste and judgment. Such antipathy can be traced to a larger critical-historical narrative that Warburg,

10. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 230–231.

11. Warburg, *Italienische Antike*, fol. 5.

12. See Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta*, 579–580.

13. Warburg, *Italienische Antike*, fol. 12.

here with Gombrich's posthumous help, wants to tell: "Tempesta's antiquity is the rhetorical antiquity of the Italian Baroque. He was one of those facile and fertile artists who used the 'superlatives' of the *pathos formula* without any deep understanding of their tragic roots."¹⁴ By contrast, because his mastery of form enabled him to mediate affective extremes, Rembrandt could, like Ghirlandaio, Mantegna, and Kepler before him, self-consciously wrestle with antiquity's legacy.

Like Tempesta, the young Rembrandt was fascinated by Ovid. Both artists depict the rape of Proserpina—the former in his illustrations for the *Metamorphoses*, the latter in an oil painting (see fig. 24). Tempesta's engraving of the theme proves so popular that it is taken up by others in decorations for contemporary opera, drama, and courtly processions.¹⁵ Subtler, Warburg opines, is Nicholas Moyaert's *The Rape of Proserpina*, which relies on "an ancient sarcophagus [featuring] Proserpina" for its model, though it, too, remains wedded to a popular mannerist or Baroque style. Only Rembrandt achieves a real synthesis, due largely to the "strength of the artist's personality" and how this helps him remake "inherited forms":

Examining Rembrandt in this regard, we see three deviations become apparent in his comprehension of the myth. These indicate to him how to emerge from the drab, affected language of gestures on sarcophagi [aus der öden sarkophagisch affektierten Gebärdensprachlichkeit], without thereby, if one inspects more closely, the mythic content forfeiting poetic power. The chariot shoots toward the underworld [Das Fahrzeug schießt auf die Unterwelt zu]. Proserpina admits no ordinary gesture of woe; rather, she grasps Pluto's dark visage with the greatest resolution. . . . Doubtlessly, Rembrandt's chariot comes from the same smithy as Tempesta's; only the conventional grimace has been transformed into a lion's mask. Most convincing, though, are the horses, which no longer participate in the heroic, coquettish, leaping gallop—every hair of the mane a *dux*—as they whirl in the opened, infernal abyss.¹⁶

Proserpina's "gesture of woe" is not indebted to Roman or Hellenistic sarcophagi, nor does it commit Baroque stylistic excesses; rather, it expresses self-possessed courage, which while not typically "heroic" still contains "poetic power." Most remarkable about Warburg's interpretation, though, is its emphasis on the shooting "Fahrzeug"—the vehicle that allows Rembrandt to convey his idea or tenor. Just as Botticelli closely attends to the fluttering of clothes in the wind, Rembrandt focuses on *bewegtes Leben*, though here the motion is infernal, tragic:

Significantly, in this motif Rembrandt stands closer to Ovid than do all other depictions; for Ovid, when the earth does not open its cracks quickly enough, lets the raging Lord of the Underworld strike the ground with his scepter, whereby the

14. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 230–231.

15. Warburg, *Italianische Antike*, fols. 15–19.

16. *Ibid.*, fols. 23–24.

abyss then opens up, which will engulf the harnessed horses. Sentimental phrases are blown away [Sentimentale Floskeln sind fortgeblasen]. Now there wafts that uncanny air of Hades, just as it quivers through sculpture and painting since the early Renaissance's awakening.

Rembrandt's new objectivity [neue Sachlichkeit] can be said to have led to the overcoming of the hollowed-out, antique pathos formula, which, originating in fifteenth-century Italy, dominated the exorbitant European language of gesture [die europäischen Superlative der Gebärdensprache].¹⁷

It is as if Rembrandt needed as dialectical spurs the Baroque language of excess and the attendant isolation of the symbolic image from its engrammatic force to achieve what sixteenth-century Italians could not. Rembrandt renovates the antique pathos formula by stripping it of the stylistic excesses of late Italian humanism—a process resembling sixteenth- and seventeenth-century efforts (e.g., those of Ramus, Bacon, and Descartes) to rescue *res* from the cult of *verba*. Yet his depiction of Proserpina's mythic descent (*katabasis*) should not be read merely as a brilliant instance of Renaissance imitation, for it also exemplifies Warburg's own attempts to give form and meaning to infernal matters. The striking phrase "Sentimentale Floskeln sind fortgeblasen" and the stress on Rembrandt's "neue Sachlichkeit" confirm a desire to confront and if possible master the demonic, without, however, yielding to allegory's temptations or allowing the ephemeral comforts of bathos. Further, the imagery of descent prepares the way for the metaphors of descent and ascent in the lecture's conclusion, but also, as we shall see in the next chapter, for Warburg's encounter with Bruno's legacy.

Yet recalling the 1905 essay on Dürer's *Death of Orpheus*, where the artist's stark but restrained representation of an antique *Pathosformel* is invidiously compared to the "barocken antikischen Bewegungsmanierismus" (archaic baroque mannerism of movement) of Pollaiuolo and his school, we now see how capacious a category Warburg's *Barock* is. At the very least it stretches from fifteenth-century Italy to late seventeenth-century Holland.¹⁸ Upon closer examination, though, the Baroque for Warburg is less an artistic or period style than the artist's or poet's dubious

17. Ibid., fols. 24–25.

18. Given that the same terms appear in his critique of Baroque art as in his readings of Hellenistic astrology, it seems that Warburg's Baroque is recursive. It thus begs to be compared with Nietzsche's groundbreaking observations in "Vom Barockstile," in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*: "Der Barockstil entsteht jedesmal beim Abblühen jeder großen Kunst, wenn die Anforderungen in der Kunst des klassischen Ausdrucks allzu groß geworden sind, als ein Natur-Ereignis, dem man wohl mit Schwermut,—weil es der Nacht voranläuft,—zusehen wird, aber zugleich mit Bewunderung für die ihm eigentümlichen Ersatzkünste des Ausdrucks und der Erzählung . . . diese Eigenschaften alle, in denen jener Stil seine Größe hat, sind in den früheren, vorklassischen und klassischen Epochen einer Kunstart nicht möglich, nicht erlaubt: solche Köstlichkeiten hängen lange als verbotene Früchte am Baume." This ever-recurring "Baroque style" manifests itself "in der Poesie, Beredsamkeit, im Prosastile, in der Skulptur ebensowohl als bekanntermaßen in der Architektur," but also in music, as well as in, arguably, Nietzsche's own style. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 438–439.

ethical, psychological stance toward antiquity's artistic legacy and the tragic, demonic elements it contains. Rembrandt and Dürer may be said to redeem Baroque delight in spectacle and ostentatious ornamentation because they allow these elements to become part of their representation of human interiority without permitting themselves or their viewers to be overwhelmed. Warburg thus proves hostile to Baroque allegory (and, implicitly, to Benjamin's reading of Baroque allegory), even if it may be said, for reasons that will become more obvious below, that he doggedly allegorizes himself.

Panel 70, "Barocke Pathetik im Raub. Theater" (The Baroque pathetic in the rape [of Proserpina]. Theater),¹⁹ and panel 71, "Schwur und Schilderhebung auf dem Theater. 'Art officiel'" (Oath and "raising on a shield" on stage. 'Art officiel'), reveal the final scope of Warburg's knowledge of Baroque visual culture.²⁰ Here the case is made that Ovidian motifs lead not just Tempesta astray, but also Rubens and an entire generation of northern artists and poets. In panel 70 (fig. 16) Rubens becomes a significant combinatorial element in the *Nachleben der Antike*, as his *Rape of Proserpina* (no. 3) and three other works by him or modeled after him (nos. 4, 6, 9) are allied with variations on the same theme by Tempesta and Moyaert, and with illustrations for theatrical works by Vondel, Coster, and Struys. By contrast, Rembrandt's relatively early, 1630 *Rape of Proserpina* (no. 11) offers, for all its theatricality, ornament, and violent motion, a unique solution to the problem of Baroque painterly expression. The extreme pathos wracking the faces of Proserpina and her attendants in the moment of her abduction is mediated by signs of real interiority. Thus Rubens's magnificent painting of the same pathos formula is too dramatic, too externalized, in short, too "superlative" for the "Sachlichkeit" and "Besonnenheit" Warburg values in art. At the other pole, panel 71's motley images display the ritual, externalized, but thoroughly conventional gestures he ascribes to Baroque tastes.

In 1612 Tempesta made thirty-six illustrations for Otto van Veen's *Batavorum cum Romanis bellum*, a brief text occasioned by the recent Spanish truce at Antwerp with the Dutch. But instead of depicting contemporary events, Tempesta and van Veen (or Vaenius) focused on the uprising against the Romans by the Batavians, led by the one-eyed general Claudius Civilis, an episode portrayed by Tacitus in books 4 and 5 of the *Histories*, and which had become an emblematic scene of Dutch nationalism in the late sixteenth century.²¹ Some fifty years later, Tempesta's

19. The *OED* cites an obsolete, substantive form of "pathetic," which means a "pathetic language or feeling; pathos."

20. A Germanic ritual, "'raising on a shield,'" is first attested by Tacitus but became a part of Byzantine and Frankish coronation ceremonies.

21. As Mark Morford argues, it is unclear whether Tempesta's engravings are based on Otto van Veen's series of twelve mannerist paintings on the same subject (as Warburg assumes throughout and Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 233, asserts), or whether van Veen undertook his paintings in response to Tempesta. See Morford, "Theatrum hodiernae vitae: Lipsius, Vaenius, and the Rebellion of Civilis," in *Recreating Ancient History: Episodes from the Greek and Roman Past in the Arts and Literature of the Early Modern Period*, ed. Karl Enenkel et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001), 67.

illustrations formed the basis for a series of enormous paintings commissioned by Amsterdam burghers to adorn their new town hall. Conforming to what Warburg derisively labels *art officiel*, these epic canvases adhered to the reigning Baroque taste for ostentatious spectacle, which, in turn, partially explains why Rembrandt's muted, sublime painting *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* (1661–62) (fig. 25) was unceremoniously removed from its place after only some two months.²²

As for the remaining images in the Amsterdam Town Hall (including the sketches by Ovens that replaced Rembrandt's painting), though still waiting to see new, better photographs of them, Warburg confidently asserts:

And yet I believe that exactly this Dutch-Flemish style in these pictures, because they treat the same subject as Rembrandt, i.e., Holland's pre-history according to Tacitus, should have led us to grasp clearly, to see [uns zum Greifen deutlich vor Augen führen müssten], how this case of Dutch-Italian Baroque taste—I have found connections with festival culture and theater—threatens and represses the Dutch-northern manner of seeing that aims to embody the deliberate tension in being; whereas the Roman *Tempesta* advocates the *plaisir* of the tied-off dynamogram with its pathos-laden discharge [wo der Romane das Plaisir der abgeschnürten Dynamogramme pathetischer Entladung fördert].²³

Whether it occurs in Hellenistic astrological representations, Baroque Rome, or a culture and time closer to his northern home, the “tied-off dynamogram” never ceases to trouble Warburg. No wonder, then, he celebrates how Rembrandt's painting overturns “*Tempesta*'s whole compositional scheme . . . for the sake of greater simplicity and concentration.”²⁴ Pathos must be formally constrained, not manneristically constricted, if it is dynamically to speak the timeless “language of gestures.”

Turning to the *Atlas* again, we see that panel 72 (fig. 17), “Dagegen Rembrandt. Heiliges Mahl: Claud. Civ., Abendmahl, Jupiter b. Philemon u. Baucis. Warum die ‘Ninfa’ bei Samson? Kindermord (Vorbild) ‘rasende Frau’” (In contrast: Rembrandt. Eucharist: Claudius Civilis, Last Supper, Jupiter with Philemon and Baucis. Why the “nymph” with Samson? Child-killing (model) “raving woman”), consists of images by Rembrandt, *Tempesta*, van Veen, Ovens, but also, significantly, three by Leonardo. The panel emphasizes what many commentators, including Warburg and Gombrich, regard as the most original aspect of Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis* (nos. 9, 12^a): its nocturnal setting around a table and the mysterious, meditative effect this produces—an effect heightened by Warburg's juxtaposition of the painting with the *Last Supper* by Leonardo (no. 13). (Curiously, he also includes,

22. It later made its way to Stockholm, where Warburg traveled to see it. He had a copy made of it that still hangs in the Warburg Institute in London. Warburg (and the sources he relies on) links the plans for the Amsterdam Town Hall with Vondel's literary circle as well. See *Italienische Antike*, fol. 39.

23. Warburg, WIA, GC 16508, fols. 3–4.

24. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 234.

anticipating *Mnemoysne's* very last panels, a newspaper clipping showing a 1929 papal procession in Rome celebrating the Eucharist [no. 7].) Not only does their common *Gebärdensprache* link these two scenes and artists, but Warburg even displays a 1635 drawing by Rembrandt of Leonardo's *Last Supper*, thereby joining the Northern and Southern Renaissances as well as completing the metonymic convergence of the sacred and the profane.

But what is Rembrandt "against"? He is enlisted, I take it, to combat the Baroque excesses in the previous two panels as well as the ones juxtaposed with his artworks here. Thus van Veen's 1612 version of *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* (no. 1) is flanked by two images of Rembrandt's 1636 *The Blinding of Samson* (nos. 2^a, 2^b), which in turn are contrasted with versions of the conspiracy by Flinck and Tempesta (nos. 3–5). Then Warburg essentially cedes the stage to Rembrandt, Leonardo, and their versions of the Last Supper. And to show, seemingly, that this pathos formula need not be limited to the Christian "inversion," the "last" image (no. 14) is Rembrandt's *Philemon and Baucis* (1658), where the eponymous figures, along with Jupiter and Mercury, are quietly seated around a barely illuminated table.

Panel 73 (fig. 18), "Medea auf dem Theater u. b. R'dt—Denkraum der Besonnenheit. Art officiel mit dem Pathos des Kindermordes. Frauen in der Schlacht. Schlacht auf der Brücke. Tacitus tritt an die Stelle von Ovid" (Medea on stage and in Rembrandt—Thought-space of Sophrosyne. Art officiel and the pathos of infanticide. Women in battle. Battle on the bridge. Tacitus takes Ovid's place), continues the *Claudius Civilis* theme while combining it with the pathos formula associated with Medea. Here the same cohort of artists (Tempesta, van Veen, Ovens, et al.) is enlisted to show the Baroque predilection for dramatic, even exorbitant *affectus*—now in battle scenes—and therefore also the usurpation of Ovid's role as principal model by Tacitus, who, beginning in the early Renaissance lent himself more easily to ideological appropriation than the poet of constant transformation.²⁵ To fill out the "Denkraum der Besonnenheit," Warburg contrasts Rembrandt's restrained etching (no. 1), *The Marriage of Creusa and Jason*, for a 1648 Dutch drama *Medea*, with more gruesome, extravagant illustrations for another Dutch version of *Medea* from 1668 (nos. 2¹–2³). Condensing Warburg's analysis in the lecture, Gombrich describes Rembrandt's etching (fig. 26): "Again he represented the moment of inner tension, the moment of reflection before action rather than action itself, and this made him reject the traditional versions of the theme based on the *pathos* of Hellenistic sarcophagi. In renouncing the 'crude' superlatives of the Hellenistic Baroque, Rembrandt rediscovered the true content of the myth which had been given expression in works of art unknown to him."²⁶ Through Warburg's metonymies

25. See Christopher Krebs, *Negotiatio Germaniae: Tacitus' "Germania" und Enea Silvio Piccolomini, Giannantonio Campano, Conrad Celtis und Heinrich Bebel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

26. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 236.

we come to appreciate how the space occupied by Medea in the etching's lower right-hand corner is almost entirely enveloped in shadows, as if Rembrandt were emphasizing not only her distance from the illuminated, despised couple, but also her brooding interiority or the "Pathos des Kindermordes."

Panels 74 and 75, with their dramatic *Überschriften*, explicitly promise "Besonnenheit," "Distanz," "Transformation," and a contemplative space where the tensions between body and soul are displayed, but never really resolved.²⁷ In panel 74 (fig. 19), Rembrandt is made kin to Pisanello and Raphael, as all the images, notwithstanding chronological and cultural differences, express "Heilung ohne Berührung" (healing without contact) and "innere Wandlung" (inner change) based on both pagan and Christian models. Then, in panel 75 (fig. 20), corporeal materiality takes center stage when miraculous and scientific accounts of the body's disposition after death are compared. As for the latter, Warburg contrasts two rather crude early Renaissance depictions of the anatomy theater (nos. 8, 10) with Rembrandt's two famous anatomy paintings (nos. 11, 12), *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) and *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Jan Deyman* (1656).

How these last two images may provoke "contemplation," though not necessarily secure "Besonnenheit," is explored by another latter-day admirer of Rembrandt, W. G. Sebald, who, in *The Rings of Saturn*, contemplates the cadaver being dissected in *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, which, he realizes, resists being merely contemplated but forces us instead to consider the ethics of spectatorship and punishment. Sebald also questions whether science here really has the upper hand: "The spectacle, which was presented before a paying public drawn from the upper classes, was doubtlessly a demonstration of the undaunted investigative zeal [des unerschrockenen Forschungsdrangs] in the new sciences; but it also represented (though this surely would have been refuted) the archaic ritual of dismembering a corpse, of harrowing flesh of the delinquent even beyond death, a procedure then still part of the ordained punishment."²⁸ That a magical, metonymic act—the corpse stands in for the departed soul—continues to haunt Rembrandt's viewers at the end of the twentieth century would have, I think, perturbed yet pleased Warburg, for notwithstanding his ultimate desire to overcome such unmediated pathos, he always avidly seizes on any instance of its persistence in the imagination.

In the lecture's concluding remarks, after branding it merely an awkward "preliminary attempt," Warburg promotes several bold theses. To begin with,

27. Panel 74 is glossed as "Besonnenheit. Petrus bei Masaccio, Raffael, R'dt. Distanz: Heilung ohne Berührung. 100 Gl-Blatt ['Hundertguldenblatt']. Pisanello—Transformation b. R'dt. = innere Wandlung. Großmut bei Scipio"; panel 75 as "Magische Anatomie. Gedärmschau—Suche nach dem Sitz der Seele. Wissenschaftl. Anatomie = Kontemplation durch Einstromen der Totenklage. Tieranatomie—Menschenanatomie pathetisch und kontemplativ [vgl. Carpaccio]."

28. W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998), 12; Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn* (Frankfurt am Main: FTV, 1997), 22–23. The text includes an image of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*.

Rembrandt's depiction of Claudius Civilis's nocturnal oath not only rejects the Baroque tastes of his times and art's ideological function but succeeds in vividly expressing timeless questions of conscience, even as it decorously, not hyperbolically, renovates the antique, thoroughly tragic *Gebärdensprache*:

Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis* symbolizes a moment in which, on the one hand, antique, historical narrative from a nation's prehistory as captured mnemonically [gedächtnismässig] in word and image and, on the other hand, an unmediated, lively, corporeal, dramatic representation can mislead genius neither to romanticizing eloquence nor to theatrical posing.²⁹

A symbolic "moment," Rembrandt's painting spurns what Warburg views as the pursuit of exorbitant *affectus* in most Baroque dramatic, visual, and plastic arts. Instead, he suggests (somewhat improbably, it must be admitted) that Rembrandt remembers classical *Ausdruckswerte* without the filter of mannerism distorting his view.

Next, Warburg challenges his fellow art historians and, perhaps, those scholars of literature, such as Strich, Weisbach, and, implicitly, Benjamin, who had in the 1920s, following Wölfflin's lead, transformed the *Barock* from an object of scholarly derision into a fertile, if still largely unplowed field of inquiry. He discovers, though, an interior, psychological Baroque, where pathos is palpable but not "superlative" or "tied-off" from its earlier, especially antique formulas:

Whoever demands from art lovers despairing inner concentration [verzweifelte innere Zusammenfassung], which prepares itself for an uncertain, perilous future, and whoever sympathizes with the eternal Hamlet-problem when the pangs of conscience [der Gewissensqual] waver between reflex-movement and reflective behavior [zwischen Reflexbewegung und reflexivem Verhalten]—whether it takes the form of an ethically demanding, ritualistic image in the "Medea" or the "Claudius Civilis"—he runs always the risk of being driven from the field by the purveyors of triumphal presentism [Gegenwartsbejahung]. But resurrection day in the circle of seekers came for the hesitant Medea through Lessing as it did for Rembrandt's Claudius Civilis.³⁰

This cryptic proclamation, which makes ethical, if not also spiritual demands on its auditors, appropriates the trope of "resurrection" on behalf of a strain of historical consciousness and psychological fortitude that Warburg would share with Rembrandt, Lessing, and even Hamlet. To resurrect antiquity, to give it a *Nachleben*, the historian must seize those moments (*Augenblicke*), symbolic of neither absolute action nor absolute thought, but rather expressive of an awareness of being fatefully placed in between the two modes. As Warburg goes on to argue, the "edle Einfalt

29. Warburg, *Italianische Antike*, fol. 105.

30. *Ibid.*, fol. 106.

und stille Größe" that Winckelmann idealistically attaches to classical antiquity, and that Lessing canonizes in *Laocoön*, also contains this terrible in-between moment. Indeed, Lessing cites an example of it, one that Rembrandt could not have known, since it was discovered only in 1748 with the excavation of Pompey. This is a portrait of Medea by Timomachus of Byzantium (first century BCE) that shows her not enraged or in the gruesome act of killing her children, but with restrained gestures and a brooding face. Such a portrait proves "there was a Greece," a different Greece than Winckelmann's, that "für die Gewissensqual des zur tragischen Handlung Getriebenen, wie nur je ein Shakespeare, Sinn hatte" (had meaning for the pangs of conscience of one driven to tragic action, as only a Shakespeare could show).³¹ In this manner, Rembrandt is placed in synchronic conversation not with contemporary poets, like Vondel and Hooft, but with other exemplary "seismographs," here a Roman painter, an Enlightenment thinker, and a Renaissance dramatist.

Warburg's last gesture in the lecture is to look forward, to speculate, on the basis of his historical retrospection. He does this partly by relying on the eschatological metaphors of descent and ascent and partly by acknowledging his own contingency as viewer and fellow traveler through the same *Denkraum* he finds Rembrandt traversing:

Admittedly, for a while now historians of religion, philologists, and psychologists have taught us that demonic experience, which leads to the most uninhibited, unhinged expression, belongs to pagan culture, just as the Olympian cheerfulness of Greek sculpture does [dass zur heidnischen Kultur das dämonische, zum ungehemmtesten Ausdruck fortreissende Erlebnis ebenso gehört wie die olympische Heiterkeit griechischer Skulptur]. I have tried to sketch this evening what this polar tension in art and art-appreciation means for seventeenth-century Holland. Furthermore, may this excursion through the semi-subterranean region where spiritual, expressive values are minted [durch die halbunterirdischen Region der Prägwerke seelischer Ausdruckswerte], which I have offered here, with your patient attentiveness, serve to prepare the path for an energetic theory of human expression [für eine energetische Lehre vom menschlichen Ausdruck], a path beyond a purely formal aesthetic and based instead on a philological, historical examination of the connection between pictorial, artistic formation and life's formative, actual, or dramatic dynamic.

The climb [Auffahrt] toward the sun with Helios and into the depths with Proserpina is symbolic of two states of mind [or stations (as in the Stations of the Cross)] that in the cycle of life belong inseparably together, like inhalation and exhalation. On

31. Ibid., fol. 107. Lessing writes: "Die Medea hatte er nicht in dem Augenblicke genommen, in welchem sie ihre Kinder wirklich ermordet; sondern einige Augenblicke zuvor, da die mütterliche Liebe noch mit der Eifersucht kämpfet. Wir zittern voraus, nun bald die grausame Medea zu erblicken, und unsere Einbildungskraft gehet weit über alles hinweg, was uns der Maler in diesem schrecklichen Augenblick zeigen könnte" (*Laocoön*, 27).

this journey [Fahrt], the only baggage we may bring with us is the eternally fleeting pause between inclination and action [die ewig flüchtige Pause zwischen Antrieb und Handlung]. It is up to us how long we, with the help of Mnemosyne, can extend this pause for breath. Apart from such music to come [Zukunftsmusik], I hope, however, to have made one thing clear today: one may not ask of antiquity, with a thief's pistol pointed at it, whether it is "classically tranquil" or "demonically frenzied" [man darf der Antike die Frage "klassisch ruhig" oder "dämonisch erregt" nicht mit der Räuberpistole des Entweder-Oder auf die Brust setzen]. It depends really on the subjective character of those who live afterward, not from the objective inventory of the antique legacy, whether we are aroused to passionate action or soothed to mellow wisdom.³²

And then, in a handwritten addition to the typescript made the day after the lecture, Warburg aphoristically declares: "Jede Zeit hat die Renaissance der Antike die sie verdient." (Every age has the Renaissance of antiquity that it merits.)³³ By figuring himself and his audience in such "subjective," mythic terms, he rejects both Winckelmann's serene classicism and the enthusiastic *Barock* of his contemporaries in favor of a more contingent, perhaps even solipsistic vision of the *Nachleben der Antike*. His peroration seems to agree with Kant that aesthetic judgments are perforce subjective; but it agrees more strongly still with the likes of Gadamer, Blumenberg, and particularly Benjamin, who view interpretation (or translation) as being fully contingent on the hermeneut's (or translator's) historical, cultural, and subjective horizons. Further, Warburg's "Lehre" is self-consciously "energetisch"—it depends on his ability to give it metaphoric expression and condensation. At the same time, however, by invoking the "Hilfe der Mnemosyne"—which I take to mean both *mater musarum* and the *Atlas*—he would prolong "die ewig flüchtige Pause zwischen Antrieb und Handlung" to extend the space for contemplating this and the other polarities we have encountered in the course of this book. As Gombrich neatly phrases it, "Not to submit to immediate phobic reactions but to lengthen the interval of reflection is the aim of true civilization."³⁴

Warburg never published his thoughts about Rembrandt and Tempesta.³⁵ Instead, his thoughts turn soon after the lecture to the idea of a "Bilderatlas." As he announces in the *Tagebuch* (8/26/1926): "Bilderatlas für den Claudius Civilis vorbereitet" (Atlas of images for *Claudius Civilis* prepared).³⁶ This entry marks his first use of the word "Bilderatlas."³⁷ It suggests that Rembrandt may have been a

32. Warburg, *Italienische Antike*, fols. 109–111.

33. Warburg, *Italienische Antike*, fol. 111.

34. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 237.

35. Leuschner plausibly explains that Warburg's poor health prevented him from publishing the Rembrandt materials, even as they directly led to work on panels for *Mnemosyne* (*Antonio Tempesta*, 568).

36. GS, VII:6.

37. GS, VII:xxvi. Michels and Schoell-Glass note: "Der *Claudius Civilis* hatte für Warburg und seine Mitstreiter eine wichtige symbolische Funktion, die allerdings nur dem internen Kreis zugänglich gewesen sein dürfte: Er galt als Sinnbild für das 'sittlich fordernde Kultbild' in der neuzeitlichen

decisive spur not just for the panels discussed above, but for the entire *Mnemosyne* project. In fact, Warburg created three *Tafeln* for the 1926 Rembrandt exhibition at the K.B.W., although they are ordered quite differently than the corresponding ones in the *Atlas*.³⁸ Beyond this, ample evidence exists in the *Tagebuch* and notebooks that he continued to think of Rembrandt as an important ally, a crucial combinatory piece, in his effort to win “metaphoric distance” in his map of historical and symbolic change.

In still more concrete terms, Eckhard Leuschner points to two images, drawn in Warburg's own hand, that may be said to emblemize his progress toward the *Atlas*. The first is a sketch of the essential elements in one of Tempesta's illustrations for the *Batavorum cum Romanis bellum*.³⁹ While its figures are crude, the drawing nonetheless neatly conveys Tempesta's *Gebärdensprache*. The second image is what Leuschner, viewing it as prefiguring the *Bilderreihe* method, dubs a “diagram of the dependent relations in the *Civilis*.”⁴⁰ Though it is difficult to make out all of the diagram's parts, they appear to correspond to the various artworks by Leonardo, Tempesta, Vaenius, et al., discussed above in the context of the lecture and the *Atlas*. In this manner, Warburg begins already to move beyond discursive argument as he explores what a metonymic map of Rembrandt's invention might achieve.

Warburg's Diagrams

Trying to find the conceptual and pragmatic means in his last years to mediate the mass of historical materials and artistic details (re)presenting themselves to him, Warburg increasingly came to rely on a form of diagrammatic thought that conflated word and image. Closely related to his long-standing habit of organizing his thinking, especially in the notebooks, in tabular form, such diagrammatic reasoning is at once inductive, deductive, and, like some of his metaphors, condensed to the point of obliquity. Exemplary of this is a 9/7/1927 entry in the *Tagebuch* (just five days after the exchange with Saxl over “‘tied-off’ metaphor”) where he offers one of the many diagrams outlining his historical vision and adumbrating future projects that riddle his notebooks and other unpublished writings.⁴¹ In this case, a grand *translatio* in space and time is sketched. Contemplating the convergence of Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and European astrology and astronomy,

Kultur und symbolisierte zugleich eine politisch konnotierte Kunstgeschichtsschreibung” (Warburg, *Tagebuch*, xxv).

38. See GS, II.1:xi.

39. Leuschner, *Antonio Tempesta*, 564.

40. *Ibid.*, 569.

41. See John Bender and Michael Marrinan, *The Culture of Diagram* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). Their definition of diagram stresses “process”: “A diagram is a proliferation of manifestly selective packets of dissimilar data correlated in an explicitly process-oriented array that has some of the attributes of a representation but is situated in the world like an object. Diagrams are closer in kind to a Jackson Pollock than to a Rembrandt” (7).

Warburg tries “to show” (*zeigen*) how the Renaissance forms an intermediate, mediating moment between himself and those cultures he perceives as not having the ability to use metaphor to mediate properly between the human and the divine. Given this ambitious aim, not surprisingly the entry (fig. 27) is elliptical, telegraphic:

Möchte von dem Buch von Angelo ausgehend (Augsburg), es in die Mitte stellen zwischen Teukros und Boll (circa 100–1488–1907) < 1500 1900 > um zu zeigen, wie das kleinasiatische Engramm kosmischer Orientierung gerade in Bayern (Augsburg Padua) centriert logierte; die Astrologie wäre (anderseits Isomnemen zwischen Ibn Esra und Aby Warburg) zu behandeln als Abfall der Bilderwelt vom centrierten Globus: “Astrologie als rückläufige Bewegung innerhalb <urheidnischer> menschentümlicher [anthroposophistischer] Verursachung (Causalität) Vorgänge”

Saxl wies mit Recht auf Levy-Brühl das Denken der Primitiven . . .

Die barbarische Entartung der klassisch griechischen Sphaera als Grundlage der Nativitätsstellerei:

NW	Norden		
K.B.W.	Lichtenberger Dürer Luther		
Westen		Osten	
		Kyzikos	
(Toledo)	Angeli		
(Araber)	(Engel)	Griechenland	Indien
(Juden)	München Boll	Soloi	Bagdad
	Süden		
	Padua		

Die “Anlieger” des Mittelmeerbeckens im Kampfe um den mathematischen Denkraum

<Die Wiedergewinnung metaphorischer Distanz>

Alexandrien

. . . Darum steht am Ende der Epoche der Hexenglauben wie der Streit um die metaphorische Distanz beim Abendmahl: significat oder est.⁴²

42. GS, VII:141. Even in his last months Warburg was still mapping the importance of the “Mittelmeerbecken” for northern artists; see GS, VII:494. Also in the *Tagebuch* (GS, VII:143–144), he contemplates the title “Menschengleichnis am Himmel” for a “bildgeschichtliche Studie.” One should also distinguish between what Warburg meant by “barbarische Entartung” and what Nazi ideology branded as *entartete Kunst*. The former signaled a culture that unconsciously embraced “Unvernunft,” whereas the latter was a highly motivated form of slander.

I would like to begin with the book by Angelus (Augsburg), placing it in the middle between Teucer and Boll (circa 100–1488–1907) < 1500 1900 >, in order to show how the engram from Asia Minor of cosmic orientation lodged, centered right in Bavaria (Augsburg Padua). Astrology would be (alternately Isomnemen between Ibn Esra and Aby Warburg) treated as the detritus of the world of images from the centered globe: “Astrology as the retrogressive movement within <originary-pagan> human [anthroposophist] causation (causality) events”

Saxl rightly points to Levy-Brühl, *Primitive Mentality* . . .

The barbaric degeneration of classical Greek [cosmic] sphere as the basis for nativity scenes:

NW	North			
K.B.W.	Lichtenberger	Dürer	Luther	
West				East
				Kyzikos
(Toledo)	Angelus			
(Arab)	(Angel)			Greece India
(Jew)	Munich Boll			Soloi Baghdad
	South			
	Padua			

The “riparians” of the Mediterranean basin battling for mathematical thought-space
<the winning-back of metaphoric distance>

Alexandria

. . . Therefore at the end of the epoch stands the belief in witches as well as the strife about metaphoric distance concerning the Eucharist: *significat* or *est*.

Part map, flowchart, and journal entry, this diagram is an attempt to orient the development of European early modern cosmology by tracing how the “sphere” of ancient Greek culture shifted, in the Alexandrian era, toward barbarism, and how this shift, reinforced by Islamic and other non-European cultures, came to shape the metaphoric, cosmological *Denkraum* of early modern Europe. The “Mitte” of this rebus depicts how astrological thought threatens the “Mediterranean,” and so it is occupied by Johannes Angelus (1463–1512), who authored a treatise on astrological medicine, first published in Augsburg (in 1488, not “1518”).⁴³ But Franz Boll, whose history and critique of astrology deeply influenced the trajectory of Warburg’s thought, also appears in the center. In other words, like Boll, Angelus, and Teucer of Babylon, Warburg stands in a paradoxical, synchronic, but not untenable place: all are “Anlieger” to a Mediterranean culture itself shaped and

43. The treatise is the *Tractat von der Pestilentz*. Engel was a student of Regiomontanus.

displaced by historical change. Yet at the same time they also occupy a hermeneutic center.⁴⁴ By allying himself with these figures, Warburg resists becoming merely a formalist *Isomneme* (along with the medieval Arab astrologer Ibn Ezra!) to the Greeks.⁴⁵ Instead, he indicates the need here for an intellectual history based on the premise that there had occurred a still unremedied “Barbarische Entartung” from classical Greek culture. In this sense, he also stands aloof from the others, as confirmed by the underlined “W.” in “K.B.W.” situated in the northwest part of the “map.” Warburg would trace how the “causality” associated with certain anthropomorphic, astrological, or “primitive” worldviews became central to the European Renaissance. To this end he invokes the contemporary research of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who was known for mixing anthropology, sociology, and psychology in his several books on “la mentalité primitive,” to argue, among other things, that it did not address contradictions.⁴⁶ Lévy-Bruhl embodies the *mentalité* that opposes the struggle (“im Kampfe”) to regain a “mathematical thought-space” and thereby also to achieve the “Wiedergewinnung metaphorischer Distanz.” What Warburg means by this last phrase is abruptly shown when he compares belief in witches to belief in Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist ceremony. No mere theological nicety, the exact nature of Christ’s ontological status in the wine and bread was of course a principal *casus belli* during the Reformation.⁴⁷ It proves, Warburg suggests here, metaphor’s essential, mediating, and thus redeeming role in European culture as he prizes it. Similarly, when the degeneration of “classical Greek” astronomy is cast “as the basis for nativity scenes,” this suggests not only that metaphor is a constant in Western intellectual history, but that it can either obscure or clarify our relation to the past and physical world. As we saw in Ghirlandaio’s *Adoration of the Shepherds*, which was situated next to the main altar or chancel, various real and metaphoric relations to the pagan past may be represented with consummate skill. But here Warburg turns to an even more dramatic instance of “metaphoric distance.” Whether the wine “signifies” or actually “is” Christ’s blood is the difference between civilization and barbarism. And metaphor’s “Wie,” as embodied by the Eucharist ceremony, is the main criterion by which he makes such a distinction.⁴⁸

44. Warburg is referring to Teucer of Babylon (in Egypt), a first-century CE astrologer, who united elements of Egyptian, oriental, and Greek astrology. His work on the constellations greatly influenced Arabic and medieval astrology. Boll published an edition of the *Sphaera* in 1903.

45. *Isomneme* is Warburg’s neologism; it neatly puns on *Isomene*, which *Duden* defines as “Verbindungsline [on a map or globe] zwischen Orten gleicher mittlerer Monatstemperatur,” and *mneme*, or the “capacity which a substance or organism possesses for retaining after-effects of experience or stimulation undergone by itself or its progenitors” (*OED*).

46. Lévy-Bruhl’s *La mentalité primitive* appeared in 1922. By contrast, Warburg has much closer affinities with Lévi-Strauss’s vision of the “savage” as *bricoleur*.

47. On the next page of the *Tagebuch*, Warburg comments on the historical role of metaphor: “Die Aufstachelung zum ‘Wie’ des Abendmahls kam aber vom *Holländer* Hoenius der erst vergeblich beim ‘Freunde’ Luther offerierte und dann zu Zwingli ging” (GS, VII:141). A few pages later, he cites Jean Paul’s assertion that “Logik und Metapher an einem Stamm sind” (146).

48. In the *Tagebuch* on 8/31/1929, Warburg writes: “David Hume berichtet, daß ein Wilder am Tage nach der Communion dem bekehrenden Missionar auf seine nachprüfende Frage, ob es einem

That the Eucharist was an abiding fascination for Warburg in his last years is confirmed by the very last *Tafel* in *Mnemosyne*, panel 79 (fig. 22), “Messe. Verzehren des Gottes. Bolsena, Botticelli. Heidentum in d. Kirche. Bluthostienwunder. Transsubstantiation. Italienischer Verbrecher vor der letzten Ölung” (Mass. Devouring of God. Bolsena, Botticelli. Paganism in the Church. Miracle of the bleeding host. Transubstantiation. Italian criminal before the last rites). Here Warburg amplifies and complicates the theme of panel 78, “Kirche u. Staat. Geistliche Macht unter Verzicht auf weltliche” (Church and state. Sacred power renounces worldly power), which is dominated by photographs of the signing of the Lateran Treaty in Rome on February 11, 1929, an event he witnessed with great fascination.⁴⁹ This treaty, whereby the Vatican renounced all claim to temporal power in exchange for recognition of the pope’s supreme spiritual sovereignty, marked for Warburg, as Mussolini’s ubiquity in these photographs indicates, the dangerous loss of metaphoric mediation.⁵⁰ In a 1927 notebook, he writes: “[Die] metaphorische Ferne [ist] durch die Direktheit d. Gewalt im Symbol des Symbols durch Mussolinis Beil gestört.” (Metaphoric distance [is] destroyed through the immediacy of the violence in the symbol of the symbol, through Mussolini’s axe.)⁵¹ This refers to the *fascis*, the original symbol of Italian fascism, which had a number of rods bound together around an axe. The “violence” promised by the symbolic axe, in effect, forestalls the contemplative space needed for metaphor. Thus the Christian “inversion” Warburg praises elsewhere is here “tied-off” from the world, while the symbol is freed to become a vehicle of unmediated violence. Yet at the same time, the panel affords a witty, ironic glimpse of how, potentially, force and reason, tradition and modernity, might be fused: its “last” photograph (no. 8) shows Cardinal Maffi visiting a Fiat factory. Maffi (1858–1931), whose interests in science and astronomy were matched only by his fervent, militant nationalism, thus becomes the link between the eternal church and fascism’s cult of the machine.

Panel 79 reveals still deeper ironies and disjunctions. Images on the left side signal a return to Renaissance “balance” and the humanist ideal of “inversion.” Dominating these, at least in terms of size, is Raphael’s 1511 *Mass of Bolsena*

Gott gäbe, antwortete: ‘nein’ bestürzende Begründung: ‘er habe ihn ja gestern gegessen.’ möge ihm das übergeschluckte ‘wie’ gut bekommen sein. [Das Abendmahl als ‘Tanz’ bei den Primitiven (Cassirer)]” (GS, VII:513).

49. In *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), Arnaldo Momigliano paraphrases a story often told by Bing: “There were in Rome tremendous popular demonstrations. . . . Mussolini became overnight the ‘man of providence,’ and in such an inconvenient position he remained for many years. Circulation in the streets of Rome was not very easy on that day, and it so happened that Warburg disappeared from the sight of his companions. They anxiously waited for him back in the Hotel Eden, but there was no sign of him for dinner. Bing and others even telephoned the police. But Warburg reappeared in the hotel before midnight, and when he was reproached he soberly replied something like this in his picturesque German: ‘You know that throughout my life I have been interested in the revival of paganism and pagan festivals. Today I had the chance of my life to be present at the re-paganization of Rome, and you complain that I remained to watch it’” (92).

50. I disagree, that is, with Gombrich, who insists that it shows “another link in the long chain of mankind’s road towards enlightenment” (*Aby Warburg*, 279).

51. Warburg, *Allgemeine Ideen*, fol. 62.

(no. 2) from the Vatican's Stanza d'Eliodoro, which depicts the miracle at Bolsena in 1263, when the host began to bleed as a priest, who was skeptical of the real presence, celebrated the Eucharist. This supernatural event is mediated, firstly, by Raphael's formal mastery and the calm, anachronistic presence in the fresco of his contemporaries, who contemplate the miracle at a distance, and, secondly, by the juxtaposition of the fresco with Giotto's *Spes* (Hope) (no. 3), from a grisaille in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, and Botticelli's *Last Communion of St. Jerome* (no. 4). If the former, as Schoell-Glass suggests, invokes Warburg's beloved *nympha*, the latter, I would add, also indicates a crucial *translatio* or transference of meaning.⁵² All these images map and mediate "paganism in the Church," as does the presence of three images of the Cathedra Petri (Chair of St. Peter), the pope's throne in St. Peter's. A marvelously syncretic object, located at the very center of the church's earthly power, it joins pagan mythological and astrological imagery, which adorns ivory tablets on a wooden chair (nos. 1¹, 1²) given to the pope in the ninth century, with Bernini's Baroque altar (no. 1³), which supports the chair with statues of the church's four doctors and envelops it in a magnificent bronze casing. But if this object, as Warburg suggests in the *Tagebuch*, contains "pagan monsters" and thus is comparable to Rembrandt's *Last Supper*, it by no means resolves his questions or the *telos* of "life in motion."⁵³ For nearly touching the Bernini image is a photograph of the hara-kiri ceremony (no. 5), and another depicting Japanese corporal punishment (no. 6). And while such ritual, state-sanctioned violence is again balanced by a newspaper clipping (no. 11) showing the signing of the 1925 Locarno Treaty, which Warburg believed would put an end to the demons of World War I in a way that the Versailles Treaty did not, the political begins to yield again to the religious in the six contiguous photographs showing a Eucharistic procession and parade of Swiss Guards in St. Peter's Square from the summer of 1929.⁵⁴ Here symbolic practice has become a mass phenomenon—the crowds and troops, Dorothée Bauerle suggests, could just as easily belong to a Fascist rally.⁵⁵ The timeless threat of the mob is then made explicit by two late fifteenth-century depictions (nos. 9, 10), the first from Lübeck, the second from Florence, of the destruction of the host by Jews. These images of the "desecration of the host" (*Hostienschändung*) remind us that violence in relation to symbol practice is never far away.⁵⁶

52. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "The Last Plates of Warburg's Picture Atlas *Mnemosyne*," in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects*, ed. Richard Woodfield (Amsterdam: OPA, 2001), 195.

53. GS, VII:506.

54. Schoell-Glass contends this image's "function" is "to represent this trust in the power of idealism" ("Last Plates," 193).

55. Bauerle, *Gespensstergeschichten*, 141: "In der Masse verliert sich die Distanz zwischen dem Ich und dem Andern; die individuelle geistige Erfahrung schlägt um in kollektive Machtszenerie."

56. See Schoell-Glass, "Last Plates," 196–197; but unaddressed is how such violence is to be reconciled with the "idealism" that Schoell-Glass finds elsewhere in the panel. See, however, her *Aby Warburg and Anti-Semitism: Political Perspectives on Images and Culture*, trans. S.P. Willcocks (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008).

Less clear, however, is the meaning of three clippings (nos. 12–14) from Hamburg newspapers, the first two of which are themselves tableaux containing various heterogeneous images. Fortunately, in a July 1929 speech (the so-called Doktorfeier lecture) given to some recent graduates in Hamburg, Warburg wittily explains how we should interpret the first clipping from the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* (no. 12). First, he compares its display of physical prowess in the figure of a young swimmer (“selbstzufriedene Schaustellungen menschlichen Könnens”) with how early modern broadsheets hyped monsters. This, then, yields a neat conceit or *coincidentia oppositorum*: “This atmosphere of satisfied worldliness [zufriedener Diesseitigkeit] most glaringly contrasts with the papal procession whose middle point shows not the monster but the monstrence.”⁵⁷ But then he wonders whether this wordplay actually produces knowledge (historical or otherwise) as well. Doubting that the swimmer is self-conscious of his symbolic roots in “paganism” (Heidentum), Warburg asks his audience to ponder how a “juxtaposition” of images can upset hermeneutic expectations: “Crude juxtaposition shows that the pleasurable *hoc meum corpus est* can be very abruptly brought before the eyes [vor die Augen] next to the tragic *hoc corpus meum est* without the discrepancy evoking protest against such a barbaric tactlessness [solche barbarische Stillosigkeit].”⁵⁸ But of course it is more than a question of style here—even if Warburg’s metonymies and metaphors are constitutive. Ultimately, he looks fixedly toward the past (above all, to the “Kultur des Mittelmeerbeckens”) for insights into how present and future forms of representation may serve urgent objective and subjective needs:

In order to conceive the process of thought [Auseinandersetzungsprozess], whose final meaning is a religious concretion or a scientific abstraction, in its momentary state, we must possess a collecting tank for that movement of exchange between past and present in northern Europe, which helps us to counter one way or another the chaos of unreason with a filter system of retrospective prudence [die uns hilft, so oder so dem Chaos von Unvernunft ein Filtersystem der retrospektiven Besonnenheit entgegenzusetzen].⁵⁹

With this “Filtersystem der retrospektiven Besonnenheit” as his ideal, Warburg would mediate contemporary popular culture’s flotsam and jetsam, as if historical memory could redeem the extremes of the present. Conversely and less optimistically, panel 79’s newspaper clippings create a kind of *mise en abyme* in which each becomes an ironic *Verdichtung* of the entire project. With their jarring juxtapositions of images, they are parts expressing the whole, but parts that no longer try for synthetic solutions.

57. Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 280 (Gombrich’s translation). Gombrich (279–282), Bauerle (*Gespengstergeschichten*, 141–142), and Schoell-Glass (“Last Plates,” 195–196) also turn to the Doktorfeier speech to gloss this clipping and Warburg’s late method.

58. Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 281 (my translation).

59. Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 281 (my translation).

The “last” image (no. 14), however, gestures at a transcendent solution. The clipping’s layout seems to imitate a Renaissance emblem, replete with gnomic superscript, compelling image, and explanatory subscript. Its *inscriptio* or motto consists of four unrelated headlines; the *imago*, Warnke and Brink observe, concerns a “Eisenbahnunglück bei Düren: ein Sterbender erhält das letzte Sakrament” (train accident near Düren: a dying man receives the last rites), while the *subscriptio*, the photograph’s caption, secures the image’s meaning. The “last” note in Warburg’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*, this “Transubstantiation” suggests that, despite the lethal chaos produced by distance-destroying technology, the possibility remains that humanity might master its fear of death through symbolic practices. That Warburg makes this the subject of the last panel may well correspond to an apprehension of his own impending death—his heart condition had worsened in the summer of 1929—but also to the notion that recent political and technological changes for all their ominous effects continued to engage and remake antique pathos formulas.⁶⁰ Still, with this panel’s enormous temporal scope (from the ninth century to 1929), cultural heterogeneity (from Japan to Italy and Germany), and thematic tensions (between the sacred and profane, the individual and mass), here again *syncretis* is the rule: metonymies yield no clear resolution.

Moreover, as the diagram above makes manifest, the putative barbarians were already inside the gates. Other evidence suggests that Warburg struggled to reconceptualize his historical vision in light of the already ominous political developments in Europe. In the first place, he was fascinated by the image, as in the background of Rubens’s oil painting *Spain Succouring Religion*, of “Neptungespänn” (Neptune’s team of horses) or “Neptuns als Rossbändiger in der Antike” (Neptune as horse tamer in antiquity) that yields the metaphor “Meereswoge gleich Ross” (ocean wave equals horse).⁶¹ As we saw above and in chapters 1 and 2, Warburg is drawn to this image and Virgil’s line “Quos ego—! sed motos praestat componere fluctus” because they exemplify the possibility of finding a compromise between mythic, natural forces and rational, abstract control of those forces as embodied by science and technology. But again, this is to be contrasted with the immediate threat of violence promised by Fascist symbolism.

In the last years of his life Warburg was unable to win back, to secure, such “metaphorical distance” for himself. Nor of course could he be certain if and how *Mnemosyne*’s spectators would experience such “distance” as they tried to put together the pieces he left behind.⁶² But that he passionately wishes us to attain “this conscious creation of distance” is clear from the *Einleitung*’s opening sentence, which describes the stakes in the starkest of terms:

60. See also panel 78, images nos. 4^a–4^b, which reproduce “the first telegram” from Pope Pius XI to King Vittorio Emanuele II.

61. Quotations are from McEwan’s account of the Warburg-Saxl correspondence on the “Prachtexemplar” of Neptune (Warburg and Saxl, “*Wanderstraßen der Kultur*,” 64).

62. Schoell-Glass concludes: “On the whole, Warburg found it difficult to convince others that his visualized ‘art historical cultural history’ could indeed also be used to understand contemporary

Bewußtes Distanzschaffen zwischen sich und der Außenwelt darf man wohl als Grundakt menschlicher Zivilisation bezeichnen; wird dieser Zwischenraum das Substrat künstlicher Gestaltung, so sind die Vorbedingungen erfüllt, das dieses Distanzbewußtsein zu einer sozialen Dauerfunktion werden kann, deren Zulänglichkeit oder Versagen als orientierendes geistiges Instrument eben das Schicksal der menschlichen Kultur bedeutet.⁶³

The conscious creation of distance between oneself and the external world may very well be called the foundational act of human civilization; if this liminal space becomes the substrate of artistic creation, then the conditions are fulfilled such that this consciousness of distance can become a lasting social function, whose sufficiency or failure as an instrument of spiritual orientation means even the fate of human culture.

This proposition distills the chief theoretical motive for *Mnemosyne*; but it also implicitly describes the “Schicksal” of the spectator, who observes and judges whether and how “dieses Distanzbewußtsein,” this metaphoric *Zwischenraum*, has been achieved. The spectator is invited to decide how to view such “Distanzbewußtsein,” and how to compare the myriad efforts of Western (and sometimes Eastern) cultures, especially their artistic and cosmographical attempts, to achieve it. This task’s difficulty is mirrored in turn by the syntax of Warburg’s sentence, as its focus shifts from how this “liminal space” determines “artistic arrangement” to, more broadly, how it serves a “lasting social function,” and then even serves “as an instrument of spiritual orientation.” By combining his art-historical and cosmographical concerns in a single, Delphic utterance, Warburg sets the stage for the remarkable syncretism of *Mnemosyne*.

As Imbert argues, *Mnemosyne* “proposes a paradigm at once opaque and incomplete” to answer a question that since Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (or, arguably, since Lessing’s *Laocoön*), through to Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and Burckhardt’s cultural turn, has been at the center of German aesthetic philosophy: namely, what is the nature of the relation between the artwork and spectator?⁶⁴ But that Warburg realized his solution was for all its encyclopedic scope insufficient or provisional, the *Tagebuch* leaves little doubt. His *Atlas*, like many of his earlier works, is an *essai*, both in the sense that it is an “attempt” or “experiment” not promising perfection and insofar as it is a highly personal, self-reflexive artifact. In a 4/8/1929 entry—six months before his death—Warburg details his plans for *Mnemosyne*, calling it a “Versuch kunstgeschichtlicher Kulturwissenschaft (attempt at art-historical cultural science). In another entry from the same month, the word *Versuch* reappears, but now it is applied to much earlier efforts to mediate antiquity and linked, as

visualizations. . . . Bing once said of Warburg that he often felt not wholly understood by his contemporaries and that he hoped to entrust his concerns to the future by means of his vast archive and library” (“Last Plates,” 189).

63. GS, II.1:3.

64. Imbert, “Aby Warburg,” 2.

we saw above, to metaphor's essential task: "Reformationsversuch der heidnischen Ekstase durch metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung" (attempt at reformation of pagan ecstasy through metaphoric determination of scope).⁶⁵

This last entry, however, marks a new current in Warburg's thinking, one that emerges really only in the last two years of his life but when tracked proves critical to an understanding of his work's philosophical and intellectual-historical implications. The Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) becomes in the *Tagebuch*, letters, and an eponymously named notebook Warburg's primary intellectual focus during his Italian journey in 1928–29. Indeed, Bruno is the figure with whom Warburg and Bing wrestle in order not only to confirm their research's conceptual and methodological direction, but, more particularly, to discover an avatar of the marriage of word and image, cosmology and art history, that comes uncannily close to the ideal mapped in the *Atlas*.

The phrase "Reformationsversuch der heidnischen Ekstase durch metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung," together with Warburg's claim, which I noted earlier, that Cassirer's "Individuum und Kosmos" is also his theme, occurs in a paratactic entry—really another diagram—riddled by Bruno's presence. Here Warburg recombines the art-historical and cosmographical strands of his thinking as he gnomically ponders *Versuche* preceding his own:

Reformationsversuch der heidnischen Ekstase durch metaphorische Umfangsbestimmung. <Vorversuch: energetische Inversion durch gegenpolare Sinngebung>
der heldisch weltliche—durch antikische Pathosformeln

des römischen Triumphes

der tragisch weltliche—durch griechische Pathosformel und collegiale Romantisierung
alla franzese

des Sarkophags Maenade,
Flußgott,
Nymphe.

der ekstatisch religiöse: Perspektive der Ebene gegen
Raptus in Coelum

der kosmische —durch sphaerisch gestuften
Auf und Abstieg (Kalender)
Sphaera
(Leber)

65. GS, VII:434, 436. Variations on the word "Versuch" occur frequently in the published and unpublished writings. For example in *Symbolismus aufgefaßt als primäre Umfangsbestimmung*, Warburg writes: "Das (Kunstwerk) ist ein Ereignis des *wiederholten* (Versuches) abseits des Subjectes, zwischen sich und das Object zu eine Entfernung zu legen versucht" (81). Briefly put, Warburg's *Versuche* are meant to supplement and critique the *Versuche* of the artists and cosmologists that provoke him.

(Spaccio)

Domesticatio der bestia pathetica

(Jetzt kriegt man auch Bruno an die richtige Stelle als Reformator *à cheval*.)⁶⁶

Reformational attempt at pagan ecstasy through metaphoric determination of scope.
<Preliminary attempt: energetic inversion through the polarized interpretation of meaning>

the heroic-worldly [attempt]—through classical pathos formulas
of the Roman Triumph

the tragic-worldly [attempt]—through Greek pathos formula and collegial Romanticization
alla francese

of the sarcophagus	maenad,
	river god,
	nymph.

the ecstatic-religious [attempt]: Planar perspective versus
Raptus in Coelum

the cosmic [attempt] —through spherical, tiered	
ascent and descent	(calendar)
	sphere
	(liver)

(Spaccio)

Domestication of the *bestia pathetica*

(Now one wins the correct position for Bruno as reformer *à cheval*.)

A veritable *Verdichtung*, this rehearses and condenses the principal motifs running throughout Warburg's intellectual career. Forging a *Denkraum* somewhere between the images of the *Atlas* and the language of the notebooks, this metonymic effort in diagrammatics—the syntactical parallelism and semantic repetition are crucial to the narrative of cause and effect—also charts vast polarities in time (from the Greeks to Bruno) and in space (from the macrocosmic sphere to the microcosmic one—here reduced to the “liver,” which astrologers would dissect for portents).⁶⁷ And while the other polarities should be by now familiar, the final line refers to Bruno's 1584 *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*, or *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, where the audacious Italian moralizes the ancient Greek gigantomachy in light of Copernican astronomy. Bruno leans, as we shall presently see, on metaphor (mostly in the form of allegory) to create speculative distance between himself and

66. GS, VII:436.

67. In the *Tagebuch*, Bing responds to one of Warburg's entries: “Sehr schöner treffender Ausdruck! von der Leber bis zum Symbolum Cosmographicum” (GS, VII:334).

antiquity. He does so to forge a novel *Denkraum* to meditate on that same distance, one that plays with, in order to reject, pagan representation of cosmic forces as anthropomorphic, mythic gods, thereby clearing the way for a more ethical representation of the cosmos.

In what sense, though, is Bruno the “Reformer à cheval”? The rhetoric of “reformation” is ubiquitous in this section/period of the *Tagebuch*. Clearly, it refers to Luther’s efforts; but it also describes Kepler’s attempts to remake astrological thought according to mathematical reason. Bruno is cast as a contemporary ally of Kepler in this respect, while Warburg views both as predecessors for his own “Reformationversuch” via the *Atlas*. An entry made a day after the one just quoted reads:

Die Teilhabe an vorgeprägtem Eindrucksgut als stilbildende Funktion, (energetischer Polarität.)

Ein Bilderatlas (2 000) mit Text (“) zur Kultur der Renaissance

Erkenntnistheoretische psychologische Vorbemerkung

Reformationsversuch der höchstgespannten Ausdruckswerte durch gegenpolare energetisch entgegengesetzte Sinngebung.

Von der Ambivalenz höchstgespannter energetischer Ausdruckswerte für intensivst einführende Beobachtung der gebildeten Renaissancemenschen.

Europäer im Zeitalter der Renaissance.⁶⁸

The participation in [the] pre-stamped commodity of impression as style-forming function, (energetic polarity.)

An atlas of images (2,000) with text (. . .) on Renaissance culture

Epistemological-psychological introductory remarks

Reformational attempt at highest-tension, expressive values through polar opposite, energetically opposed interpretation.

On the ambivalence of highest-tension, energetic expressive values for the most intensive empathetic observation by educated Renaissance men.

European in the Renaissance epoch.

Bruno, like Rembrandt and the maker of the *Atlas*, manipulates polarities to reveal the highest-tension, energetic expressive values” that the Renaissance and Reformation inherited from antiquity, values that will reveal the “epistemological-theoretical-psychological” meaning of images and style. Fair enough, but how did Bruno become Warburg’s *Isomneme*?

68. GS, VII:437.

SYNDERESIS: THE “BRUNO-REISE”

Reading Bruno

Warburg and Bing sojourned in Italy from late September 1928 until June 1929. Their main goal was originally to collect material to supplement the ever-mutating *Bilderatlas*, which, when they left Hamburg, consisted of eighty panels and some 1,300 images.¹ Another motive for the journey was Warburg's desire to introduce “the pictorial realm” to Bing.² Prompted, however, by an article by Leonardo Olschki, he resolves soon after they arrive: “We must read Giordano Bruno better.”³ By November 22, they begin to read Bruno in earnest (though in German); four days later there is an epiphany: “Nachmittags um circa 6 angefangen Giordano Bruno zu lesen. Zuerst mühselig durch die Wüste der Allgemeinheiten gepflegt. Dann begreift College Bing plötzlich mit bildschöner Sicherheit das immens komplizierte Problem der Heiden-Götterwelt bei Giordano Bruno als explizierbar.” (Afternoon around 6 began to read Giordano Bruno. At first laboriously plowed through the desert of commonplaces. Then suddenly colleague Bing comprehends

1. See Warburg, WIA, GC 30535.

2. Warburg, WIA, GC 24906. Warburg's wife, Mary, did not accompany them. The three traveled together to Florence, though, in October 1927. Warburg and Mary lived in Florence from 1897 to 1902.

3. GS, VII:350. The article is Leonardo Olschki, “Giordano Bruno,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 2 (1924): 1–79.

with beautiful certainty how to explicate the immense, complicated problem of the pagan pantheon of gods in Giordano Bruno.)⁴

Soon thereafter, Warburg acquired a collection of some 350 books by and about Bruno. Immediately, unhesitatingly, he greeted the acquisition as a watershed moment: "Ausserordentlich weit-tragende zweckdienliche Erwerbung; wird Folgen haben." (Extraordinarily far-reaching, purposive acquisition: it will have consequences.)⁵ In this sense, the turn to Bruno was a turn back to the K.B.W. as a "Denkinstrument," even as labor continued on *Mnemosyne*. Indeed, provoked by the acquisition of the Bruno materials, Warburg later undertook another *Umstellung* of part of the Library.⁶ More importantly, had Warburg lived longer, all indications are that Bruno would have become a central, combinatory element in *Mnemosyne*.

The clearest evidence for this is the notebook titled *Giordano Bruno*, forty-five pages in folio and kept from December 1928 to June 1929.⁷ The *Bruno* notebook, Nicholas Mann observes, was where Warburg transcribed "in its first spontaneous form," the "feverish ferment of speculation" produced by his and Bing's reading of Bruno, together with their Neapolitan sojourn (their Italian journey's crucial, last leg).⁸ The latter included visits to Bruno's birthplace in Nola, the Neapolitan church where Bruno trained as a young Dominican friar, and the site of a Mithras shrine in Capua where Warburg and Bing confronted paganism's chthonic legacy. Even more than in the other late notebooks, the entries in the *Bruno* notebook are fragmentary, aphoristic, and often quite gnomic, for here Warburg is trying at once to distill and dilate new thinking.⁹ I will consider presently several instances of this characteristic distillation, but as for dilation the notebook contains several fascinating diagrams and tables, including one that juxtaposes "Don Quixote" with the phrase "Chevalier/errant/v. d. Unendlichkeit Begriffes" (Knight errant of the infinity concept), both of which appear in the same column that contains, working one's way downward, the words "kategor. Imper." (categorical imperative) and, at its bottom, "Florio! / Shakesp."¹⁰ As Maurizio Ghelardi indicates, Warburg borrows here from Pierre Bayle's entry "Brunus" in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1st ed., 1697) (a photostat of which he had Saxl send him from Hamburg).

4. GS, VII:373–375.

5. GS, VII:387.

6. GS, VII:489; also 480. Foreshadowing this turn, though, Warburg invokes Bruno thrice in the context of his discussion of Kepler and "Unendlichkeit" in the Boll Lecture. See "*Per monstra ad sphaeram*," 118, 121, 127.

7. Warburg, WIA, III.121.1.2, *Giordano Bruno*. The notebook has been published and edited by Maurizio Ghelardi and Giovanna Targia in *Cassirer Studies* 1 (2008): 13–58. They also cite a 11/21/1928 letter to Wind in which Warburg mentions a title for a Bruno project: "Die Funktion der antiken kosmologischen Mythologie im Denksystem von Giordano Bruno."

8. Nicholas Mann, "Denkenergetische Inversion: Aby Warburg and Giordano Bruno," *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 82 (2003): 34.

9. The notebook also contains factual and bibliographic information about Bruno and Mithraism, as well as notes about Warburg's health, travel arrangements, etc.

10. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 24.

There Bayle adumbrates “l'idée d'un personnage, qui, en matière de Philosophe, fait le Chevalier errant.”¹¹ But why Kant's chief ethical principle should be invoked, linked to the idea of infinity, and then lead to Shakespeare and John Florio is a conundrum requiring a more digressive solution.¹²

In a 12/13/1928 letter written to Saxl from Rome, Warburg reports on the trove of Bruno books that he will soon purchase, which he learns about in a meeting with the philosopher, Fascist, and renowned Bruno scholar Giovanni Gentile. An avid Hegelian, who, beginning in 1923, served as Mussolini's minister of education, this “ideologian of fascism” had edited Bruno's Italian works.¹³ It was Gentile's edition that Warburg and Bing acquired, read, and lightly annotated. While Gentile seems to have intrigued and disappointed Warburg, who hints dismissively at his politics, Bruno emerges from the meeting transformed:

An idiosyncratic, fanatic, cagey, but gripping character. I was not quite able to achieve my purpose of learning more specifics about Bruno's *Spaccio de la bestia trionfante*; but I did learn on this occasion that the best expert in Italy, Spampanato, died a few weeks ago, and I hear just now from Olschki that his library is set to be sold, whereby the K.B.W. will find itself faced quite soon with the question of whether it is in a position to obtain in the form of this special library a surely unbelievably important aid for intellectual-historical research [Hilfsmittel zur geistesgeschichtlichen Forschung] on the sixteenth century. At the moment, Giordano Bruno appears to me as the wheel powering the sixteenth-century's thought-rail system, and forms through a personal union, an antenna for a European way of thinking, which receives its waves equally from Italy, France, England, and Germany [Giordano Bruno stellt sich mir im Augenblick als Drehscheibe im Denkgleissystem des 16. Jahrh. dar, und bildet durch Personalunion eine Antenne europäischer Denkweise, die ihre Wellen gleichermaßen aus Italien Frankreich, England, und Deutschland empfangt].¹⁴

If the “antenna” metaphor recalls how he figured Nietzsche and Burckhardt as “seismographs,” now Warburg adds another mechanical element (“Drehscheibe”)

11. See Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, ed. Ghelardi and Targia, 53.

12. As for Florio (Elizabethan translator of Montaigne, lexicographer, and friend of Bruno when the latter lived in London from 1583 to 1585), his presence here remains a mystery to me. Perhaps Warburg anticipated some of the intellectual history traced by Frances Yates in her 1934 work *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England*, written partly in the newly relocated Warburg Institute in London. Further, it is noteworthy that Warburg, a belated maker of memory palaces, neglects Bruno's works on mnemonics, which Yates would later write about in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) and *The Art of Memory* (1966).

13. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, 3. Gentile ghostwrote Mussolini's *A Doctrine of Fascism* (1932).

14. Warburg, WIA, GC 22284, fol. 1. When he and Warburg met, Gentile had already written *Giordano Bruno nella storia della cultura* (1907) and *Giordano Bruno e il pensiero del rinascimento* (1920) and edited Bruno's *Opere italiane* (1925). Spampanato wrote *Vita di Giordano Bruno, con documenti editi e inediti* (1921) and *Sulla soglia del Secento: Studi su Bruno, Campanella ed altri* (1926). In a 12/15/1928 letter to Saxl (WIA, GC 22286), Warburg notes that the Bruno collection was not in fact Spampanato's. See also GS, VII:394.

to propel his efforts to forge a specifically early modern, comparatist vision. Forced to wander from country to country because of his novel, heterodox ideas and impolitic, irascible personality, Bruno becomes an “antenna” for Warburg’s own “er-rant” ideas about the early modern “Denkweise.”¹⁵

Furthermore, a letter written ten days earlier to Cassirer reveals that Warburg had already begun to fuse work on *Mnemosyne* with a growing philosophical fascination for Bruno:

The work on my pictorial-historical material sets me the task, in a manner that I would never have hoped for, to struggle [auseinanderzusetzen] with High Renaissance philosophy. Here the man whose heavyweight status grows important for me is Giordano Bruno. His epistemological critique [Erkenntniskritik], which hides itself behind the symbolism of the gods’ campaign against celestial demons, is in truth a Critique of Pure Unreason [Kritik der reinen Unvernunft], which I can immediately place in a historical context with my psychological-pictorial material (*Harmony of the Spheres* 1589). This is only to announce to you that I cultivate good neighborliness [gute Nachbarschaft] with you in Rome as well.¹⁶

Here Bruno is surprisingly linked to the first of the six intermedi performed for a Medici wedding, whose designs Warburg studied in a 1895 essay.¹⁷ Contemporary with such elaborate theatrical-allegorical productions, Bruno promises to help Warburg sharpen his epistemological and “psychological” critique of Renaissance astrological symbolism and its “pure unreason.” Still more audaciously, in a 12/22/1928 *Tagebuch* entry, Warburg folds Bruno into the venerable metaphors of the *theatrum mundi*: “Giordano Bruno behandelt den Himmelsglobus wie ein Theater, in dem Logenschließer Plätze anweist, nachdem er schon die kosmischen Sphaerenschalen auf ewig zersprengt hat.” (Giordano Bruno treats the celestial globe like a theater in which the usher indicates seats after he has already exploded forever the cosmic spheres.)¹⁸ The cosmos as a “theater” is “exploded,” Warburg suggests, by Bruno’s radical *theoria*, his Lucretian atomism, and his mystical, imagistic Copernicanism.¹⁹ Likewise, the *Schale* image reappears at the end of the *Bruno* notebook to signpost the liberation from disciplinary boundaries Warburg perceives in Bruno’s cosmological thinking: “Befreiung des Kosmos von der/ Schalengrenze/ Und den monströsen Grenzwächterpersonal” (Liberation of the cosmos from spherical boundaries and monstrous border

15. For a fine biography of Bruno, see Ingrid D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher/Heretic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008).

16. Warburg, WIA, GC 19962, fol. 1.

17. See Warburg, “The Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi of 1589,” *RPA*, 349–401.

18. *GS*, VII:386.

19. Blumenberg’s *Das Lachen der Thräkerin* explores the specular metaphors associated with *theoria*.

guards).²⁰ More generally still, for reasons that will become evident below, Bruno's personality and writings indicate how Warburg might test his theoretical approach to "materials concerning historical imagery" (in *Mnemosyne*) with a specific historical, philosophical moment. In terms of method, it appears that the same metonymic principle of "gute[r] Nachbarschaft" that had fueled the K.B.W. is now to be used to bring together *Mnemosyne* and Bruno.

In an enthusiastic letter to Warburg on 12/29/1928, Cassirer casts his friend's discovery of Bruno's importance as fateful, for Warburg's comparatist approach and, implicitly, his ethos let him see beyond conventional philosophical analysis:

With special delight I have heard that you are now busying yourself with Giordano Bruno. If anyone at all is to show us the way to this remarkable man, it must be you who will succeed. The conventional history of philosophy has actually remained rather clueless until the present day in regard to him. It wavers between uncritical praise and an all-encompassing hyper-critique, which gauges Bruno with completely false measures. That here the lever must be placed in another position, and that Bruno is not to be understood or interpreted coming from merely a philosophic problematic, I have already tried to show in my account of Renaissance philosophy. But if I *saw* the knots, which present themselves here, it will be you who will be able *to untie* [*lösen*] them for us. The "Spaccio della bestia trionfante" demands a commentary, not only from the vantage point of the philosophic history of the problem [Problemgeschichte], but rather from the history of images [Bildgeschichte] and from the history of astrology as well. That we both now meet on *this* path is a special delight for me; it newly demonstrates thereby how indeed true and actual problems mock all conventional disciplinary boundaries, under which we suffer so nowadays.²¹

By insisting that the "way" to Bruno's *Spaccio* must be via such a novel, interdisciplinary "commentary," Cassirer encourages Warburg in an intellectual-historical project that at first glance seems quite contrary to the centrifugal, cartographical approach demanded by the *Bilderatlas*. Remarkably, though, Warburg almost immediately paints the two undertakings as complementary if not convergent.

On New Year's Day in Rome, Warburg dramatically portrays his encounter with Bruno as a kind of redemptive *katabasis*:

Ein trüber Regentag ohne Ausgehen . . . gewinnt durch Lektüre von Giordano Brunos heroici Furori (I) seinen hoffnungsvollen Abgesang; man muß eben durch die Katakomben der temperamentvollen Unberechenbarkeit seiner Logik der Gedan-

20. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 43.

21. Cassirer, WIA, GC 30530, fols. 3–4.

ken zu dieser überpersönlichen logischen Tapferkeit seines heliotropen Herzens durch:

“Chi quel ch’annoia et quel che mi piace”²²

A dreary, rainy day without going outside . . . redeemed through reading Giordano Bruno’s *Heroic Frenzies* (I), the hope-filled parting song. Indeed, one must [pass] through the catacombs of the temperamental unpredictability of his thinking’s logic to this supra-personal, logical daring in his heliotropic heart:

“That which vexes me and that which pleases me”

Bruno, too, is moved by polarities. His subjective “heliotropic heart” spurs objective “logical daring.” Meanwhile, busy preparing the Hertziana lecture, Warburg adopts the pathos-laden rhetoric of “Sieg und Schmerz,” and that of “heroes” and “cowards,” to describe Ghirlandaio’s frescoes, the “dynamic science” and “epic suffering” in Bruno’s writings, and implicitly his own labors.²³ For now he is trying to syncretize all his projects: *Mnemosyne*, the Hertziana lecture, the Library, and the attempt to solve the Bruno “problem.”²⁴

What is so redemptive, though, about reading Bruno? In *De gli eroici furori* (On the Heroic Frenzies) (1585), Bruno tries to renovate the nearly exhausted Petrarchist tradition of the love sonnet and *canzone* with the energy of his idiosyncratic Copernicanism and Epicureanism.²⁵ In so doing, his text imitates the philosophic dialogue (such as Leone Ebreo’s *Dialoghi d’amore*) and the poetic commentary. As for the latter, Bruno invokes as predecessors “gli mistici e cabalisti dottori” who have glossed the Song of Songs, though here it is his own and Luigi Tansillo’s

22. GS, VII:391. The Italian line comes from a poem in the first dialogue of *Gli eroici furori*. See Bruno, *Opere Italiane*, ed. Giovanni Aquilecchia (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 2002), 2:535 (except where indicated otherwise all references to Bruno’s Italian works are from this edition). The full verse reads: “Chi quel ch’annoia, et quel che mi piace / Fará lungi disgiointi, / Per gradir le mie fiamme et gli miei fonti?” It also appears in the *Bruno* notebook (fol. 18), where Warburg simply indicates the page in the *Furori* (Lagarde’s 1888 edition) where he found it. Compare Warburg’s reaction to reading *Eroici furori* with his reaction to finishing the *Spaccio*: “Ende des spaccio von ungeahnter Geschlossenheit” (GS, VII:402). Besides Bruno, he is reading Shakespeare, Beiersdorf, and the *Hypnerotomachia poliphili* (392–393). Goethe (445) and Schiller’s “Über Universalgeschichte” are also on his mind.

23. See GS, VII:395–398. The English words “heroes” and “cowards” are presented as two possible consequences of “conscience” (398).

24. So even as Bing declares in an entry spanning 1/6 to 1/11 that “GB wird weiter immer besser verstanden,” Warburg has this gnomic breakthrough about the “disposition” of the lecture: “Heute Morgen 5½ endgültige Disposition. Energetische Inversion. Magnetisierung; Auseinandertreten der Pole: Ruhe (Andacht) + flandrischem Andachtsbild und Bewegung (Triumph antiker Skulptur) bei Ghirlandajo” (GS, VII:394). In addition to this and thinking about Ovid, Poliziano, and Marino, Warburg was reading Sidney’s *Arcadia* (489–490), prompted probably by Bruno’s dedications to the Englishman.

25. See Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Frenzies*, trans. Paul Eugene Memmo Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964). I am indebted to Memmo’s lucid introduction to this hybrid work. See also Eugenio Canone and Ingrid D. Rowland, eds., *The Alchemy of Extremes: The Laboratory of the “Eroici furori” of Giordano Bruno* (Pisa: Roma: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, 2007).

neo-Petrarchist lyrics that are interpreted.²⁶ Bruno's work also may be read as a notional emblem book; some twenty-eight emblems are described in the text, though none are actually pictured—a strategy that must have intrigued Warburg. But Bruno's rhetoric reaches its acme in “seine[m] hoffnungsvollen Abgesang,” that is, the *Song of the Illuminated* (*Canzone de gl'illuminati*), an allegorical poem in which Jove represents philosophy, Neptune stands in for Nature, and Diana is at once “the sun,” the sensual queen of the nine nymphs, and a symbol of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the unity of opposites, that Bruno strives to achieve in all his works.²⁷

As for the *Bilderatlas*, which “really has made great progress,” Warburg is still struggling with its *dispositio* and its introduction.²⁸ He even toys with the idea of using the Hertziana lecture as the basis for the latter:

Der Text des Atlas wurde gefördert durch die Einleitung des Vortrages, die allerdings, wenn sie eine methodologische Einleitung des ganzen Werkes werden soll, noch bedeutende Erweiterungen erfahren muß; so muß zum Beispiel bei der Erwähnung des psychologischen Begriffs der Polarität als heuristischen Prinzips noch eine Auseinandersetzung des Gedankens von dem Wechsel zwischen Distanzsetzung und Einverleibung hinzutreten, Metapher und Tropen sowie auch der Vorstellung vom Monstrum als aufklärenden Aktes durch Umfangsbestimmung und Kausalitätssetzung.²⁹

The text of the *Atlas* ought to be supported by the lecture's introduction, which, however, if it is to be a methodological introduction to the entire work, must undergo significant amplification. Thus, for example, when the psychological concept of polarity as a heuristic principle is mentioned a discussion must follow of the intellectual struggle between embodiment and distantiation, between metaphor and trope, and of the representation of the monster as an enlightening act through determination of scope and finding of causality.

While these are familiar terms for us, here they describe the process of invention, of Warburg deciding what is most important for him to convey to a

26. Bruno, *Opere Italiane*, 2:494. Compare this with *La cena de le Ceneri*, where just before his famous if slightly ambivalent defense of Copernicanism, Bruno invokes “Mnemosine”: “E tu, Mnemosine mia, ascosta sotto trenta sigilli, e rinchiusa nel tetro carcere dell'ombre de le idee, intonami un poco ne l'orecchio” (*Opere Italiane*, 1:447).

27. *De gli eroici furori*, 2:751. For more on how *coincidentia* inform Bruno's thought, see Antonio Calcagno, *Giordano Bruno and the Logic of Coincidence: Unity and Multiplicity in the Philosophical Thought of Giordano Bruno* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); also my essay, “Coincidence of Opposites: Bruno, Calderón, and the Renaissance Drama of Ideas,” *Renaissance Drama* 36/37 (2010): 319–352.

28. *GS*, VII:398. Warburg is quoting Bing's opinion. He is also keen to incorporate the Rembrandt-Manet material into the *Atlas* (428–429).

29. *GS*, VII:399.

future readership. Indeed, he has his doubts: “Die Gefahr besteht sogar, daß dadurch das tägliche Bohrwerk am Atlas und bei Bruno den Character lastender Banausität im Halbdunkeln bekommt, was gefährlich wäre.” (The danger even arises that through the quotidian work of drilling for the *Atlas* and for Bruno character acquires a shadowy, burdensome philistinism, which would be dangerous).³⁰ Here “character,” I take it, speaks to Warburg’s ethos. For he seems worried that both the theoretical importance of the *Atlas* and the investigation into Bruno’s dynamic place in sixteenth-century thought will be obscured by too much detail (“das tägliche Bohrwerk”), detail that dangerously threatens to derail broader intuitions.

Synderesis

Such concerns are decisively answered, however, when Warburg and Bing hit upon the notion of *synderesis* in their fateful reading of the *Spaccio*:

Trotzdem wird Nachmittags durch Bruno durchgepflügt und die entscheidende Bedeutung der “Syntheresis” unverzagt (mir war auch nicht besonders) herausgekriegt. Momo als europäisches ironisches weltliches Gewissen.³¹

Despite [Bing’s stomachache], in the afternoon Bruno is plowed through and the decisive importance of “Synderesis” unflinchingly extracted (I also didn’t feel well). Momus as the European, ironic, worldly conscience.

Medical complaints aside, the essence of Warburg’s brief, belated, and thoroughly inspired encounter with Bruno is unveiled here. Indeed, adapting the scholastic notion of *synderesis* has immense implications not only for a reading of Bruno, but also for Warburg’s more general methodological and conceptual aims.

To begin with, *synderesis* informs the most significant marginalia made in the Bruno books that Warburg and Bing were reading. In Warburg’s German copy of *Gli eroici furori*, Bing marks the following passage in which Bruno glosses a figure from one of his poems: “Der ‘Oberst’ aller Triebe und Gedanken ist der menschliche Wille, er steht auf dem Hinterdeck des Lebenschiffes, mit dem Steuerruder der Vernunft lenkt er die inneren seelischen Triebe und Gefühle durch alle Wogen der äusseren Wechselfälle und Verhältnisse.” (The “colonel” of all drives and thoughts is the human will; he stands on the aft-deck of the ship of life, with reason’s rudder he steers the inner, spiritual drives and feelings through all the waves of external

30. GS, VII:400.

31. GS, VII:428.

permutations and relations.)³² Bing's annotation is "Sinteresis / siehe / ed. Gentile / II, p.13. n.2." Gentile's note on *synderesis*, in turn, glosses a passage in his edition of the *Spaccio*, from the "Explanatory Epistle," where Bruno ingeniously refigures the classical gigantomachy:

The day, then, on which is celebrated in heaven the Feast of the Gigantomachy (a symbol of the continuous war, without any truce whatsoever, which the soul wages against vices and inordinate affects), this father [i.e., Jove] wants to effectuate and define that which, for some space of time before, he had proposed and determined; just as a man, in order to change his way of life and customs, is first invited by a certain light that resides in the crow's nest, top-sail, or stern of our soul, which light is called synderesis by some, and here, perhaps, is almost always signified by Momus [che da alcuni è detto sinderesi e qua forse è significato quasi sempre per Momo].³³

Bruno then proceeds to replace the astrological images of the constellations, which symbolize vices, with abstract moral virtues; for example, the Bear is replaced by Truth, the Dragon by Prudence.³⁴ More to the point, Gentile's note, which Bing (presumably) highlights with two vertical lines, explicates how Bruno remakes the commonplace metaphor of the soul as a ship's captain by pointing to Bruno's idiosyncratic notion of conscience:

Sinderesi or sinteresi, a scholastic term (of dubious etymology) adopted to signify the conscience in the ethical-religious sense. . . . In [Bruno's] *Lampas triginta statuarum* . . . it is said of the soul, in general, that "sedet in puppi et gubernator est totius compositi, ad cuius nutum omnia moventur, vibrantur nervi et muscoli obtemperant. Est ergo quoddam velut libere agens et praesidet sui operi" [it sits at the helm and is the whole structure's pilot, at whose command all things move, nerves vibrate, and muscles obey. Thus, if you will, it is like someone acting freely and presiding over his own work].³⁵

Once primarily a moral concept occurring mainly in medieval philosophy and theology, *synderesis* becomes here for Bruno a mystical form of ethical intuition

32. This occurs in the first dialogue, sec. 3 of the *Furori*, just after the poem, which in Ludwig Kuhlenbeck's translation is found in vol. 5, p. 32 of Bruno's *Gesammelte Werke* (Leipzig, 1904–9). Gentile's edition is *Opere Italiane*, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1925). The Italian reads: "Questo 'capitano' è la volutate umana siede in poppa de l'anima, con un picciol temone de la raggione governando gli affetti d'alcune potenze inferiori, contra l'onde de gli émpiti naturali" (*Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2:533–534).

33. Giordano Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, trans. and intr. Arthur D. Imerti (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 79; Bruno, "Epistola esplicatoria," in *Lo spaccio della bestia trionfante*, in *Opere Italiane*, ed. Gentile, 2:12. The underlining also appears to be Bing's.

34. It must have caught Warburg's attention when Bruno discusses Perseus (p. 82 in Imerti's translation).

35. Bruno, "Epistola esplicatoria," in *Opere Italiane*, ed. Gentile, 2:13.

that as “conscience” or “will” can balance the competing claims of “emotion” and “reason.”³⁶ It names, in effect, that faculty guaranteeing why antique pathos formulas, with their convergence of emotion and reason, continue to have conceptual and ethical roles in the Renaissance and beyond. Indeed, Cassirer asserts as much in *Individual and Cosmos* when he underscores how *synderesis*, which mediates between an astronomical, determinist worldview and an astronomical, infinite one, produces a “heroic affect,” a “moral philosophy,” and, ultimately, a liberated “self-consciousness.”³⁷ Yet critical as well is Warburg’s qualification that such a faculty functions ironically. When he writes above, “Momo als europäisches ironisches weltliches Gewissen,” he reanimates Bruno’s satiric figure, central to the Nolan’s critique of positive religions, astrology, and the ethical and epistemological consequences that follow from these ways of interpreting the world.³⁸ The *Spaccio*, that is, offers an elaborate allegorical narrative in which Jove, who symbolizes “intellectual light,” is “subject to the Fate of Mutation” but also, as Arthur Imerti observes, “is symbolic of the crisis in the life of Renaissance man, profoundly disturbed by new religious, philosophical, and scientific ideas.”³⁹ Prompted by his conscience or *synderesis*, Jove resolves to purge the “celestial temple” of the Triumphant Beast, who represents ignorance, superstition, greed, and similar vices.⁴⁰

Yet in practice Bruno spurns any transparent allegory; instead his Lucianic dialogue maps these vices onto the forty-eight constellations of the traditional Aristotelian-Ptolemaic universe.⁴¹ With the aid of mocking Momus, Jove clears away these constellations-vices and replaces them with corresponding abstract

36. Aquilecchia glosses *synderesis*: “È a coscienza morale che guida l'uomo al bene. Il concetto ha origine nella filosofia di san Girolamo, ma è attestato (con la stessa terminologia) anche in altri Padri della Chiesa e nei Vittorini. Per san Tommaso è una nozione squisitamente morale, che corrisponde, nel dominio pratico, alla funzione dell'intelletto nel dominio teoretico. Dopo la scolastica, il concetto ritorna raramente; tra le rare occorrenze, si veda il *De visione Dei* di Cusano, il quale, diversamente da Bruno, interpreta la nozione di *sinderesi* in chiave mistica” (*Opere Italiane*, 2:186 n. 32). On fol. 30 of *Giordano Bruno* Warburg asks: “Wo findet man das System?” Then he writes: “εὐβουλεία / συνθηρεσις (?) / γνῶμιν?” which Ghelardi and Targia, in their notes (Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, 54), gloss as “the three Greek nouns of virtues [prudence, understanding, and judgment] that the author draws from Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.*, 1142b1 f., 1143a1 f., 1143a19 f.).” But Aristotle there writes of σύνεσις, not συνθηρεσις. There is also considerable material on Bruno, “synthesis,” and related questions in the *Zettelkasten Iconologie Problemen* [10].

37. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, in *GW*, 14:141–142, 217. As we shall see below, Warburg only indirectly indicates his debt to Cassirer in the matter of *synderesis*.

38. See *Opere Italiane*, 2:186 n. 33, for the figure of Momus or “Momo.” This is one of the few marginal comments (aside from some underlining and occasional lines in the margin) appearing in the German and Italian editions of Bruno that Warburg acquired in Italy. Imitating Lucian, Alberti wrote a satiric dialogue titled *Momus* (ca. 1450).

39. Imerti, introduction to Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 25.

40. Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 78–80.

41. Actually, there are only forty-six constellations, notes Spampinato, in his edition of the *Spaccio*, 46–48. See p. 79 in Imerti’s translation, where Bruno calls the “forty-eight images,” which result from this traditional division of the cosmos, “the starting point and subject of our work.”

virtues derived from an understanding of the universal, rational laws of nature.⁴² *Synderesis* thus represents an ethical as well as an epistemological faculty. It belongs also to Bruno's more general attempt to adapt Nicholas of Cusa's doctrine of the "coincidence of opposites" (*coincidentia oppositorum*). Indeed, just as the *Auseinandersetzung*prozess for Warburg typically involves juxtaposing extremes, Bruno repeatedly stages the most seemingly irreconcilable contraries.

How we interpret Warburg's appropriation of *synderesis*, therefore, depends partly on how we interpret Bruno's figurative language. Throughout the *Spaccio*, Bruno proves his deep reliance on metaphor, allegory, and other rhetorical strategies to accomplish his ethical aims. With this said, his frequently expressed, but ultimately superficial antipathy to metaphor derives from a disdain for the speechifying of mediocre rhetoricians. In the *Spaccio*'s "Explanatory Epistle," Bruno decries "the masks of the mimical and comical and histrionic Sileni" used to deceive the mob, as well as the "profuse beards and magisterial and grave togas," that is, the learned and powerful. He promises instead to write without metaphorical adornment:

Here Giordano speaks in a vulgar manner, freely designates, gives the appropriate name to whom Nature gives an appropriate being. He does not call shameful that which Nature makes worthy, does not cover that which she reveals openly. He calls bread, bread; wine, wine; the head, the head. . . . He regards miracles as miracles; acts of prowess and marvels as acts of prowess and marvels; truth as truth; doctrine as doctrine. . . . He regards workers, benefits, wise men, and heroes as the same. Come! Come! We see how this man, as a citizen and servant of the world, a child of Father Sun and Mother Earth, because he loves the world too much, must be hated, censured, persecuted, and extinguished by it. But, in the meantime, may he not be idle or badly employed while awaiting his death, his transmigration, his change.⁴³

After this eruption of pathos, scorn, and self-pity, Bruno addresses Philip Sidney, his dedicatee, and promises that his book will show "the numbered and arranged seeds of his moral philosophy."⁴⁴ Words, he then insists, neatly contradicting the protestations made moments before, are to be accommodated to his "convenience and pleasure"; indeed, he urges readers to consider the literary form of his dialogues and asks that they be read with discernment and Augustinian charity.⁴⁵ As

42. I am greatly simplifying Bruno's Baroque, digressive narrative, for Jove actually calls for a return to a pre-Socratic vision of nature, which is emblemized by the ancient Egyptian conception of nature where *natura est deus in rebus* (Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 235).

43. Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 71–72. Bruno's "true comedy" the *Candelaio* mercilessly lampoons rhetoric that obfuscates obvious realities.

44. *Ibid.*, 72. See Arielle Saiber, *Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). Saiber reads Bruno as a "poet and an architect of ideas" (1).

45. Bruno, *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, 74.

such, he promises that “you will see introduced into the present work a repented Jove, whose heaven was full to overflowing with as many beasts as vices, according to the forms of the forty-eight famous images, a Jove now consulting about banishing them from heaven, from glory and a place of exaltation, destining them, for the most part, certain regions on earth and allowing to succeed into those same seats the virtues, already for so long banished and undeservedly dispersed.”⁴⁶ Jove is then allegorized as “eternal corporeal substance” and “Intellectual Light,” which self-consciously suffers the “Fate of Mutation.” In this way, Bruno welds cosmology and a theory of matter to his ethical vision, but always with the ironic awareness that his metaphors are destined to be misinterpreted.

Back in Hamburg on 8/2/1929, Warburg writes exultantly in the *Tagebuch*:

Gestern Nachmittag Cassirer da: hörte mit deutlicher innerer Zustimmung von unserer Bruno-Reise. Und, was das erwünschteste war: Er war der “Synderesis” auch als Schlüsselwort nachgegangen und zwar in Verknüpfung mit Shakespeare. Was wollen wir mehr? Heil!

Gott im Detail!⁴⁷

Yesterday afternoon Cassirer here; heard about our Bruno journey with clear inner agreement. And, what was most desired: he went along with “synderesis” as the key-word and indeed in connection to Shakespeare. What more could we want? Hail!

God in the detail.

While Warburg never unfolds how the concept of *synderesis* might illuminate a reading of Shakespeare, in an earlier *Tagebuch* entry he compares the *Heroic Frenzies* with the “Festspiel” in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (and so implicitly also with the pageants that inspired his reading of Botticelli back in 1893).⁴⁸ One wonders, then, whether he might have in mind the dialogue between Hippolyta and Theseus at the beginning of act 5. Indeed, like Theseus, Warburg in all his projects would “apprehend / more than cool reason ever comprehends.” His “strong imagination,” too, alternates between “joy” and “fear” as he contemplates the metamorphoses of images (“How easy is a bush supposed a bear!”). And like Hippolyta, he is keen to know how mutable images might yield permanent insights:

46. Ibid.

47. GS, VII:484.

48. “Den *Furor Heroicus* zu Ende gelesen! Bravissimi. Zum Schluß Festspiel der 9 Entblindeten ganz im Stile von 1565—Kenilworth 1575—Sommernachtstraum—Emphase Be-Complimenterei der Königin Elisabeth” (GS, VII:453). In “Giordano Bruno and the Stuart Court Masques,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 48.4 (1995): 809–842, Hilary Gatti explores whether Bruno’s pagentry influenced English theatrical culture. Gatti also briefly examines Bruno’s use of and thoughts about metaphor in “Giordano Bruno and Metaphor,” in *Essays on Giordano Bruno* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 297–307.

But all the story of the night told over,
 And all their minds transfigured so together
 More witnesseth than fancy's images
 And grows to something of great constancy;
 But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Synderesis, in short, offers Warburg a way of understanding both “fancy’s images” and, just as importantly, “minds transfigured” by such images.

In April, while still in Rome, Warburg and Bing meet with Benedetto Croce, who, while inspired by the motto “Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail,” proves less interested in “das bildhafte Element.”⁴⁹ (As we apprise Warburg’s affinities and antipathies to neo-Hegelian *Geistesgeschichte*, it is worth noting that in discussing his intellectual projects with Croce and Gentile he is meeting with and effectively rebuffed by the two most influential Italian Hegelians of the period.) Undissuaded, Warburg and Bing reportedly make a *Tafel* about “Radinus—Bruno—Sacchi.” Andrea Sacchi (1599–1661) was an Italian Baroque painter, whose allegorical ceiling fresco of divine wisdom at the Villa Barberini explains why Warburg includes him in this trio. Thomas Radinus Todischus (Tommaso Radini Tedeschi) was a Dominican friar, opponent of Luther, author of the *Sideralis abyssus* (1514), and the “model,” Warburg believed, for Bruno’s cosmographical imagery. And though neither the panel nor photographs of it are extant, it marks the first, if premature effort to figure Bruno’s place in the *Atlas*. Indeed, soon after the meeting with Croce, Warburg and Bing travel to Naples to deepen and confirm their intuitions about Bruno.⁵⁰ Their discoveries there and in Capua are recounted in a long letter, dated 5/21/1929, to the K.B.W.⁵¹

The letter closely links their interest—now archaeological and art-historical as well as conceptual—in Bruno, and their itinerary in Italy, with the completion of *Mnemosyne*. It begins triumphantly:

Mein Widerstand gegen eine Rückkehr aus Italien, che ich Neapel besucht haben würde, war, wie es sich hier zeigt, wirklich berechtigt; denn in der kurzen Zeit des Hierseins haben wir, den Weg verfolgend, der von Anfang an vorgezeichnet war, die Ausdruckswerte des imaginären Auf-und Abstieges in den Tiefen ihres kultlichen Praegewerkes kennenzulernen in einer Gründlichkeit durchführen können, auf der ich nicht mehr zu hoffen wagte.

Man könnte, wenn man etwa an einer affektierten Parallele Freude hätte, von unserer Reise sagen, sie wäre eine Expedition zu den unbekannten Quellen des Heliotropismus gewesen. Rimini: der Aufstieg der Sonne, Sol als Planet im Wagen

49. GS, VII:446.

50. GS, VII:448.

51. Warburg, WIA, GC 25005.

auffahrend, Apollo mit der Leier, als der Urkapellmeister des Kosmos und Jupiter Heliopolitanus als Kombination von Licht—und Weltregiment. Dann in Perugia Beginn der Lektüre des “Spaccio” in der Hoffnung, einen antibildhaft gestimmten radikalen Fanatiker der Abstraktion zu finden, während er auf ganz ergreifende Weise mit dem eidolon verhaftet bleibt. Durch die in Rom erfolgte Entdeckung des Radinus (mit Hilfe der K.B.W.!) lässt sich jetzt genau der psychische Ort bestimmen, wo seine Paralogik die Brücke bildet zwischen der Welt des Ptolemaeus und des Copernicus—Kepler.⁵²

My resistance to returning from Italy before I was able to visit Naples was, as is confirmed here, truly justified. Because in the brief time of being here we have, following the path that was from the outset preordained, been able to get to know and realize the expressive values of the imaginary ascent and descent in the depths of their cultish, stamped works with a thoroughness for which I had no longer dared to hope.

One could say of our journey—if one delights in a somewhat affected parallel—that it was an expedition to heliotropism’s unknown sources. Rimini: the rising of the sun, *sol* as the planet in the ascending chariot, Apollo with the lyre, as the *Urkapellmeister* of the cosmos, and Jupiter Heliopolitanus as combination of light and authority over the world. Then in Perugia beginning to read the *Spaccio* in the hope of finding an antipictorial, radical fanatic of abstraction, while in fact he remains bound to the *eidolon* in an entirely gripping manner. The subsequent discovery in Rome of Radinus (with the K.B.W.’s help!) now permits the exact psychological place to be determined where its paralogic depicts a bridge between the world of Ptolemy and that of Copernicus-Kepler.

Why, though, is Radinus the immediate solution to the historical “problem” spurring them to undertake their melodramatic “Expedition zu den unbekannten Quellen des Heliotropismus”—that is, less colorfully, to Naples and then Capua?⁵³ Months earlier, Warburg intuited (drawing on his earlier work on astrological images in sixteenth-century Germany and in the Schifanoia frescoes) that Radinus was the *begriffsgeschichtliche* link between a first-century text by the mythographer Hyginus and Bruno, and therefore also the solution to the problem of how certain cosmological images migrated and were transformed from antiquity to the late Renaissance. The Dominican Radinus, that is, had relied on Thomist thought (and thus, arguably, *synderesis*) in his attempt to allegorize Hyginus’s globe.⁵⁴ Warburg writes in *Giordano Bruno*:

52. Ibid., fol. 1. Compare with Mann, who quotes at length from Warburg’s 3/6/1929 letter to Toni Cassirer, a letter that confirms the “almost allegorical nature of his Italian journey” (“*Denkenergetische Inversion*,” 33).

53. See also GS, VII:456 (entries from 5/17/1929 and 5/19/1929).

54. See Mann, “*Denkenergetische Inversion*,” 31.

Thomas Radinus, *Sideralis Aby(ssus)* 1514 Paris. Dieser Dominikaner versucht den Globus des Hygin nach thomistischem System zu moralisieren unter Einbeziehung der antiken Harmonielehre und der orientalischen Mediation d. Antiken Globus. Dieser optimistische reformierende Vorfahre Brunos! ob das Buch des Radinus im Besitz v. G. Br. war?⁵⁵

Thomas Radinus, *Sideralis Aby(ssus)* 1514 Paris. This Dominican attempts to moralize Hyginus's globe according to the Thomistic system, taking into account the ancient doctrine of harmony and the oriental mediation of the ancient globe. This optimistic, reforming ancestor of Bruno! Whether Radinus's book was in Bruno's possession?

Characteristically, it is only after his epiphany that he pauses to ask whether there is any decisive evidence that Bruno read Radinus's *Sideralis abyssus*, a copy of which, a letter from Saxl informs him, was bought for the K.B.W. in 1910. Intuition, in brief, here trumps philology.

Given this lack of definitive proof, how does Bruno's "paralogic" promise the syncretic solution for which Warburg so passionately yearns? As his exorbitant language suggests, the entire Italian journey had become a kind of pilgrimage toward an *Auseinandersetzung* with Bruno. Initially, "in Perugia," reading the satiric *Spaccio* with its mockery of the pagan gods and the vices they represented, Warburg regarded Bruno simply as an enemy of astrological imagery. Upon closer inspection, however, Bruno proved no iconoclast, but rather a subtle thinker who "auf ganz ergreifende Weise mit dem eidolon verhaftet bleibt." In short, instead of wanting to destroy these "simulacra," Bruno heroically—and Warburg never fails to stress his heroism—tries to reform them, to make them, if you will, more dialectical. Now, though, Warburg and Bing are in Naples, where they visit the Carafa Chapel at San Domenico Maggiore, the church where Bruno as a young Dominican friar struggled with his nascent cosmological and ethical ideas. There they find "frescoes with astrological and zodiacal motifs" confirming the benighted context out of which Bruno's novel Copernicanism arose.⁵⁶

On the same day San Domenico in Naples is visited, they travel to Capua to see the Mithraeum there. (The close metonymy of these sacred places with their historical distance but thematic affinities nicely mirrors how the *Atlas* functions spatially and temporally.) To interpret this journey, it is important to know that the "Mithraic cult is closely linked to the Sun, therefore to the ascent: Mithra is the protector of justice and of law, of livestock and of just men, and his original

55. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 29 (12/22/1928).

56. Mann, "Denkenergetische Inversion," 34; though Bruno is said to have removed from his cell all religious images save a cross.

personality also has cosmogonical and soteriological connotations.”⁵⁷ Associating Mithra with Phaeton and so also with Bruno’s heliotropism, Warburg revels at the chance in Capua “die Ausdruckswerte des imaginären Auf- und Abstieges in den Tiefen ihres kultlichen Praegewerkes kennen zu lernen” (to become familiar with the expressive values of the imaginary ascent and descent into the depths of their cultic, minted works). The letter then details, somewhat comically at times, their visit to the Mithras cave-shrine. Because both he and Bing were short enough to climb down into the opening afforded by a manhole cover, and because “a woman from the neighborhood . . . brings [them] an acetylene torch,”⁵⁸ they are able to discover the cult’s colorful, sanguinary origins. What Warburg learns in that underground space speaks directly to the agonistic struggle with polarities shaping his own psychology:

Wir haben es jetzt erfahren, wie tief im opferblut-durchtränkten Boden die Erlösungsreligiösität der römischen Legionäre wurzelte. . . . Die qualvollen und gefährlichen Einweihungsriten . . . sind in farbigen Figuren (was bisher an keinem Monument zu erkennen war) dargestellt. Der Grundgedanke ist bei all diesen Mysterien derselbe: Du warst getötet und erstandest wieder zum Leben.⁵⁹

We have now experienced how deeply the redemptive religiosity of the Roman legion took root in the thoroughly-soaked-in-sacrificial-blood earth. . . . The painful and perilous initiation rites . . . are depicted in colorful figures (which earlier were not recognizable on any monument). The basic idea is the same in all these mysteries: you were killed and brought back again to life.

This last phrase recalls the one a younger Warburg would address directly to the monstrous or demonic element haunting him: “Du lebst und tust mir nichts.” Now, though, he has displaced his own *psychomachia* onto the figure of Bruno, who offers him a Neoplatonic “psychagogia” in return:

In Ostia sind vorne an Stelle der Ordalien Zodiakalfiguren und auf der Sternwand Planetensymbole zu sehen.⁶⁰ Hier also war der Kampf mit der “bestia trionfante” am Himmel noch eine persönliche energetische Leistung, voll von wirklichen Gefahren und umstrickt von dämonischen Schreckhaftigkeiten erschütternter Art. Der Sternkunst des Hygin dagegen, mit dem sich G. Bruno auseinanderzusetzen hatte, trug den durch wohltemperierte Weltweisheit geordneten Charakter eines Orientierungswerkzeuges, unter den Händen der Astronomen war er eine

57. Ghelardi, introduction to Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, ed. Ghelardi and Targia, 21.

58. I take this pregnant phrase from the account of the visit in the *Tagebuch* (GS, VII:456).

59. Warburg, WIA, GC 25005, fols. 2–3.

60. Ostia is the port city for Rome. It has an underground Mithraeum whose mosaics and wall paintings are still partially extant.

kartographische Ortsanweisung für Gestirnerscheinungen geworden. Die revoltierende Scheu vor dem widerwärtig-dämonischen Wesen der antiken Sternnamen spricht dennoch aus jedem Wort des "Spaccio", der ein Katechismus für Aufständische gegen das Regime der monstra am Himmel ist und bleibt. Die Klosterbibliothek der Dominikaner, die der junge Mönch (geb. 1548, in Kloster eingetreten ca. 1563) vorfand, wird ausser dem Radinus gewiss auch eine Hyginillustration enthalten haben.

Unser Besuch in Neapel brachte der Mnemosyne als ueberraschend sinngemässes Abschiedsgeschenk den Nachweis eines monumentalen Engrammvermittlers solcher heidnischer Monstra-Sphaera aus der nächsten Umwelt G. Bruno's. . . . Wenn auch vom rein wissenschaftlichen Standpunkt aus der Nachweis eines derart wuchtigen Einprägers nicht mehr nötig war, so ist dieser doch für die Aufklärungs Psychagogie, die unter meiner Leitung in der K.B.W. unbedingte Evidenz anstreben muss, ganz unschätzbar, wenn es sich bei der in ihren konstitutiven Elementen so unerfassbaren Persönlichkeit (wie der G. Bruno's) die Funktion paganer Vorprägung aus dem Halbdunkel mnemisch zurückgesunkener Erinnerungsbilder so überzeugend und einfach wieder ans Tageslicht herausstellen lässt.

. . . Jedenfalls dürfen wir beim Abschluss unser Expedition sagen, dass der Gehorsam dem Problem gegenüber sich als Grundlage einer wachstumsfähigen Gemeinschaftsarbeit, objektiv leuchtend und subjektiv ermunternd, erwiesen und überraschend bewährt hat.⁶¹

In Ostia there can be seen zodiac figures in front of the place of ordeals and symbols of planets on the wall of stars. But here the celestial battle with the "bestia trionfante" was still an individual, energetic achievement, full of real dangers and woven throughout with demonic terrors of the most horrifying kind. By contrast, Hyginus's celestial art, with which G. Bruno had to wrestle, bore, through well-tempered wisdom, the ordered character of an orientation instrument, and became in astronomers' hands a cartographic indicator of position for stellar phenomena. The rebellious awe before the repellent-demonic nature of the antique star names speaks still in every word of the *Spaccio*, which is and remains a catechism for those rebelling against the regime of the *monstra* in the heavens. The Dominican cloister library, which the young monk (born 1548, joined the cloister ca. 1563) found, would besides Radinus certainly also have contained a Hyginus illustration.

Our visit to Naples gave to *Mnemosyne*, as a surprising, fitting farewell gift, proof of a monumental mediator of engrams of such pagan *monstra*-spheres from G. Bruno's immediate surroundings. . . . Although proof of such a weighty engraver was no longer necessary from a purely scientific standpoint, nonetheless, this is for the Enlightenment psychagogia, which under my leadership at the K.B.W. has to strive for

61. Warburg, WIA, GC 25005, fols. 3–4.

unconditional evidence, quite priceless, if the function of the pagan pre-stamping of mnemonic, backward-sunken images of memory can be recovered so convincingly and simply, in daylight and far from the shadows in a personality (like Bruno's) whose constitutive elements are so inexplicable.

. . . In any case we may say, as our expedition concludes, that obedience to the problem has proven itself and stood the test of time surprisingly well, in an objectively illuminating and personally exhilarating way, [and] as the basis for a collaboration capable of prospering.

In this manner Bruno, with his “wohltemperierte[r] Weltweisheit,” not only provides a glimpse of a new solution for the problem of word and image, but Warburg regards him as an archetypal figure who heroically, ethically, and, in the end, tragically dedicates his life to taming astrological superstition and associated monstrous imagery. Briefly put, Warburg finds in San Domenico and Capua the empirical proof for the theoretical claims he wants to make palpable, visible in *Mnemosyne*. Not only is he somehow now certain that the library at Bruno's cloister possessed a copy of *Sideralis abyssus*, but, like the “fruchtkorbtragende Mädchen,” aka *Eilsiebringitte*, their Italian journey, with its obsession with Bruno, brings a gift to *Mnemosyne*, their capacious, imperfect, ever-mutating atlas of images.⁶²

Warburg's fugal writing on this convergence of figures and projects in the *Bruno* notebook is, however, anything but “well-tempered.” As he tries to bring together the Bruno and Mithras themes, he suffers characteristic centrifugality. The sanguinary Mithras cult evokes points of comparison ranging from Athena, Osiris, Dante, Botticelli, Titian, Burckhardt, Raphael, Comenius, and Michelangelo.⁶³ But for all this Warburg still intuitively brings Bruno closer to the underground scenes in Capua:

Das Monstrum als
Lichtsymbol
Erleuchtungs-
Die gegabelte Wünschelrute
bog sich auf Neapel nieder
G. B. nach S. Domenico—Hygin
A. W. nach Capua—Heliotropismus
u. Trionfo della notte.⁶⁴

62. In the penultimate folio of the *Bruno* notebook, written before they had traveled to Naples, Warburg treats Bruno, too, as a *bearer* of meaning: “Was bringt Bruno mehr / als Cusa? / den Glauben an d. / Zweckmäßigkeit des / hingerissenen Denkens? / der docta Ignorantia / des Furor?”

63. See Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fols. 1–8. His main authority seems to be Friedrich Behn, *Das Mithrasheiligtum zu Dieberg* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928).

64. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 9.

The *monstrum* as
 light symbol
 of illumination
 The forked dowsing rod
 bent down toward Naples
 G. B. to S. Domenico—Hyginus
 A. W. to Capua—heliotropism
 and Trionfo della notte.

Like a “dowsing rod,” Bing and Warburg literally, geographically part ways to gather evidence even as they converge metaphorically. Another formulation slightly untangles this chiasmus and provides a stronger hint of psychological or spiritual redemption:

An einem Tage: Spaccio delle Tenebre
 durch das äußere (Mithras) zu innerem (Giordano Br.) Licht.⁶⁵

On one day: Spaccio delle Tenebre
 through the external (Mithras) to the internal (Giordano Br.) light.

This “external” pagan world is a familiar one to Warburg. Recalling his visit decades earlier to see the Hopi rituals in the American Southwest, he writes:

Wie in der Khiva zu Oraibi 1896
 stieg G. B. die Leiter herunter in d.
 Mysterienraum.
 “Das Blut des Stieres riecht gut”
 sagte d. Malicieva in S. Ildefonso⁶⁶

As in the kiva at Oraibi 1896
 G. B. climbed down the ladder into the
 chamber room.
 “The steer’s blood smells good”
 Malicieva said in San Ildefonso

But now, in a dizzying bit of syncreticism, instead of La Malinche (whom Warburg mistakes as “Malicieva”), it is Bing (or Bruno) who explores the “Mysterienraum,”

65. Ibid., fol. 11.

66. Ibid., fol. 9.

while it is the Hopis who slaughter the Mithraic bull.⁶⁷ And, because of Warburg's own theoretical "Heliotropismus" and Bruno's example, paganism's shadowy world need not threaten anyone's "Besonnenheit":

Der Akt der heroisch-erotischen Hingabe an das Chaos und die Hyle
der schöpferischer Urakt der Denkraum schaffenden Besonnenheit.⁶⁸

The act of heroic-erotic inclination toward chaos and the *hyle*;
the formative, originary act of the thought-space creating prudent wisdom.

This is because Bruno was of all Renaissance thinkers best able to internalize and thereby mediate cosmic forces:

Die polare Funktion
der Antike in mikrokosmischen Ideenwelt
Giordano Brunos.⁶⁹

The polar function
of antiquity in Giordano Bruno's
microcosmic world of ideas.

In more symbolic terms, the figures of Perseus and Actaeon emblemize this "polar function" as it is sketched in the *Bruno* notebook.⁷⁰ Warburg, in brief, identifies psychologically and conceptually with these figures. Perseus exemplifies the spurned lover and the ethical hero who defeats the monstrous, while Actaeon represents the perils of the scopic realm and erotic *furor*, especially when it lacks any mediating form. That Bruno dedicates an entire chapter of the *Heroic Frenzies* (part 1, dialogue 4) to explicating and allegorizing Actaeon's fateful encounter with Diana

67. The Matachines Dance at San Ildefonso featured La Malinche (Cortés's translator and concubine), El Monarca (Moctezuma), and El Toro. In *The Matachines Dance: Ritual Symbolism and Inter-ethnic Relations in the Upper Río Grande Valley* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), Sylvia Rodríguez summarizes the dance's syncretic origins: "Most scholars agree that the Matachines dance derives from a genre of medieval European folk drama symbolizing conflict between Christians and Moors, brought to the New World by the Spaniards as a vehicle for Christianizing the Indians. Iberian elements merged with aboriginal forms in central Mexico, and the syncretic complex was transmitted to Indians farther north, including the Río Grande Pueblos, probably via Mexican Indians who accompanied the Spanish colonizers" (2).

68. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 41.

69. *Ibid.*, fol. 42. Both this and the previously quoted entry occur in a section of the notebook titled "Psychologie" (fol. 40).

70. See Mann, "Denkenergetische Inversion," 31–33. Warburg evokes Perseus in fols. 7, 27, 31, 32, 33 and Actaeon in fols. 38, 39. Perseus also figures in a loose sheet between fols. a and 1 that reads like a subtitle for the notebook: "Giordano Bruno. / Auffahrt 1929 / (Mithras, Rimini, Perseus)."

does not escape Warburg's attention. In one of the notebook's most puzzlingly syncretic passages, Warburg writes:

In d. Er. Fur. an die Stelle gek. wo Aktæon als Erbeuter d. Beute
d. denkenden Einsamkeit wird.
"ward je in solcher Laun ein Weib gewonnen?"
Trick des Ergriffenen:
Aus dem griech. höllischen Zurückwandler
in das animalische
aus dem vor dem Feind bebenden Fürchtling (d. Semiten)
formt der Nolaner phobische
Uraction zur Sophrosyne um.
"Spaccio della bestia (in Fuge)"
(paurosa)⁷¹

Reached the place in the *Eroici furori* where Actæon becomes plunderer of the plunder
of thinking solitude.
"Was ever woman in this humour won?"
Ploy of the deeply moved:
Out of the Greek infernal migrant
returning from the bestial,
out of the one frightfully trembling (the Semites) before the enemy,
the Nolan transforms the phobic
originary action into Sophrosyne.
"Spaccio della bestia (fleeing)"
(paurosa)

Whereas Bruno, to create a *Denkraum* for his ethical and cosmological ideas, portrays himself as Actæon in his neo-Petrarchist, allegorical text, Warburg conceives of Bruno's metaphors in terms of the struggle that he first traces in Florentine quattrocento art, which tried "to internalize as spirit the hereditary mass of phobic engrams" (die Erbmasse phobischer Engramme einzuverseelen), and which he will later discover in the history of astrology—a struggle he never ceases to see as reflected in his personal fate. Threatened, too, by "contemplative solitude" and the immanent specter of bestial forces, Warburg here metonymically remakes Bruno's *Spaccio* to fit his own condition. Just as Ghirlandaio, Mantegna, Kepler, and the nymph in *Mnemosyne* are viewed as spanning, giving form to, and thus somewhat

71. *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 38. A *Tagebuch* entry employs many of the same phrases albeit to paint a slightly different vision (GS, VII:457).

resolving the conceptual and psychological tensions riddling Western culture, Bruno becomes emblematic of another but related form of *translatio*: a flight from shadowy fear toward a heroic “Auffahrt.”

Yet Warburg also transforms Bruno’s *Umformung* of bestial, chthonic imagery into a species of “Sophrosyne” marked by real ambivalence. Descent, flight, and fear are dominant themes, while his erotic question (“Was ever woman in this humour won?”)—strangely borrowed from a gloating, duplicitous Richard, Duke of York, and referring to Lady Anne, whose husband Richard has murdered (*Richard III*, 1.2)—remains unanswered.⁷² On a symbolic level, though, while Warburg identifies with Actaeon’s plight as described in the *Furori*—he even transcribes a passage from part 2, dialogue 1 where “l’affetto intiero del furioso sia ancipite, diviso, travaglioso” (the inner affection of the frenzied one is amphibious, divided, afflicted)—he clearly anticipates a metamorphic redemption.⁷³ Citing (but not quoting) two other passages from the *Furori*, he would illustrate the “Verwandlung des Aktaeons als Akt d. intuition u. gänzlicher Hingabe an die Schau” (transformation of Actaeon as intuitive act and as total devotion to the gaze).⁷⁴ This “transformation” is synonymous with what we have seen Warburg figure as the creation of “metaphoric distance”; it signals the possibility of “reformation,” of “moralized gods,” and that the imagery of Ovid, Fulgentius, Virgil, and Hyginus can be subtly *moralisée*.⁷⁵ What Bruno truly confirms for Warburg is how such moralization and the “abstraction” resulting from it can remain intuitively tethered to the chaotic, vital realm of sensation: “magische monströse / Concretion umgedeutet / zu intuitiv-geistiger / Abstraktion” (magical monstrous concretion given new meaning as intuitive-mental abstraction).⁷⁶ Considering in the *Tagebuch* “Tragödie der Heliotropie” and “Religiöse Leidenschaft,” and how they are common to Greek and Judaic thought, Warburg returns again to Jean Paul’s dictum:

Und mit “claratio” auf “einen Stamm geimpfet” der Absturz: Phaeton (den abgestürzten Sonnensohn) den Mithras überwindet prägt die Formen des Seelensturzes bei Michelangelo vor wie es sich andererseits es die römische kaiserliche Tropaion gefallen lassen muß zum Schandpfahl und Märtyrerinstrument zu werden. . . . Energetische Inversion kat’exochen.⁷⁷

72. Mann, “*Denkenergetische Inversion*,” 33. Mann suggests that Warburg was worried that Bruno would become a “Galeotto” for him and Bing.

73. Bruno, *Heroic Frenzies*, 203.

74. *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 39. The indicated passages are part 1, dialogue 4 (*Opere Italiane*, 2:596) and part 2, dialogue 2 (2:695–696).

75. A chart on fol. 28 offers a genealogy of how these classical voices are “moralized.”

76. *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 39.

77. GS, VII:457. The phrase *kat’exochen* is frequently found in descriptions of the “unique” or “pre-eminent” qualities of the divine.

And with the [*de*]claratio “grafted onto one branch,” the crash: Phaeton (the fallen son of the sun) whom Mithras overcomes, pre-stamps the forms of crashing souls in Michelangelo, like, *mutatis mutandi*, the Roman imperial *tropaion* [trophy] must acquiesce in becoming the pillory and a martyr-making device. . . . *kat'exochen* [preeminent] energetic inversion.

Thus *Logos* and *Mythos* (to recall Jean Paul's terms) are metaphorically “grafted” together in lapsarian imagery heralding a synchronic, ever-repeating “Absturz.”

As a *Tagebuch* entry made at 1:30 in the morning of 5/9/1929 indicates, even before he and Bing visited San Domenico and Capua, Warburg had enthusiastically found the theoretical basis for his empirical, Brunian discoveries. He writes elliptically:

Beiderseitiger Müdigkeit abgerungene Bruno-Lektüre führt zur magnifiken Aussicht ins weiteste: der Jäger Aktaeon wird (*Eroici Furori*) in die seelische Beute der inneren Schau verwandelt: das heißt:

die höllische griechische magische Ichzerstörende Verwandlung

und die

in elender Verzweiflung vor dem Feinde erbebende semitische Flucht: (Psalm 55 (54) 8):

“Ecce elongari fugiens et mansi in solitudine.”

Diese phobischen Monstra durch den Nolanischem im Norden gestählten Luther!! Marcello Palingenio Josanawillen zum Stehen gebracht die Sonne der Vernunft. (Synderesis!) der innere Heliotropismus entspricht dem Kopernikanischen System.

A Bruno reading wrested from mutual tiredness leads to a magnificent, most far-seeing outlook: the hunter Actaeon is transformed (*Eroici Furori*) into the spiritual spoils of introspection: this means:

the infernal, Greek, magical self-destroying transformation

and the

trembling Semitic flight in wretched despair before the enemy: (Psalm 55:7):

“Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.”

These phobic *monstra* through the Nolanistic in the northern, steely Luther!! Marcello Palingenio's will of Joshua brought to a standstill the sun of reason. (Synderesis!) the inner heliotropism corresponds to the Copernican system.

To which Bing adds:

Sehr schön. Hier zeigt sich wieder die Angemessenheit “unserer” Begriffsbildung als Instrument zum Verstehen von Brunos spezifischer Denkform, deren Charakterist-

isches dem verschlossen bleiben muß, der mit rein philosophischer Terminologie an ihn herangeht.⁷⁸

Well said. Here the pertinence of “our” concept-formation distinguishes itself again as the instrument for understanding Bruno’s specific form of thought, whose characteristic element must remain locked to whomever approaches him with purely philosophic terminology.

“Synderesis!” is thus confirmed as the solution to the “problem” raised by Cassirer, or how Copernicanism might be synthesized with the pagan tradition promoting “höllische griechische magische Ichzerstörende” imagery. Here it offers, too, an ethical solution that reconciles the drive for “innere Heliotropismus” with science’s progress. For all their idiosyncrasy and unacknowledged debts to Cassirer, then, Warburg’s insights are significant because they refuse to be tied solely to art-historical or philosophical questions, to the image or the word, but would be, as he phrases it in the letter above, “objektiv leuchtend und subjektiv ermunternd.” In this way also exegesis becomes *Verdichtung*.

Indeed, the theory adumbrated in the introduction to *Mnemosyne*, which seeks to explain the dynamics of an art-historical, cosmological *Denkraum* in which “conscious creation of distance” is won and lost, and which Warburg is refining during these months in Italy, may be said to succeed with his attempt to understand Bruno’s cosmology and its relation to symbolic images.⁷⁹ As for the latter, Actaeon again plays an exemplary role. In a *Tagebuch* entry from 5/10/1929, Warburg muses:

Der Desperado-Akt des Heroischen im Kampfe um den Denkraum ist deshalb par excellence: Giordano Brunos Anschmieden des von Menschentum erlösten Aktæon-Hirsches als Beobachter an den Felsen vernünftigen Bewußtseins.

Die willentliche Umkehr des an das denkraumlose Chaos verlorenen Animal’s in ein distanzschaffendes Symbolon—dies ein Akt der Kultur katexochen. Das Symbol funktioniert immer als ein energetischer Umschalter.⁸⁰

78. GS, VII:451. This entry reworks many of the same elements as found in the entry from the *Bruno* notebook (fol. 38) discussed just above. Bruno cites the quote from the Psalms in part 2, dialogue 2 of the *Eroici furori*, where he offers an elaborate, Neoplatonic, allegorical exegesis of the myth of Diana and Actaeon wherein seeing and being seen, hunting and being hunted, transforms the heroic thinker. See Bruno, *Heroic Frenzies*, 226.

79. For more of Warburg’s thoughts on the progress of the *Atlas*, see GS, VII:437, 454, 462, 467, 510, 513, 519, 521, 543, and 547. On p. 505, for instance, Warburg muses: “Eigentlicher, esoterischer Titel für die Mnemosyne: / Transformatio energetica / (als) Forschungsobjekt und Eigenfunktion / einer vergleichend historischen Symbol Bibliothek: / [[das Symbol als katalytische Quintessenz]].”

80. GS, VII:452.

The heroic man's desperado act in the battle for the thought-space is thus par excellence: Giordano Bruno's forging of the Actaeon-stag that is redeemed from being human as observer on the cliffs of rational consciousness.

The deliberate reversion of an animal lost in a chaos without thought-space to a distance-creating symbol—this is the preeminent [*kataxochen*] cultural act. The symbol always functions as an energetic toggle switch.

Besides refining here the notions of distance and inversion, Warburg seems to play with the etymological notion of the symbol as a "link" to connect the realms of "rational consciousness" and "chaos." Yet also underscored are the dangers—dismemberment, death, and "das denkraumlose Chaos"—that accompany the failure to achieve such metaphoric acts. The "Sinnbild" offered by Bruno's Actaeon-stag who turns his gaze away from the world to ponder more spiritual matters is a paradigmatic one for Warburg. It enables him to join the Mithras cult and the Sistine Chapel, the history of art and history of philosophy, in one syncretic view. And from Bing it earns him "Bravo. wunderbare Zusammenfassung" (Bravo. Wonderful summary).⁸¹

This is also to say that Warburg's, or rather Warburg's and Bing's, interpretation of Bruno confirms more generally the power of their theoretical approach to intellectual history. Just after their return to Hamburg, they pen this dialogue in a *Tagebuch* entry on 8/5/1929:

Warburg: Die Sphaera barbarica ist als Führer—gegen ihren Willen—zum spaccio della bestia trionfante aufzufassen. Indem sie durch Ueberbefruchtung des Globus mit bildhaft wucherndem Sternenklein diesen als stereometrisch zu reichendes Versuchsinstrument zerstört, und ihn in einen hieroglyphisch illustrierten Wahrsage-Kalender-Streifen verflächt, schafft sie den unendlichen Raum als Tummelplatz atomistischer gesetzlicher Eigendynamik um.

Bing: Ganz hervorragend guter, klarer, überzeugender Gedanke, dessen unmittelbare Evidenz Kriterium seiner Richtigkeit zu sein scheint. Interessant, wie hier einer der Grundbegriffe der exakten modernen Wissenschaft nicht aus der Traditionslinie des rationalen, sondern gerade des monströs-kausalen Denkens kommt. (NB. Wind möchte gern, daß der Giordano Bruno als Aufsatz geschrieben wird und vorweggenommen publiziert wird.)

Warburg: "*denkenergetische*" *Inversion*! Gut gemacht, College Bing!⁸²

Warburg: The *Sphaera barbarica* can be considered as a guide—against its will—to the *Spaccio della bestia trionfante*. For it destroys the globe as a stereometrically

81. GS, VII:457–458.

82. GS, VII:488. The Aesthetics Congress was to take place in Hamburg in 1931 and was organized by Cassirer. Heidegger was also slated to participate.

sufficient instrument by overfecundating it with rampant celestial imagery, and it flattens the globe into hieroglyphic, illustrated, fortune-telling Almanac-Calendar gores; it transforms infinite space into a playground of atomistic, lawful momentum.

Bing: What excellent, good, clear, persuasive thinking, the direct evidence for which seems to be the criterion of its correctness. Interesting how here one of the basic concepts of exact modern science comes not from the traditional lineage of reason, but rather from monstrous-causal thought. (N.B. Wind would very much like for the Giordano Bruno to be written as an article and for it to be published in advance [of the lecture].)

Warburg: "*An energetic thought-inversion!* Well done, colleague Bing!

If astrology transforms the globe into a "Sphaera barbarica" whose "Ueberbefruchtung" of zodiacal images or hieroglyphs "destroys" the possibility of it becoming a tool, a "Versuchsinstrument" for scientific contemplation, it also furnishes a *Denkraum* in which a thinker like Bruno can explore his syncretic brand of atomism ("Tummelplatz atomistischer gesetzlicher Eigendynamik"). Yet as striking as this intellectual-historical insight is, perhaps still more telling is how Bing generously translates Warburg's gnomic language in a manner that both clarifies and advances his ideas. This is to say that Warburg's achievements in Italy, such as they are, depend greatly on Bing's assistance and inspiration. Warburg's discoveries are partially Bing's as well. Colleague Bing, aka Bingia, Bingius, and Bingio, plays the supporting roles of Warburg's memory, muse, hermeneut, and (notional) nymph.⁸³

In other words, Warburg often portrays his attachment to Bing in metaphoric terms. We saw above where he describes himself and Bing as a "dowsing rod"; this is ingeniously amplified in a *Tagebuch* entry describing their visit to the Mithraeum in Capua: "Gertrud Bing und ich funktionieren—rückblickend—wie eine zwiefach gegabelte Wünschelrute die sich im Pneuma . . . neigt, sobald sich in der Sphäre der bildhaften Prägung Zwang 'ad inferos' in die Tiefe oder 'Raptus in Coelum' kündet (offenbart)." (Gertrud Bing and I function—in retrospect—like a forked dowsing rod that slopes in the pneuma as soon as the compulsion "ad inferos" toward the depths or "raptus in coelum" announces itself in the pictorial sphere.)⁸⁴ Moreover, if the figures of Gertrud Bing and Giordano Bruno begin to converge in Warburg's mind—the notebook *Giordano Bruno* has a photograph of Warburg and Bing taken during their "Bruno-Reise" on each inside cover, and both are referred to as "G.B."—there are conceptual as well as psychological motives for this. In the 12/3/1928 letter to Cassirer, Warburg writes:

83. These are some of the monikers that appear in the *Tagebuch*. On Bing, see the Festschrift *Gertrud Bing, 1892–1964* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1965).

84. *GS*, VII:457.

Fräulein Bing is a great help to me because she managed, more than a year ago, to delve into the details of art-historical sources. Now she understands immediately the nuances of sources in word and image, takes delight in this, and makes it easier for me to finish up with my material. Surely, without her help I would not have contemplated actively approaching again my old stock of memories [an meine alten Erinnerungsbestände].⁸⁵

Besides confirming that his return to the same "material," after his breakdown and subsequent stay in Kreuzlingen, had become an act of personal and cultural memory for him, here we see how the ever-present, always solicitous, often dialectical Bing plays the muselike role of Mnemosyne in Warburg's *ars inveniendi*.⁸⁶

In this last figurative sense, Bing assumes in connection with the Bruno material the role that the nymph plays elsewhere in Warburg's thought. As we saw earlier, prompted first by Jolles in the late 1890s, he makes the Nympha a constant, central element in his combinatory thought. She continues to function both as exemplum and inspiration for further invention when Warburg and Bing are in Italy and after their return to Hamburg. Again, central to this function is how, despite or probably because of her deceptively marginal status, the nymph is able to symbolize life in motion by gracefully bearing the engrammatic stuff of the world (i.e., life-giving fruit, fire-dousing water, or a death-heralding head) from one historical moment to another.⁸⁷ As such, she is a *metaphora*, a *translatio*, rather than an obvious or easily deciphered symbol. Or, perhaps, allegory is in order: if Bruno makes Diana the "queen of the nymphs" both to court patronage and to fashion a kind of cosmographical Petrarchism while he sojourns in England, Warburg during his Italian journey likewise conflates Bing, the nymph, and his powers of invention. For example, struggling with the costs and scope of the *Mnemosyne* project, Warburg exclaims: "Nympha hilf! Nur durch eine Probetafelinterpretation der Nympha können die Extraspesen für die Mnemosyne glaubhaft gemacht werden." (Nymph help! Only through a trial interpretation of the nymph-panel can the extra expenses for *Mnemosyne* be made credible.)⁸⁸ But the perfection of *Mnemosyne*, like the comprehension of the nymph, ultimately eludes Warburg.

Not surprisingly, Bing embraces the nymph theme as well.⁸⁹ In doing so, she also doggedly, brilliantly, emulates and refines Warburg's broader comparatist vision. In a *Tagebuch* entry on 9/23/1929, Bing comments on her reading of Sidney's *Arcadia* (again probably instigated by her mentor's reading) and how it deserves to

85. Warburg, WIA, GC 19962, fol. 2.

86. Grassi, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 30, cites Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 9.14, where an analogy between *mousai* and *mneiai* is drawn.

87. For further evidence that the nymph persists as a fundamental motif during Warburg's last years, see GS, VII:466–467.

88. GS, VII:507.

89. GS, VII:501.

be compared with Bruno's *Furori*, especially on account of its "Umkehrung von Sein and Schein" (inversion of being and appearance), whereby "das wahre Heldentum" (true heroism) is made manifest, since both Bruno and Sidney explore what it means "die Selbstverteidigung und Eigenbehauptung aufzugeben" (to surrender self-defense and self-preservation) in order to express "Beseelung durch den Enthusiasmus" (spiritualization through enthusiasm).⁹⁰ Responding to Warburg's curiosity about how a visitor to the library, G. J. Dekker, was going to reconcile in Schelling's work the tensions between abstraction and myth, Bing notes that Schelling's *Bruno* (1802) "kündet für uns diese Polarität schon an" (already announces for us this polarity).⁹¹ Lastly, in a moving letter written only days before his death to Karl Vossler (1872–1949), the prominent scholar of Romance literature,⁹² Warburg recounts the motives for his Italian journey and how the *Bilderatlas*, Bing, and Bruno shaped its topography:

Infolge meines sehr prekären Gesundheitszustandes konnte ich mich der Einsicht nicht entziehen, dass jetzt oder nie noch einmal die Möglichkeit bestand, alle meine zerstreuten Einzelstudien in einem Gesamtwerk zu vereinigen, das den auf ein einheitliches Ziel gerichteten Sinn meiner vielfachen Bemühungen zeigt. Dazu musste eine Reise unternommen werden, die die Materialien sammelte und sichtete, von Bologna über Rimini, Perugia, Rome bis Neapel. Denn nur dadurch konnte ich hoffen, bedeutsame und übermächtige künstlerische Gestalten mit als beweisführende Glieder in die Kette meiner Deduktionen einzureihen, die auf eine neue Lehre von der Kunstgestaltung überhaupt abzielen. Mit Hilfe des selbstlosen Eifers von Frl. Dr. Bing ist es mir gelungen, das Material für einen Bilder-Atlas zusammenzubringen, in dem man an seinen Bilderreihen die Funktion der vorgeprägten antikisierenden Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung inneren und äusseren bewegten Lebens ausgebreitet sieht und der zugleich die Grundlage sein soll für die Entwicklung einer neuen Theorie der Funktion des menschlichen Bildgedächtnisses. Sie sehen, hier durfte ich mich unter keinen Umständen eher abziehen lassen als bis es mir gelungen war, eine Gestalt, die mich seit 40 Jahren fesselte, mit einzubeziehen, die bisher noch an keiner Stelle, soweit ich sehe, richtig geistesgeschichtlich eingeordnet wurde: Giordano Bruno.

Ich erzähle Ihnen dies in freundschaftlich-persönlichen Vertrauen, denn ich möchte nicht, dass eher darüber gesprochen wird, als bis mein Versuch vorliegt. Kein

90. GS, VII:533. She also calls the style "antichità alla francese" of Sidney's text a "Fortsetzung" of Christine de Pisan and the *Roman de la Rose* on account of its allegorization of the arcadian pastoral. To this Warburg replies: "Fördernde Einsicht! (Heulboje!)"

91. GS, VII:541. See p. 478, which, Mann notes ("*Denkenergetische Inversion*," 36), "records . . . a long and passionate debate with Bing and Edgar Wind about the problematic nature of his interpretation of Bruno."

92. Vossler published "Die Antike und die Bühnendichtung der Romanen," in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, 1927–28 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1930).

anderer als Sie kann wissen, was es heisst, einer solchen Persönlichkeit nahe zu kommen. Wir haben Tage um Tage damit verbringen müssen, um nur den Wortschatz dieses Genies begreifen zu können.⁹³

As a result of my very precarious health, I could not but realize that the possibility existed now or never to bring together all my scattered separate studies in an opus, to show how the meaning of my myriad efforts is directed toward a unitary goal. Thus a journey had to be undertaken, from Bologna via Rimini, Perugia, and Rome to Naples, to collect and inspect materials. For only in this way could I hope to incorporate eminent and powerful artistic figures as evidential links in the chain of my deductions, which aims above all at a new doctrine concerning artistic creation. With Fräulein Doctor Bing's selfless, eager assistance, I was able to succeed in gathering the material for an atlas of images, in which one sees spread out in its sequences of images the function of pre-stamped, classicizing expressive values for the representation of internal and external life in motion. At the same time the atlas should be the basis for the development of a new theory concerning the function of human pictorial memory. You see that I could under no circumstances let myself be drawn away before I succeeded in including a figure, which for forty years enthralled me, and which up until now, as far as I can see, has not been correctly integrated into the history of ideas: Giordano Bruno.

I tell you this, trusting in our personal friendship, because I would not like this to be publicly discussed before I publish my attempt. Nobody but you can know what it means to come close to such a personality. We had to spend days in order merely to be able to comprehend this genius's vocabulary.

To "comprehend" Bruno's "Wortschatz" is Warburg's last "Versuch." And insofar as this "Wortschatz" is also a *Leidschatz*, Bruno's struggle with the *bestia trionfante* and his dialectical use of imagery become the culmination not only of Warburg's efforts with the *Bilderatlas*, but also, as he somewhat speciously maintains, forty years of scholarship. Because of their Italian journey, Bruno now can be fitted into the chain of his deductions as the final link in a series of "artistic figures." In objective terms, Bruno provides him with philosophical-discursive *Ausgleich*. Alternately, he serves as the ultimate, subjective *Isomneme*. Given, then, the intensity of his *Auseinandersetzung* with Bruno, and given his "precarious state of health," Warburg might be forgiven for exaggerating the *durée* of his dialogue with the Nolan.⁹⁴

Finally, Bing serves as *Mnemosyne*'s first hermeneut. Her insights and the *affectus* attending them help persuade Warburg that his method and materials are the correct ones. With Bing's help, he achieves the "Einverseelung vorgeprägter

93. Warburg, WIA, GC 2476 (10/12/29), fols. 3–4.

94. See Mann on this inconsistency ("*Denkenergetische Inversion*," 29).

Ausdruckswerte bei der Darstellung bewegten Lebens,” which he describes as his primary aim in the introduction to *Mnemosyne*. In the process, hermeneutics become almost eucharistic. As he writes in a 7/22/1929 letter to his brother Max, their Bruno journey proved “dass Frl. Dr. Bing nun zum ersten mal wirklich an das bildhafte Element gebracht, in bewundernswerter Weise die ganze Kunstwelt in sich aufzunehmen und als Welt der inneren Fragen sich einzuverseelen im Stande war” (that Miss Doctor Bing, now for the first time really encountering the pictorial element, was admirably capable of assimilating the entire world of art and of ingesting it spiritually as a world of inner questions).⁹⁵

Warburg Remembered

Warburg died of a heart attack on October 26, 1929. Soon afterward, to honor his memory, Cassirer dedicated his *Rektorsrede* at the University of Hamburg to sketching “das Bild des Mannes”—a consideration of Warburg’s “sachliche Leistung” being still too premature.⁹⁶ In this “Nachruf,” Cassirer begins by recounting how he initially came to know and feel a close kinship with Warburg through contact with the ineffable riches of the K.B.W.⁹⁷ Then he relates how, when he actually had his first personal conversation with Warburg during a visit to Kreuzlingen, their bond was cemented: “The problem, which had seized his life and consumed it, I now saw standing before me in its full gravity, its force [Wucht], and its tragic greatness.”⁹⁸ Warburg’s intuition that meaning must first be sought in the art-historical “detail” was tenable, Cassirer affirms, only because he always kept in view “the whole,” the “living context,” and the ever-present pathos formulas.⁹⁹ But what really set Warburg apart from other scholars was his ineluctable personal experience:

He had in himself lived and experienced what he saw in front of him—and he was only able to see truthfully what he could grasp and understand from the center of his own being and his own life. . . . The Orpheus-motif, the motif of the rape of Proserpina, the motif of Medea’s murder of her children—all this signaled to him just the last and highest extremes of human pain and human suffering [die letzten und höchsten Extreme menschlichen Schmerzes und menschlicher Leidenschaft]. He saw in

95. Quoted in the introduction to *Giordano Bruno*, 25.

96. Ernst Cassirer, “Nachruf auf Aby Warburg,” in *Aufsätze und Kleine Schriften (1927–1931)*, ed. Tobias Berben, in *GW* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2004), 17:368–374. At the beginning of the speech, Warburg’s instrumental role in the founding and nurturing of the new university is underscored.

97. “Wie von einem Zauberhauch schien mir dieser nicht abbrechende Zug der Bücher unwittert; wie ein magischer Bann lag er über ihnen” (Cassirer, “Nachruf,” 369).

98. Cassirer, “Nachruf,” 370.

99. “Er konnte und durfte diese Liebe zu Kleinsten pflegen, weil er des lebendigen Zusammenhanges, weil er des Ganzen, in dem er stand, in jedem Augenblick sicher war” (Cassirer, “Nachruf,” 370).

all this only a symbol, a symbol for those unnamable, demonic powers, to which our existence is exposed.¹⁰⁰

If in his mourning Cassirer dramatizes the pathos-laden, subjective side of Warburg's achievement, he also begins, notwithstanding his previous declaration that it was too early to do so, to situate Warburg within the period's "Geistesgeschichte" and, more specifically still, within his own philosophy of symbolic forms.¹⁰¹ Invoking Goethe, he briefly compares Warburg with Shakespeare, since both fearlessly explored the "Gegensatz und die innere Spannung von Freiheit und Notwendigkeit" (opposition and inner tension between freedom and necessity).¹⁰² Yet for all the pathos that this polarity caused Warburg, Cassirer insists that such experience had tangible epistemological value. As for Warburg's heroism, it consisted in continuing to undertake, even in his last months and hours, "new questions" that deepened and enriched the "singular trajectory" of his life's work. Given this, his life and work pose, Cassirer declares, "new tasks" for "us" as well.¹⁰³

Here Cassirer has in mind specifically Warburg's belated encounter with Bruno: "Only one hour before his death he developed for me his new, large comprehensive plans, which were supposed to constitute his work's crowning conclusion. . . . It was a topic from the history of philosophy that in these last months passionately occupied Warburg, who had distanced himself previously from this circle, and that appeared to lure him toward new, unfamiliar realms. His last studies validated Giordano Bruno's personality and writings."¹⁰⁴ Warburg's final, culminating project was not *Mnemosyne*, then, but a novel philosophical-historical study of Bruno! Still more remarkable are the specific affinities Cassirer elicits between Bruno and Warburg. Bruno's thought, which "so ganz und gar im Bildhaften sich bewegt und im Bildhaften gebunden bleibt" (so completely moves in the pictorial realm and remains bound to it), is such that Warburg, who dedicated his life to investigating the mobility of images depicting corporeal and cosmological motion, was uniquely suited to interpreting.¹⁰⁵ More to the point, his encounter with Bruno was not just "a theoretical problem"; it was instead an "Erlebnis." "Giordano Bruno," we are told, "is the first among Renaissance thinkers, who, originally tied

100. Cassirer, "Nachruf," 371.

101. "Denn in seinem eigenem Innern hat Warburg von früh an den Kampf gekämpft, den er hier gewissermaßen in der Projektion auf die Geistesgeschichte vor uns hinstellt. Den Weg '*per monstra ad sphaeram*', wie er ihn zu nennen pflegte, ihn verstand er, weil er selbst ihn immer wieder gegangen war und immer wieder gehen mußte. Aber auch dann, wenn er unter den Mühen dieses Weges fast zusammenbrach, ist er niemals an seinem Ziele verzweifelt. Aus aller Unfreiheit und Gebundenheit heraus strebte er immer wieder ins Reich der geistigen Freiheit—in jenen 'Denkraum der Besonnenheit', der ihm als das Letzte und Höchste galt, was menschliche Erkenntnis und menschliche Wissenschaft sich zu erringen vermag" (Cassirer, "Nachruf," 372).

102. Cassirer, "Nachruf," 371.

103. Ibid., 372–373.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid., 373.

[gebunden] wholly to the sphere of magical thinking, deliberately wrests himself from this sphere [sich bewußt aus dieser Sphäre losringt]."¹⁰⁶ Some 350 years later, Cassirer urges, Warburg "consciously" experiences this agonistic *translatio* as well.

Above all, this is because Bruno wrestles with the concept and experience of "Unendlichkeit" (infinity). One of the Nolan's cardinal and indisputably most radical ideas is that the mathematics and metaphysics of Copernicus's heliocentric cosmos yield not just a much larger universe than the Ptolemaic system claimed, but herald an infinite universe containing potentially an infinite number of worlds, thereby also impeaching the uniqueness of terrestrial creation.¹⁰⁷ (The theological implications of this helped provoke Bruno's arrest by papal authorities in 1592 and his martyrdom in the Campo de' Fiori in 1600.) How Bruno's championing of cosmological infinity speaks to Warburg's efforts is arguably Cassirer's most pathos-laden insight:

The infinite is reason's object [Das Unendliche ist Gegenstand der Vernunft]; but only a reason that is moved by heroic *affectus* and that is given wings by the same is truly able to grasp the infinite. Not mere gazing, rather enthusiastic looking [Schau] and enthusiastic love let the infinite be appropriated. One understands what Warburg in this teaching, in Giordano Bruno's challenge of the "heroic frenzies," must have seized upon. Here he found thinking that showed through and through that energetic form and those energetic tensions [jene energetische Form und jene energetischen Spannungen] as he had elsewhere sensed and demonstrated to be behind works of pictorial art. It was not the contents of this thinking that excited him, but rather its form became for him at once a symbol of the forces that moved his own self most inwardly [die ihn selbst zuinnerst bewegten].¹⁰⁸

While the assertion that Warburg was not "moved" by the content of Bruno's thought is certainly debatable, Cassirer's larger point about how its formal aspects, its ability to mediate between extremes, became symbolic for Warburg is surely worth pondering. If the "doctrine" of infinity as experienced by Bruno yields for Warburg solely a "heroic *affectus*" rather than producing the metaphysical insights that Bruno (and his predecessor, Cusanus) enjoyed as well, then this is consonant with Warburg's own emphasis on the imperfect but vital *Prozeß* and metamorphosis over concrete conceptual ends that we saw in the writings and images associated with *Mnemosyne*. Cassirer's emphasis on the *energeia* Warburg discovers in Bruno's thought is thus a way of folding both these figures into the history of symbolic forms.

106. Ibid.

107. Bruno's three Italian dialogues that explore the ethical and metaphysical implications of cosmological infinity are *La cena de le Ceneri* (1584), *De l'infinito universo et mundi* (1584), and *De la causa, principio et uno* (1584).

108. Cassirer, "Nachruf," 373.

Warburg, in brief, becomes a “Bild” for Cassirer of the monumental, tragic, eternally recurring movement of “Geist”:

There is a certain spiritual-intellectual motif [seelisch-geistiges Motiv] that resonates repeatedly in Giordano Bruno's works and verse: the motif of the human spirit's endless flight toward the sun of the infinite, divine truth. The human spirit [menschliche Geist] knows that it will not and cannot reach the goal, that its flight finally, like that of Icarus, must end with a crash [mit dem Sturze]—but despite everything spirit dares this flight, because only in flight can it ensure its eternal being and eternal destination. For the crash from the heights is better than being bound to the ground and the debasements of existence [den Niederungen des Daseins].¹⁰⁹

While such hyperbole is excused, even demanded by the panegyric occasion, Cassirer's imagery is fully consonant with Warburg's own emphasis on *Auffahrt* and *Heliotropismus* in the *Bruno* notebook, the *Tagebuch*, and letters. Fittingly, then, to furnish Warburg's epitaph, Cassirer cites from the *Furori* a sonnet by Luigi Tansillo that Bruno uses to paint himself as a belated but defiant Icarus: “non temer . . . l'alta ruina. / Fendi sicur le nubi, et muor contento; / S' il ciel si illustre morte ne destina.” (Fear not . . . noble destruction, burst / boldly through the clouds, and die content, if / heaven destines us to so illustrious a death.)¹¹⁰ He then comments, as if making the “Bild” he sketches of Warburg the very commentary he had hoped Warburg himself would be able to write: “As Giordano Bruno pronounces it in these words, thus did Warburg live, and thus did he die. And thus will his image [Bild] live on in us: not as the image of a mere scholar and researcher, who was allowed to die in peace, after he had brought his life's harvest home, rather as the image of a fighter and a hero, whose weapons, as death stole them from him, were not dented or broken but remained equally strong, equally sharp, and equally pure from beginning to end of his lifelong intellectual-spiritual battle [seines geistigen Lebenskampfes].”¹¹¹ In the end, then, it is by analogy that Cassirer transforms his friend into a “Bild” and a pathos formula, thereby adding him to the epic narrative told by his own philosophy of symbolic forms.

A Paean and an “Apple Tree”

Like Bruno's *Spaccio*, Warburg's *Mnemosyne* strives to create a “vergleichende Betrachtung.” For Warburg, however, the comparatist's task is complicated by centuries more of separation from the original, foundational *Auseinandersetzung* with antiquity that he celebrates in the Italian Renaissance. Moreover, for Warburg such

109. Ibid., 373–374.

110. See Bruno, *Opere Italiane*, 2:569; Bruno, *Heroic Frenzies*, 118.

111. Cassirer, “Nachruf,” 374.

synderesis or *syncrisis* is made more labyrinthine still by personal demons. Epitomizing this struggle, one of his very last entries in the *Tagebuch* plaintively wonders: “Wer dichtet mir den antisaturnischen Paian auf den spätreifenden Apfelbaum?” (Who will compose for me the anti-Saturnian paean on the late-ripening apple tree?)¹¹² This literally refers to an old apple tree in the garden of his house, which everyone save Warburg thought was moribund. Warburg resisted having it uprooted, and in the early autumn it unexpectedly began to bear fruit. Transformed here into an ambiguous symbol of his inventive intellectual efforts to reap the fruits of pagan antiquity, the apple tree—like Hölderlin’s fig tree invoked at the beginning of this book—seems tied to the fate of its poet, who still seeks allies for his encounter with Saturnian forces. But Warburg’s question summons, too, the specter of myth, as northern European folklore maintained that a late-blooming fruit tree was a sign of impending death.¹¹³ Thus even in his last hours he metaphorically marries north and south, past and present, to express the hope of redeeming his fears. Or perhaps he was thinking of the “tree cult” as he described it in the *Schlangenritual* text, echoes of which still could be heard in his day, as Frazer’s *Golden Bough* (1890) went to such great lengths to show.¹¹⁴ In any case, joining infernal and celestial forces, Warburg’s apple tree is more than a “symbol”—it is a metaphor that finds similarity in differences. It grafts onto a single branch, to paraphrase Warburg quoting Jean Paul, the afterlife of myth along with the logic of his intellectual history in order to discover *Besonnenheit* across images in motion from antiquity to the Renaissance, from northern New Mexico to a Hamburg garden. Thus rather than threatening him with unmediated violence, the psychological, magical, even spiritual aspects of images may now, he hopes, blossom and yield comforting fruit. They may, in short, be safely retied to the world, because the world has been found to have historical memory.

On the morning he dies Warburg makes an entry in the *Tagebuch* emblemizing both his intellectual career’s trajectory and the polarities riddling it:

Morgens 4. “Perseus” oder “Energetische Aesthetik als logische Funktion im Geschäfte der Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno” [dazu gehört die Entwicklungstypentafel “Perseus”] So würde meine Rektoratsrede gelaundet haben.” Kant: Was heißt sich im Raume orientieren (Titel ungenau).¹¹⁵

112. GS, VII:554. Just before this Warburg writes: “Habe dem ebenso dummen wie gemeinen Kult des grünen Blattes auf die Fruchtbarkeit des Schatzes der späten Reife (Symbol: unser Gravensteiner Baum, der die schönsten Äpfel trägt und schon längst condemned war) so auch die vor circa 20 Jahren von mir gerettete Goldweide auf dem Rasen an der Benedictstraße.”

113. Frank Zoellner, “Der gerettete Apfelbaum: Über Aby Warburg,” in *Aby Warburg: Akten des internationalen Symposions*, ed. Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers, and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Weinheim: VCH Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991), 71–77.

114. Warburg, *Images*, 32–33.

115. GS, VII:555.

4 o'clock in the morning. "Perseus" or "Energetic aesthetic as logical function in the business of orientation for Giordano Bruno" [to this belongs the "Perseus" panel on the development of types]. This would have read my rector's lecture. Kant: What does it mean to orient [oneself] in space (inexact title).

This last entry grafts onto Kant's synoptic 1786 essay, "Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren," Warburg's encounter with Bruno and the possibility of making a "panel on the development of types" from the Perseus materials that he had long studied and collected, some of which, as we saw earlier are already deployed in panels C and 2 of the "last version." As for the lecture, perhaps Warburg would have included materials concerning Bruno's representation of Perseus in the *Spaccio*.¹¹⁶ Speculation aside, that he accidentally, so it seems, substitutes "space" for "thought" when he recalls the title of Kant's essay gives vivid if unintentional expression to his desire to forge a *Denkraum* without "border guards."

More concretely, *Mnemosyne* serves both as a *Denkraum* and as a *Denkinstrument* for logically and metaphorically transforming the multiplicity of symbolic images into a unity furnished by recurring forms and themes, without, crucially, sacrificing the vitality and historical provenance of sensuous details. That this task is meant to be ethical as well as conceptual is confirmed by the phrase in the *Bruno* notebook, written in early December 1928, "Reformation der mensch-/ bildhaften Causalität / Geburt d. kategor. Imperativs" (Reformation of human-/ pictorial causality / Birth of the categorical imperative).¹¹⁷ In Warburg's view, Bruno's solution to the problem of the *Nachleben der Antike* is an ethical one, since it heroically expresses the individual pathos of acting and being acted on even as it maps the universal tensions between *Logos* and *Mythos*, reason and unreason.

Likewise, in his 1920 essay on sixteenth-century German astrological imagery, Warburg hears an "anti-Saturnian paean" in Dürer's art:

The truly creative act—that which gives Dürer's *Melancholia I* its consoling, humanistic message of liberation from the fear of Saturn—can be understood only if we recognize that the artist has taken a magical and mythical logic and made it spiritual and intellectual [wenn man diese magische Mythologik als eigentliches Objekt der künstlerisch-vergeistigenden Umformung erkennt]. The malignant, child-devouring planetary god, whose cosmic contest with another planetary ruler seals the

116. GS, VII:550. The rector's lecture mentioned here differs from the talk he planned to give at the Aesthetic Congress in 1931, which as he informed Cassirer, was to be called "Die ethische Verurteilung des Aesthetischen als logische Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno." Ghelardi, consulting WIA IV. 51, cites a slightly different title: "Perseus oder energetische Aesthetik als logische Funktion im Geschäft der Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno" (introduction to Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, 24).

117. *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 24. This is on the same page (but a different column) where Warburg writes, "Don Quixote / Chevalier / errant / v. d. Unendlichkeit [des] Begriffes // kategor. Imper," which I discussed earlier.

subject's fate, is humanized and metamorphosed by Dürer into the image of thinking, working human being.¹¹⁸

With the *vita activa* as his elusive goal, Warburg looks to the humanist past and Dürer for a protection against the melancholic forces threatening him. If the "girl with a self-conscious gleam in her eye" helps redeem the past and pagan excess for Hegel, then the metaphoric distances sketched by Dürer, Ghirlandaio, Mantegna, Kepler, and Bruno play analogous roles for Warburg. But in this he was also aided by the efforts of collaborators like Saxl and Bing, not to mention colleagues like Cassirer, Panofsky, and Wind, who constantly goaded him into actualizing his vision. And yet because this vision was so thoroughly syncretic and, therefore, in a pragmatic sense, impossible, one reads the following observation made three days later in the *Tagebuch* almost as if it were a negative reply to his previous question about the "anti-Saturnian paean": "Robert Ernst Curtius kann nicht kommen muß aus persönlichen Gründen in Paris bleiben." (Robert Ernst Curtius cannot come, must for personal reasons stay in Paris.)¹¹⁹ This absence is poignant not because the two men were close friends (they were not), but because, as we have seen, Curtius also understood how "metaphoric distance" could be at once a method, an object of contemplation, and a goal. His chapters on metaphor in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, a book written in Germany during the *Nazizeit*, are arguably the linchpin of his encyclopedic defense of European literary culture. Indeed, like Warburg's examination of pathos formulas, Curtius's focus on the topoi that have for millennia fueled literary metaphor and ornamentation argues for historical continuity rather than any kind of teleological apotheosis, an apotheosis that might too easily be co-opted by whomever finds themselves in power at the "end" of history. Via the myriad ways that it forges comparatist perspectives out of the philological details native to literary imitation, Curtius's tome argues that pagan antiquity's art and Judeo-Christian culture's belated aesthetic fruits can and must be constantly compared in order to furnish a redeeming vision of the "whole." Curtius believed that without a comparatist philology that deployed "analytical methods" and disdained the dictates of "the Guardians of Zion"—so Aby Warburg used to call the proprietors and boundary guards of the specialties," both past and present were at risk.¹²⁰ This helps explain why, when he published *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* in 1948, Curtius partially dedicated it to Warburg. A fitting complement to *Mnemosyne* and an "anti-Saturnian paean" in dark times, it came too late, however, to answer Warburg's question.

118. *RPA*, 644; *GS*, I.2:528. Ferretti compares this with Panofsky's famous reading of the engraving: "For Panofsky the metamorphosis lies in the personalization of temperament, in the fact that the ancient demon with his temperament becomes a sort of heroic lament of the genius, a personification of pessimism vis-à-vis the actual possibilities of attaining the beautiful form by means of the magical-scientific tools at his disposal" (*Cassirer, Panofsky, and Warburg*, 59).

119. *GS*, VII:555. Warburg transposes Curtius's first and second names. On 7/31/1929 Warburg announces: "Ernst Robert Curtius will Ende September kommen" (*GS*, VII:482).

120. Curtius, *ELLMA*, 15, 13.

ILLUSTRATIONS

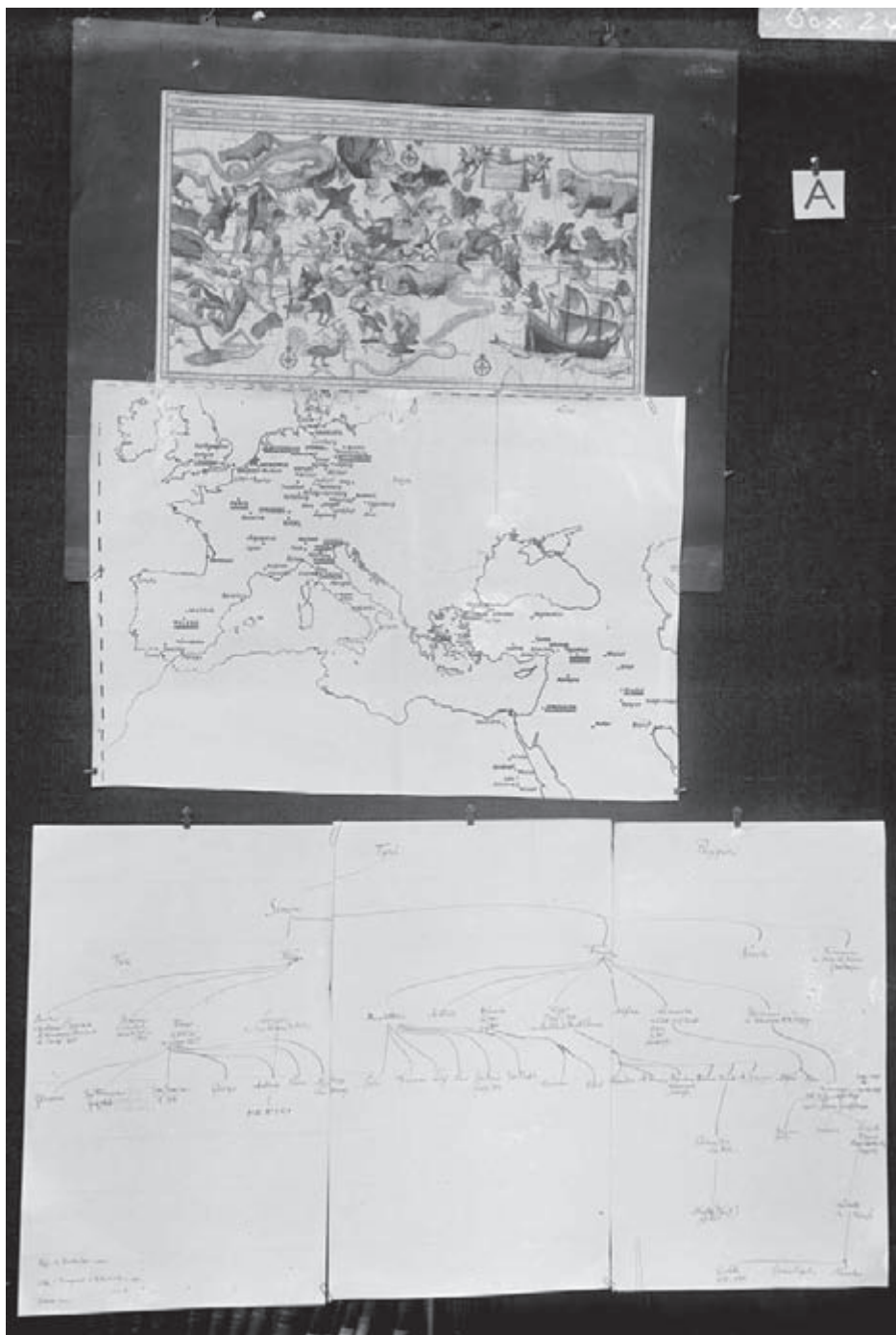


Figure 1. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel A. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 2. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel B. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 3. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel C. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 4. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 41. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 5. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 41a. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 6. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 42. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 7. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 43. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 8. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 44. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 10. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 46. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 11. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 47. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 12. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 48. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 14. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 60. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 15. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 61–64. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 16. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 70. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 17. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 72. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.

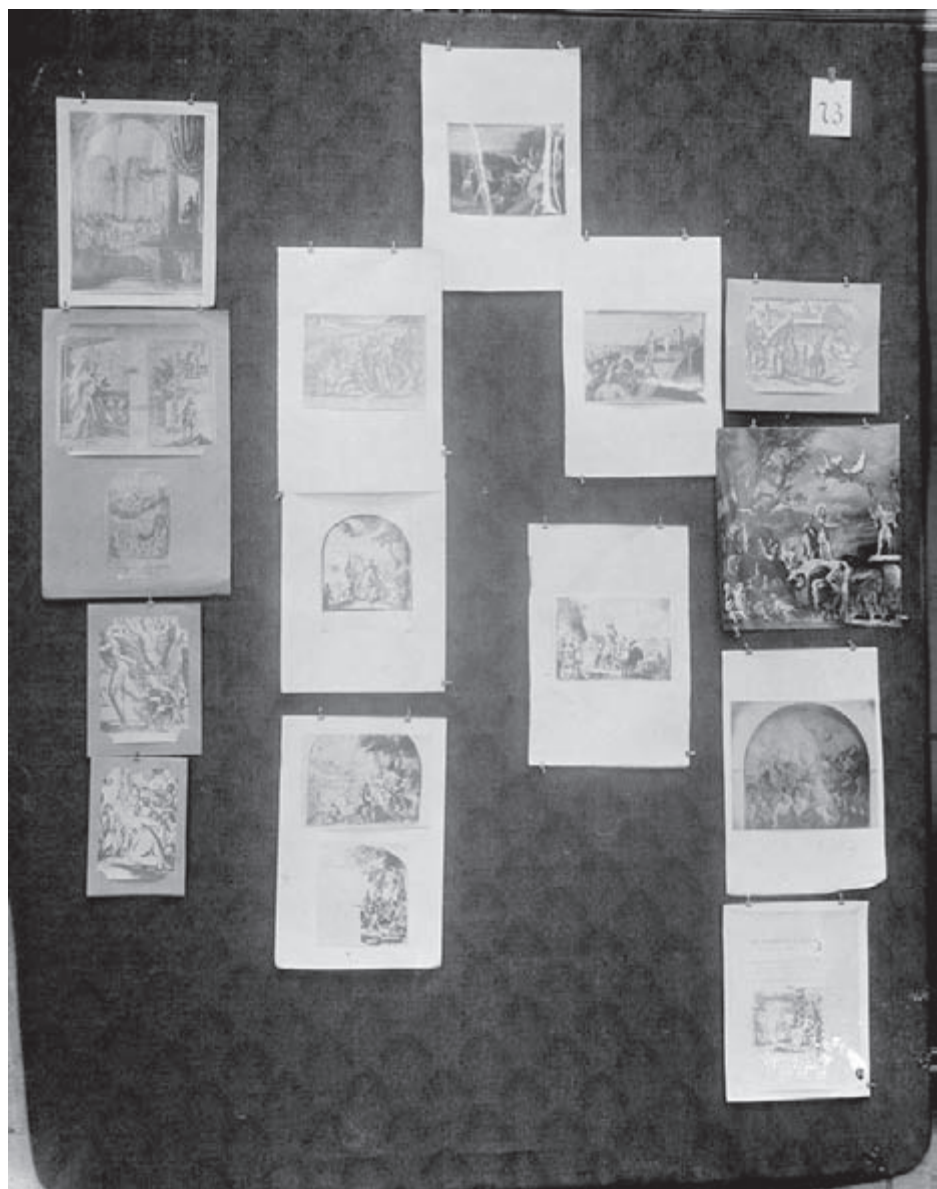


Figure 18. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 73. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 19. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 74. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 20. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 75. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 21. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 77. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London



Figure 22. Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas*, panel 79. Photo: The Warburg Institute, London.



Figure 23. Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448–1494), *Adoration of the Shepherds*. Photo: Alinari / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 24. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Rape of Proserpina*. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatliche Museen / Joerg P. Anders / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 25. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606–1669), *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 26. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606–1669, *Medea: or The Marriage of Jason and Creusa*. Photo: The Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York. RvR 177.

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