

WARBURG'S VISION

From Arsenal to Laboratory*

1. An Issue of Translation

The subtitle of this essay could just as well have been “Kunstgeschichte als Kulturwissenschaft”, but while the first term translates easily into English, the second, like so many others in Warburg, does not. Indeed, the lack of suitable – and suitably nuanced – English translations for some of his favourite terms, many of which will appear in the following essay, is one of the obstacles to a fine-grained understanding of his work. When it comes to the noun *Kulturwissenschaft* [the science of culture] and the adjective *kulturwissenschaftlich* (as in the title of his famous library, for a start: the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg) we are left with a seemingly unbridgeable divide between what English speakers call the humanities and the sciences, and between two almost irreconcilable epistemologies. In German, the term *Kulturwissenschaft* conveys a greater confidence in the possibility of reducing at least something of the complexity, messiness and apparently infinite variability of context to a semblance of order, analytic precision and communicability across boundaries – whether geographic, cultural, spatial, temporal or epistemological. While Warburg desired to achieve what we might now think of as a more scientific form of cultural history and inter- and intra-cultural relations, his ideas in this direction were much less clearly articulated than those regarding the history of images and their transmission across space and time. Even so, there can be no question that for Warburg *Kunstgeschichte* [history of art] was to be conceived of as a form or even a subdivision of *Kulturwissenschaft*. Although he certainly would not have had the same confidence in reason and in the defining analytic role of the falsification of hypothesis as his great successor, E. H. Gombrich, Gombrich’s own biography of Warburg was more clearly attuned to this ambition of Warburg’s than most other commentators, despite the

* This essay is based on my introduction to the conference, *Aby Warburg 150: Work. Legacy. Promise*, held on June 13–15, 2016, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Aby Warburg. Without the help of Matthew Peebles, Nomis Fellow at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, this adaptation and expansion of my text on that occasion would not have been possible. I am particularly grateful to my co-organizer Claudia Wedepohl, not only for her help in making the conference the success it was, but for the enormous contribution she has made over the years to making the archives available and adding to our knowledge of the meaning of Aby Warburg’s published and unpublished work. I should emphasize, however, that many of the interpretations of Warburg’s meaning and potential I offer here are wholly my own; and even if I would not admit that these are solely the product of my imagination, I would certainly confess that they are dreams – dreams which, I hope, have passed not through the gates of ivory, but of horn.

many criticisms levelled at it. The severest critic of Gombrich's biography, Edgar Wind, might have been still more so, but unfortunately he never fully set forth his views on this matter.¹

2. *Nachleben*: Gombrich and Warburg

To understand what the Warburg Institute became and how it differed from Warburg's vision for the future of his Library, one must begin with Gombrich and work backwards. His brilliant and famously lucid contributions to the history of art, iconology and the psychology of visual perception were critical for the development of the London Institute. He was a master of the *Nachleben der Antike*, the afterlife of Antiquity up to and including the twentieth century. His vast learning was well equipped to deal with this key Warburgian concept, but his vision of the afterlife of Antiquity was more restrained than Warburg's. Less imaginative than Warburg and wary of the irrational turns which *Nachleben* could take, Gombrich reinforced a positivist tendency at the Institute that had already set in with his Warburgian predecessors Fritz Saxl (Director 1929–1948) and Gertrud Bing (Director 1955–1959) almost from the moment they arrived in Britain in 1933.

Gombrich's own thought – or at least his ways of thinking – stood at odds with the irrepressible imagination of Warburg himself.² He and his successors frequently regarded Warburg's imaginativeness as too little constrained by reason. Both he (as early as 1971) and Charles Hope (as late as 2016) told me that Warburg's writings were too confused to be suitable for neophyte students of cultural history. No wonder, then, that Warburg's keenly dialectical approach to the history of culture (and the epistemological athleticism it sometimes entailed) should have receded in prominence at the London institute named after him.

Gombrich's high rationalism, his suspicion of anything in German intellectual culture which he believed might have contributed to the rise of National Socialism, his commitment to a Popperian vision of science and its implications for the history of art,³ his emphasis on

1 Many of them appear in his still unparalleled essay "Warburg's Concept of Kulturwissenschaft and Its Meaning for Aesthetics" (Wind 1993); first published as "Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik" in 1931, shortly after Warburg's death; and in his famously acid 1971 review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (Wind 1971) of Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography* (Gombrich 1986, first published in 1970). For a slightly more sceptical take on Wind's view of Warburg, see Ginzburg 1989a. For a broader contextualization of the concept of *Kunstwissenschaft* in Warburg and his Hamburg circle, see Ulrich Raulff's typically perceptive "Von der Privatbibliothek des Gelehrten zum Forschungsinstitut" (Raulff 1997).

2 On Gombrich, Warburg, and the Warburg Institute, see especially Ginzburg 1989a; Wedepohl 2015; Freedberg 2018.

3 This commitment is openly expressed throughout much of Gombrich's work, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in *Art and Illusion* (Gombrich 2000, first published in 1960). It is here that he declares his epistemological debt to Popper most explicitly, especially with regard to the centrality of the role of hypothesis and falsification in science. For him, as for Popper, science proceeds on the basis of the establishment of hypotheses that necessarily take precedence over the recording of sense data and remain provisional until they are shown to be clearly capable of refutation. As for Constable, so for Gombrich, "painting is a science, of which pictures are its experiments" (Gombrich 2000, p. 33). As is now well known, central to Gombrich's

probing and classification over intuition and emotion, his resistance to inductivism, his antipathy to Hegel and Nietzsche and his reluctance to engage with the fundamental roles of superstition and irrationalism in the transmission of culture – all of this made him sceptical of Warburg.

Moreover, Gombrich's wariness of the irrational and his cautiousness about the persistence of the barbaric in the civilized meant that his powerful influence and the succession he set up turned the Institute into a less ambitious place than Warburg had envisaged in the last two paragraphs of the essay on "Francesco Sassettis letztwillige Verfügung" (1907),⁴ in the great and programmatic epilogues to "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoia zu Ferrara" (1912) and "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten" (1920),⁵ as well as in several moving documents that have more recently emerged. These include the introduction to the now legendary *Mnemosyne-Atlas* ("Mnemosyne Einleitung"; 1929)⁶ and the notes he prepared for a presentation to his brothers, his son, Saxl and two others prior to a discussion of the constitution of the *Kuratorium* of his Library on December 31, 1927, entitled "Vom Arsenal zum Laboratorium".⁷

It may be that Gombrich's resistance to the idea that the barbaric and apparently alien elements in a culture provided the energy which drove and transmitted it was one of the consequences of having lived through the Nazi catastrophe, but it blinded him to some of the central elements of Warburg's thought (as did his deep suspicion of the work of both Nietzsche and Hegel). On the other hand, it is true that Gombrich's scepticism about what he often scathingly referred to as "hunting the prototype" arose not just out of his concern about the identification of what in the end were merely false similarities between one motif and another, but from his keen awareness of the dangers of too narrowly interpreting the central Warburgian project of the *Nachleben der Antike*. He himself seems to have fully realized that a purely positivist approach to that project was doomed not just to aridity, but to failure.

Indeed, although Gombrich was not always sympathetic to the major strands in Warburg's approach to cultural history and the history of art and images, his great and finally sympathetic biography of Warburg has been unfairly and often inaccurately maligned.⁸ However much he may have differed from Warburg intellectually and philosophically, and despite his

view of art are notions of schema (hypothesis) and correction, and so "making and matching" becomes the key formula for understanding the fundamental processes of (naturalistic) representation. These views, along with the associated (but ironically less positivist) position that similarity is largely by convention, are present throughout the text and are explicitly confirmed several times in the prefaces of the second and third editions of the work (cf. Gombrich 2000, pp. xl, 28–29, 272. For further comments on the importance of Popper for Gombrich, see Freedberg 2018, pp. 41, 59.

4 Warburg 2010g, esp. p. 277.

5 Warburg 2010i, esp. pp. 396–397; and Warburg 2010h, esp. pp. 484–486.

6 Warburg 2010l.

7 Warburg 2010a. Those present at this meeting were Saxl, Warburg's brothers Max and Fritz, his nephew Erich, his son Max Adolph, Dr. Kessal and the accountant Eva von Eckardt, while Gertrud Bing was absent on convalescence. See also pp. xxx and xxx and notes 42 and 54 below.

8 Gombrich 1986; Wind (1971).

blind spots (for example, about the role of empathy in people's relations with one other and with images), there can be no doubt about the depth and subtlety of his understanding of Warburg.⁹ Nonetheless, under the succession of ever more positivist directors, the Institute went its own way and eventually became much more narrowly philological and focused on documenting what in the 1950s and 1960s was commonly called "the survival of the classics" (chiefly Latin, Greek and Arabic, with a sprinkling of other cultures); and the anthropological, the psychological and the biological interests which both Warburg and Gombrich shared fell by the wayside.

3. Aims and Requirements in an Age of Borders

When I took on the directorship of the Institute in January 2015, my main aims were: 1) to bring the Warburg Institute in London back to its Warburgian roots; 2) to recover and make more accessible the central elements of his thought; and 3) to test the extent to which the objects and ideals of its pursuits could engage with the moral and political issues of our time. If the Institute were ever to regain the place in the study and understanding of cultural history it once had, it seemed to me that we needed to make clear its relevance for our times – and not just conceive of it as a kind of fossilized historiographic relic, however auratic it may have become. This, I thought, should involve attending more deeply not only to Warburg's published writings (and securing better English translations), but to the extraordinarily rich material from the archives that have at last been opened up, first under the direction of Dorothea McEwan and especially now under Claudia Wedepohl.

It seemed to me that the Warburg had a powerful role to play in securing the humanities for now and for the future. Their precarious state both in the universities and among the public becomes clearer by the day. Warburg's ideas not only provide keys to the understanding of lost cultures, but also offer a variety of strategies for assaying the principles of their transmission and for recording the vagaries of cultural memory as it passes over large tracts of space and time – different spaces and radically different times, with all the accretions and contaminations that memory may acquire in the process. His work suggests many ways of uncovering how cultural memory is recharged by difference and by the forms of dialectical energy which are implicit in what has so often been dismissed by using terms such as exotic, alien and barbaric.¹⁰ The project of understanding the mechanisms of cultural memory – and

9 As emerges most clearly, perhaps, from Ginzburg 1989a. Wind 1971 charges that no mention is made of the influence on Warburg of Robert Vischer, author of *Über das optische Formgefühl* of 1873 and the great theorist of *Einfühlung*. Thinking to defend Gombrich, in a subsequent letter to the editor of the *TLS* Charles Hope wrote insisting that Gombrich had indeed mentioned him (Hope 1984). Unfortunately, the Vischer mentioned by Gombrich was actually Vischer's father, the possibly more distinguished, but less relevant, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, author of *Asthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen* of 1846 and "Das Symbol" of 1887 (as already mentioned by Anderson 1984).

10 As is also evident from the importance Warburg attached to what he so frequently referred to as one or other variety of ancient and primitive orgiastic mass behaviours, as, for example, in the statement: "In der Region der orgiastischen Massenergriffenheit ist das Prägwerk zu suchen, das dem Gedächtnis die

cultural memory across cultural diversity – thus becomes not merely the identification of similarities but the recovery difference. At the same time, it is also a struggle for identity – a project, therefore, not only of cultural memory and recuperation, but of human rights, not just a historical project, but an essentially political and moral one that challenges the conventional epistemological orders of the day as it crosses borders, refusing to submit to what Warburg himself called the *Grenzpolizei* (the forces that so rigorously police our disciplinary borders).¹¹

All this, of course, requires both courage and reflection. It requires time for reflection and sagacity in reflection, so that thought may distance itself from immediate entrainment by the instantaneity and speed of modern forms of representation. The need for what Warburg named *Denkraum* and *Besonnenheit* amidst the modern speed of image consumption could not be clearer.¹² This and the acknowledgement of the polar tensions in human cultures, of the presence of the irrational in the rational, of the persistence of engrammatic forms in culture all these are amongst the most significant aspects of Warburg's legacy. They become even more precious in an age in which we are flooded with more images than ever before and have far less time to ponder them individually (if we ponder them at all). In the age of the internet, of Instagram and selfies, we can surf the web unconstrainedly and look at ourselves whenever we desire, leaving little space for the many questions which arise about the relationship between attention, contemplation and speed of image presentation. It is an age in which we lose whatever empathy we may have for the other at the expense of the multifold and all-too-facile forms of involvement with what we see, read and hear. It is a time in which our subsumption in the media seems well-nigh unstoppable. In this new era of digitization and the disappearing book, we who so restlessly till the fields of cultural history must bear

Ausdrucksformen des maximalen inneren Ergriffenseins, soweit es sich gebärdensprachlich ausdrücken lässt, in solcher Intensität einhämmert, dass diese Engramme leidenschaftlicher Erfahrung als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut überleben" (Warburg 2010l, p. 631). See, however, many other locations as well, especially his discussion of these topics in his final Burckhardt seminar of 1927, where he speaks of Nietzsche as the Nabi, the ancient Hebrew prophet, "der auf die Strasse läuft, sich die Kleider zerreisst, Wehe schreit, und das Volk vielleicht hinter sich her leitet. Seine ursprüngliche Geste ist die des Führers mit dem Thyrosstab, der sich zur Gefolgschaft Alle zwingt. Daher seine Bemerkungen zum Tanz [...]. Velea und die Mutter, die den Sohn zerreisst" (Warburg 2010q, pp. 697, 698; further discussed on pp. xxx-xxx and notes 24 and 71 below). Of course, the central preoccupation with the absorption of the barbaric as a fructifying element in the generation of fertile cultures emerges perhaps above all in the lecture entitled "Per Monstra ad Sphaeram" and subtitled "Die Einwirkung der Sphaera barbarica auf die kosmischen Orientierungsversuche des Abendlandes", which Warburg gave in honour of Franz Boll on April 25, 1925 (Warburg 2008b).

11 As in the peroration to "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie" (Warburg 2010i, p. 396); see further comments in note 21 below.

12 The notion of *Denkraum* as "space for contemplation" seems clear enough; but *Besonnenheit* much less so. It is not easily translatable. It is usually translated by words such as calm, prudence, level-headed deliberateness, rather akin to the Greek concept of *sophrosyne*, which, like *Besonnenheit*, implies a degree of wisdom and self-control. For Warburg the term generally carries a sense of self-aware reflectiveness, as if arriving at a state in which self-awareness and a degree of self-control supersede automatic absorption in something or someone else; for him it entails a reflective detachment and distancing from swift engagement. See also Freedberg 2018, as well as pp. 26, 28, 35 and 42 and notes 20, 31, 61 and 93 below.

in mind the implications of the Warburg Library and its matchless system of classification for who we are, how we work and how we respond to images.

4. Polarities: Winckelmann and Lessing, Burckhardt and Nietzsche

Aby Warburg was already in Binswanger's clinic when Fritz Saxl gave the first *Vortrag* of the Warburg Library. It was published as the opening essay in the first number of the *Vorträge* of 1921–1922 and entitled "Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel".¹³ Saxl began by describing Warburg's debt to Jacob Burckhardt, and how the influence of Burckhardt was dialectically modified by that of Nietzsche and in turn by that of Hermann Usener, the philologist and comparative religionist. From Nietzsche he learned to understand the Dionysian strand in culture, the presence of the barbaric in the beautiful, the wild in the rational. From Usener he learned the importance of ethnography and of making a comparative study of cultures and religions across the globe – of the battle between Orient and Occident and of the rebirth of pagan Antiquity in the Renaissance.¹⁴

These are not easy things to reconcile, but what seemed to me to have been too long forgotten at the London Institute was Warburg's keen and fundamental awareness of the polarities of thought that underlie the survival of Antiquity and its persistence, not just until the Renaissance but up to and including our own times. Warburg spoke of the *Auseinandersetzung* between polar opposites, of the tensions that arise from the presence of the alien in the conventions of the social and the civilized, the primitive in the modern, the struggle between Apollo and Python, between the energy of the Laocoön and the calm of the Doryphoros, Lessing and Winckelmann – movement, in other words, and stillness. Resolution emerges from the very confrontation that *Auseinandersetzung* implies. Warburg's view of culture was an acknowledgement – or rather a carefully considered realization – that the tension between these poles and the release of energy that ensued gave cultures their particular energies and drove their transmission across time and space. The interaction between opposites and the confrontationality present in the exchange of ideas, motifs and forms as one culture meets, absorbs or rejects another, lie at the heart of cultural memory and drive the mechanisms of recollection, migration and transformation. The study of these processes constitutes the major task of the Warburg Institute.

13 Saxl 1923. Cf.: "It is in the zone of orgiastic mass seizures that we must look for the mint which stamps upon the memory the expressive movements of the extreme transports of emotion, as far as they can be translated into gesture language (*soweit es sich gebärdensprachlich ausdrücken lässt*) with such intensity that these engrams of the experience of suffering passion survive as a heritage stored in the memory." This is Gombrich's translation (in Gombrich 1986, p. 245) of the passage from the "Mnemosyne Einleitung" (Warburg 2010I, p. 631).

14 Saxl emphasizes: "Ihm [Usener] verdankt Warburg es vor allem, dass er sein Denken auf das Phänomen des Wiederauflebens heidnischer Religiosität in der Frührenaissance einstellen konnte, da er ihm vor allem die Erkenntnis des antiken Heidentums verdankt" (Saxl 1923, p. 2).

The idea of the *Nachleben der Antike* was, of course, central to Warburg.¹⁵ For him, unlike for so many of his epigones, especially in recent years, this meant not just the *Nach* in *Nachleben*, but also the *Leben*, the life which remains in cultural forms across time. The basic question was not just the survival of particular motifs; it was why cultural forms retain the life they do in different ages and regions and how they are transformed in the course of that passage. The flow of cultures across time and space is never smooth or steady; it is made up of constantly changing currents and directions, buffeted, adjusted and recomposed as it moves unpredictably forward, with infinite variations of energy and speed. This combination of flow and tension is just what gives cultures their vitality and dynamism, and this is what drove another great Warburgian formulation, the *Pathosformel*: the persistence of particular gestures of emotional expression across time.¹⁶

Nietzsche and Lessing must be returned to the Warburg Institute, while Winckelmann and Burckhardt must be assigned their due roles, complex as they are, in the *Auseinandersetzung* of thought about which Warburg so often wrote. Indeed, when Warburg gave his moving lecture on the last day of 1927 to the group discussing the formation of a *Kuratorium* of his Library, he spoke of Darwin immediately after telling of his own efforts to recalibrate both Lessing and Winckelmann in terms of the necessity of understanding the relationships between movement, emotion and stillness as psychological factors not just in *Kunstgeschichte* but in *Kulturwissenschaft* itself. This, he went on to explain, was a process which had to acknowledge and involve the significance of Darwin's theory of the *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* as well as Theodor Piderit's *Mimik und Physiognomik*.¹⁷ For Warburg, these were the books which made clear both the importance of human expression in an image as

15 As he put it most succinctly in the introduction to Karl Reinhardt's lecture on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on October 24, 1924: "Eine bestimmte Frage, die mir seit meinem ersten Aufenthalt in Florenz 1888 von weittragender und nicht genügend erforschter Bedeutung erschien, sollte dabei als Mittelpunkt und Leitstern dienen: Die Frage nach dem Einfluss der Antike auf die späteren Kunstepochen" (Warburg 2008d, p. 59).

16 The literature on this topic is now vast. Much – but by no means all – is cited in the essay on the *Pathosformel* by Carlo Ginzburg in this volume. Amongst the many critical earlier articles, see especially Settis 1997; and, more recently, Wedepohl 2012. See also my "The *Pathosformel* Revisited", given as a lecture at the Courtauld Institute of Art, in November 2013 (forthcoming); and "Per Monstra ad Sphaeram: Aby Warburg and the Future of the Humanities", given as a lecture at the Siemens Foundation in Nymphenburg, Munich on March 1, 2016; and then modified in subsequent lectures at the Warburg Institute, Universities of Manchester, Hamburg and Cambridge in 2016–2017 (Freedberg 2016). Didi-Huberman 2002 (English translation Didi-Huberman 2017) remains by far the richest treatment we have on the subjects of *Nachleben* and *Pathosformeln* (see especially Didi-Huberman 2017, pp. 123–148); like all his contributions to the study of Warburg, whether on these or the expression of emotion, Warburg's relationship with Darwin, the representation of the figure in motion, the *Bilderatlas* and the role of memory-traces in the transmission of culture, whether in this work or elsewhere in the items listed in the bibliography to this volume, Didi-Huberman's work has been both an inspiration and an indispensable source of references.

17 Warburg 2010a, p. 687. On these topics, see also the valuable discussion in Didi-Huberman 2017, pp. 146–148. The work to which Warburg referred is: Theodor Piderit, *Wissenschaftliches System der Mimik und Physiognomik*, Detmold: Klingenberg, 1867.

the defining criterion of the sense of actual movement it conveys, as well as the implications for memory of reflexive responses to physiognomic expressions of emotion. If ever there were an inclusion of sense-data into a study of reaction and counter-reaction in and to cultural forms, it is here. In Warburg's view (following Darwin, he says) the memory of a sensible stimulus is not a simple matter of reaction, but rather a polar process full of tensions. Culture is not simply to be understood in terms of dynamic responses to sense stimuli but rather as productive counter-reactions to the inherent burdens imposed by the other on them.¹⁸

While Winckelmann and Burckhardt have always been present at the Institute, Lessing and Nietzsche have been much less so, especially in the years after World War II. Indeed, they have almost been forgotten and rarely appear in the Institute's publications;¹⁹ yet without Lessing, Warburg's particular interest in movement and emotion is unimaginable; without Nietzsche, it would be impossible to understand either Warburg's sense of the roles of the primitive and barbaric in culture, or of the alien and the Dionysiac – to say nothing of the relationship between the rational and irrational. Only by grasping these polarities and confronting the tensions between movement and stillness, popular culture and elite culture, Antiquity and the contemporary can we come to terms with the dialectics which lie at the core of Warburg's thought and are essential to his approach to the history and mechanisms of cultural transmission.²⁰

Warburg introduced the final meeting of his Burckhardt seminar of 1926 to 1927 with the observation: "We must recognize Burckhardt and Nietzsche as receivers of mnemonic waves, and see that their consciousness of the world affects them in wholly different ways."²¹ Warburg's particular coupling of Burckhardt and Nietzsche had rich implications for his conception of his task as a cultural historian and sociologist. The mechanistic words of transmission

18 Cf.: "Die Darwinsche Theorie von der Erinnerung an den sinnfälligen Reizzustand musste dabei freilich nicht als einfacher, sondern als polarer Vorgang aufgefasst werden in dem Sinne, dass die Stilwandelung nicht als einfache dynamische Reaktion, sondern als Gegenreaktion gegen eine Belastung aufgefasst wurde" (Warburg 2010a, p. 688).

19 See, however, Gombrich 1958. Even so, the very scanty representation of Lessing in the Institute's Library remains both striking and remediable.

20 See, e.g.: "[...] dass eine ikonologische Analyse, die sich durch grenzpolizeiliche Befangenheit weder davon abschrecken lässt, Antike, Mittelalter und Neuzeit als zusammenhängende Epoche anzusehen, [...] die grossen allgemeinen Entwicklungsvorgänge in ihrem Zusammenhange beleuchtet" (Warburg 2010i, p. 396). Cf. the more complex and moving exposition of the role of the *Auseinandersetzung* between polar opposites, not only in terms of the productive release of cultural tensions in new forms, but also of the benefits of reflection, distancing and *Besonnenheit* in his final lecture to the doctoral students in Hamburg on July 30, 1929, cited in the final note below (Gombrich 1986, pp. 280–281). See also Warburg's introductory lecture to the *Bilderreihe* of *Orientalisierende Astrologie* given to the Vierter Orientalistentag of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (Warburg 2012e; also cited in note 64 below) on September 30, 1926: "[D]amit in steigender Unanfechtbarkeit die europäische Kultur als Auseinandersetzungserzeugnis heraustritt, ein Prozess, bei dem wir, soweit die astrologischen Orientierungsversuche in Betracht kommen, weder nach Freund noch Feind zu suchen haben, sondern vielmehr nach Symptomen einer zwischen weitgespannten Gegenpolen pendelnden, aber in sich einheitlichen Seelenschwingung" (Warburg 1932/1998q, p. 565).

21 "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" (Warburg 2010q, p. 695). See also Gombrich 1986, p. 254. The meeting was held on July 27, 1927.

("mnemic waves") he uses here appear ever more frequently after Kreuzlingen, but they still come as a slight shock. On the other hand, his assertion of Nietzsche's and Burckhardt's very different takes on what Warburg called *Weltbewusstsein* comes as no surprise. It is a fleeting reference to a Hegelian kind of transcendent world-consciousness, while the drive to see the polar tensions within it emerges with great clarity.

"We must let them illuminate each other", he observed, "in order to understand Burckhardt as the sufferer of his profession". "Both of them", he continued, "are very sensitive seismographers who are shaken to their foundation when they receive the waves and must transmit them; but there is one great distinction: Burckhardt received the waves from the region of the past, he sensed the dangerous tremors and saw to it that the foundations of his seismograph had to be strengthened".²² In the course of emphasizing how much Nietzsche wished to learn from Burckhardt, Warburg revealed how far he was now inclined to a view of culture that was predicated on restraint and self-control, rather than on impetuous or orgiastic involvement in its rituals and ritual forms.²³ Though Warburg never let go of his sense of the importance of the latter, he nevertheless acknowledged that while Burckhardt "experienced the extremes of oscillation, he never surrendered to them completely and unthinkingly".²⁴

This is how Warburg, in the face of great upheavals like the First World War, felt that he, too, needed to react: avoid surrendering to the extremes of oscillation between orgiastic involvement and passive detachment, emotionally difficult though that might be. Nietzsche was a seer like the biblical Nabi, running out on the street and tearing his clothes; Burckhardt like the classical Lynceus up in his tower, singing "for seeing I'm born, for watching, employed".²⁵ Though Warburg never actually cited this passage from Goethe he must certainly have wanted to recall it here. Nietzsche was a "thyrsus-bearer", as that repeated Warburgian term for wild enthusiasm went. In him, Warburg observed, "the ancient orgiastic states were a kind of dream-world, and as a poet he produced invocations from a musical sphere that Burckhardt never attained".²⁶

These were the kinds of major cultural polarities that Warburg so determinedly sought to define. Burckhardt had "turned away from [Nietzsche] like someone who sees a Dervish run through the streets of Jerusalem, Velede against an amok-runner [...]. In short, he had

22 "Wir müssen sie sich gegenseitig beleuchten lassen, und diese Betrachtung muss uns dazu verhelfen, Burckhardt als Erleider seines Berufes zu sehen. Beide sind empfindliche Seismographen, die in ihren Grundfesten beben, wenn sie die Welt empfangen und weitergeben müssen. Aber ein großer Unterschied: Burckhardt hat die Welle aus der Region der Vergangenheit empfangen, hat die gefährlichen Erschütterungen gefühlt und dafür gesorgt, dass das Fundament des Seismographen gestärkt wurde" (Warburg 2010q, p. 695); my translation is slightly different from that of Gombrich 1986, p. 254.

23 It is indeed worth reading the almost dithyrambic conclusion to the "Schlussitzung" of 1927, including lines such those quoted in notes 26 and 27. Ever the compulsion to find some kind of union out of polarity!

24 "Er hat zu den äusseren Schwingungen, obgleich er sehr leidet, nie völlig und unbedenklich ja gesagt" (Warburg 2010q, p. 695). The allusions, of course, are to the ancient German priestess Velede and, possibly, to Agave, the mother of Pentheus, and his aunts, who tore him apart at the behest of Dionysus.

25 "[Z]um Sehen geboren, zum Schauen bestellt" (Goethe, *Faust*, II, IV, vv. 11288–11289).

26 "Bei Nietzsche ist der antikisierende Orgasmus ein Wunschbild, dem er nicht gewachsen war, wobei er als Dichter Anrufe hervorgebracht hat, die aus einem musikalischen Gebiet stammen, das Burckhardt nie erreichte [*sic*]" (Warburg 2010q, p. 698). Gombrich 1986, p. 257.

sought what was the very opposite of Nietzsche – restrained and exalted form [...] a form which was life and restraint at the same time: Rubens.”²⁷ No wonder Rubens was the subject of Burckhardt’s last book.²⁸ Like Rubens, Burckhardt “possessed the dominion of the eyes which presented to him the discipline of form [...]. He could remain sitting in his tower and act as a reflecting mirror, because what affected him was form rather than mystic drama: Velleda and the mother who tears her son from limb to limb.”²⁹

This, however, this was not enough: “Putting himself out there alone against the strongest shocks, Nietzsche with his belief in the superior logic of fate perished [...]. Thus we suddenly see the influence of Antiquity in both its currents, the so-called Apollonian and the Dionysian.”³⁰ Burckhardt had “what lifts him above us and what remains our example: the ability, through his *sophrosyne*, to feel the limits of his own mission, perhaps even too sharply, but at any rate not to transcend them.”³¹ That was Warburg’s dream, vain as it was. Restraint and distancing *versus* unreflective and insufficiently self-aware involvement, lacking, precisely, the *sophrosyne* that was so important a constituent of *Besonnenheit* – these were the hallmarks of the “bifurcation of two types of seer” with which Warburg never ceased to struggle.³² Nevertheless, in the end it was the Nietzschean dichotomy and the impact of Nietzsche’s own formulations that triumphed over the declaration of intellectual fealty to Burckhardtian enlightenment as is clear both from the final seminar and in Warburg’s work as a whole.³³

27 “Nietzsche hat stark um Burckhardt geworben. Burckhardt hat sich von ihm abgewendet, wie einer, der in Jerusalem einem Derwisch laufen sieht: Velleda gegen einen Amokläufer [...]. Jetzt hat er das gesucht, was das Gegenteil von Nietzsche war, er sucht das Mass und die gesteigerte Form, sodass es eine Form gab, die Leben war und Bändigung zugleich: Rubens” (Warburg 2010q, p. 698).

28 Burckhardt 1898b.

29 “Er hatte die Welt der Augen, die ihm die geprägte Form vorführte [...]. Er konnte auf seinem Turm sitzen bleiben und als Auffangspiegel wirken, weil, was auf ihn wirkte, Gestaltung war und nicht mystisches Drama: Velleda und die Mutter, die den Sohn zerreit” (Warburg 2010q, p. 698). Translation lightly adapted from Gombrich 1986, p. 257.

30 “Dieses sich Aussetzen den stärksten Erschütterungen als Einsamer, daran ist Nietzsche mit einer überlegenen Logik des Schicksals zugrunde gegangen [...]. Wir sehen auf einmal den Einfluss der Antike bei den beiden Stömungen, der sogenannten apollinischen und der dionysischen” (Warburg 2010q, p. 698). The ellipsis is mine. It contains Warburg’s further asseveration: “Er hat ja die Reaktion gegen die selbstgefällige Pathosformel erlebt bei Wagner” [He had reacted against the self-satisfied pathos formula he found in Wagner]. I leave it out because the excursus it demands must await another occasion.

31 “Aber er [Burckhardt] hat das gehabt, was ihn eben über uns hinaushebt und was unser Vorbild ist: die Fähigkeit durch seine *Sophrosyne* die Grenzen seiner eigenen Mission vielleicht zu scharf zu fühlen, aber jedenfalls nicht zu überschreiten” (Warburg 2010q, p. 699). It could not be more significant that in his life of Warburg Gombrich adds, as a quotation from Warburg, but one which I have not found in the latter’s text, the significant words “since his mental poise restrains him” (Gombrich 1986, p. 258).

32 See also the visionary, idealistic and finally very moving words he spoke to the graduating doctoral students at Hamburg in 1929, three months before his death, as cited in note 93.

33 “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. Bernoulli über Burckhardt [...]. An Nietzsche und Burckhardt können wir sehen, wie sich das Sehertum in seiner Grundauffassung gabelt” (Warburg 2010q, p. 698).

Unless both Nietzsche and Lessing are brought more firmly back to the Institute which carries Warburg's name, we shall fail to identify the most critical and generative tensions that lie at the core of his thought.

5. Gesture: Memory, Language and Biology

The Burckhardian and Nietzschean polarities also inform the ways in which corporeal vitality and physical entrainment meet theory and history in Warburg: on the one hand, primitive wildness and direct manual action (*Hantieren* is the term Warburg uses most often for this),³⁴ on the other, self-aware distancing necessary for contemplation. Without that distancing and the ensuing possibility of contemplation, Clio would be disabled. History emerges most fully as a product of this entire dialectic. In its Warburgian conception it reveals itself in all its imaginativeness in his history-traversing descriptions of the passage of both images and particular forms of culture from the most ancient possible times to our own.

What Warburg wanted to show was that memory depends not just on the studied accumulation of facts (or anecdotes, folktales, or superstitions, since these, too, must inevitably be the historian's subject) but on the physiological and biological dimensions of engrams and the physical, muscular and neural underpinnings of the emotional energies which drive the transmission of cultural forms and patterns. The historian must consider the ways in which forms become or are combined into patterns, and how both form and pattern reappear from culture to culture, however faintly and in however transmuted a way. The pressures of context on such dynamics then become the focus of our anthropologically, socially and psychologically oriented histories. Inspired by teachers such as Usener (1834–1905), Adolf Bastian (1826–1905), Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915) and Tito Vignoli (1829–1914), Warburg searched for the primitive and arcane beginnings of things, of image-making and of language (hence the continuing references in all his notes on *Urworte* and *Urbegärde* as well). Only in this way could religious and political differences ultimately be reconciled and the search for *Nachleben* be justified.

Warburg's drive to the engrammatic and to the persistence of apparently similar forms across cultures derived from what he called the *Ursprache* of emotional feeling and the *Urbegärde*, the primal gestures of emotion.³⁵ These were the wellsprings, the source of the sap from which all cultural change began and which underlay the dynamics of growth and change in the course of cultural transmission.³⁶ The *Bilderatlas* was not just a matter of comparing images and seeking their formal similarities and genealogies: it was an effort to understand their transformations, even in their minutiae. It was for this reason, too, that Warburg described the *Pathosformeln* which formed so basic a part of the *Bilderatlas* in terms of the *Urworte leidenschaftlicher Gebärdensprache* (itself the title of the exhibition of February 1927 dedicated to

34 See also Wind 1931, pp. 174–177; Freedberg 2018, pp. 44–62, *passim*.

35 See especially Wedepohl 2012.

36 See notes 55, 72 and 73 below for the origins of the metaphor of the "fructifying" (*Säfstesteigen*).

illustrated editions of Ovid).³⁷ In seeking the origins of motifs, whether in gesture or in language, Warburg sought to answer the question of what made works of Antiquity – and not only Greek and Roman Antiquity – still vital. Hence the obvious importance of the *Leben in Nachleben*.

6. Long Trajectories: High and Low

As we know from the great essay on the iconography of the frescoes in Palazzo Schifanoia, Warburg believed that the clues to understanding the past (and more specifically the Renaissance) may be taken back to the deepest time and the most remote and distant civilizations. The key to the mysterious astrology of the frescoes in Borso d'Este's Palazzo Schifanoia was to be found not just in Hellas and Rome, but in the decanic doctrines of ancient Babylon, passed on via the Indian philosopher Varahamihira in the sixth century to Persia and Anatolia. These strands of ancient cosmological thought came together in the ninth-century *Introductorium Maius* of Albumasar; were translated in twelfth-century Spain by Ibn Ezra and in thirteenth-century France by a Jew called Hagins; passed into the *Astrolabium Planum* of Pietro d'Abano (the Faust of fourteenth-century Padua); and finally appeared in pictorial form in the wonderful frescoes which Francesco del Cossa executed for Borso d'Este in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara in the middle of the fifteenth century – even before they were first printed in Augsburg in 1488.

In Warburg, of course, the image trajectory from Babylon to Ferrara was even denser than this. At first reading, the genealogies Warburg traces all sound (and sometimes all look) far-fetched; but even when the visual parallels are not immediately clear, even when one cannot follow every link in the chain of continuities that Warburg describes, there can be no doubt of the deep antiquity of the origins he traces or of the vitality which is sustained in their transformations across time and space – or of the creative and imaginative possibilities they open up before our own, generally more sceptical, comprehension. In pursuing these immensely remote origins, both temporally and spatially, Warburg was searching for basic forms of movement which subtend emotion and have sufficient energy within them to sustain their continued expression in material form across time, in however modified and distant a way.

Thus Warburg looked at the low as well as the high. He looked at *panni* and *boti*, Flemish textiles and popular Florentine votive images,³⁸ as he strove to establish both the formal and the social genealogy of the presence of rustic peasants amidst ancient sarcophagi in the paintings of Ghirlandaio and his Florentine contemporaries.³⁹ He sought the origins of

37 Warburg 2012g.

38 On *panni*, see esp. Warburg 1932/1998j; on *boti*, see the famous Appendix and Additions (both on votive images of wax and other materials, mostly in Santissima Annunziata in Florence, but also elsewhere) to Warburg 1902, pp. 117–119 and pp. 349–350.

39 Cf. Warburg 1932/1998b (1907); and the discussion of the “organic polarity” represented by this contrast in the altarpiece of the Sassetti Chapel in Warburg 2010g, esp. p. 277; also Warburg 1932/1998c (1905), esp. p. 181. For more on low and high in Warburg, see too Warburg 2010f (1901).

astronomy in astrology, of mathematics in magical superstition about numbers.⁴⁰ Kepler's dream grew out of his views on lunar astronomy and eventually led to his discovery of the elliptical orbits of the planets. Gombrich was certainly no slouch when it came to popular imagery, but for the most part he stood back from analysing the dynamics – the engines, so to speak – of the trajectory not just from Antiquity to modern, but from popular practice and portrayal to higher learning and elite cultural forms.

Similarly, despite his own great interest in the psychology of vision, Gombrich never really came to grips with Warburg's inchoate view of the role of empathy in one's engagement with images. Wind was right in his famously critical review of Gombrich's life of Warburg to note the extraordinary absence of the figure of Robert Vischer and his influential theory of *Einfühlung*, which so profoundly affected Warburg.⁴¹

For all the intensity of his realization of the need for distance and reflection, Warburg still acknowledged the empathetic power of the *Pathosformel* and the degree of automaticity it so often entails. Its effect depends fundamentally on the instantaneity of response which it is capable of provoking; and it is effective to the degree that it evokes in the viewer the activation of the same neural substrate that would be evoked if one were performing the same action as the one seen – thereby generating the emotion which accompanies the action, too. What is formulaic in the *Pathosformel* – in other words, what sustains the very formularity of the gesture – has not only to do with formulaic copying but also with the fact that both the simulated embodiment of the seen action and the accompanying emotion occur even prior to contextual input and prefrontal modulation of motor and emotional response.

From the very start, Warburg could not have been more attentive to the roles of fear and superstition both in the understanding of science and in human responses to images. These are often responses that precede reflection and reason, and almost as often resist any form of modulatory logic. But what underlies this resistance? This was a significant issue for Warburg. He was quick to see the implications of the polarity of contagious movement and emotion *versus* still contemplation, but how might it be possible to understand the drive to imitative movement and emotion elicited by images and the resistance – and

40 Cf. also Goethe's statement, as cited in Warburg 1999n: "A great part of what is commonly known as superstition springs from a misapplication of mathematics; for which reason the name of mathematician was formerly equated with that of a charlatan or an astrologer" (p. 651). The source of the quotation is Goethe's "Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre: Roger Bacon" (Goethe, *Werke*, Stuttgart: Cotta, 1902–1907, xl, p. 165).

41 For Charles Hope's confusion of Robert Vischer with Friedrich Theodor Vischer in his attempt to absolve Gombrich of Wind's charge, see note 9 above, as well as the further discussion in Freedberg 2018, pp. 42–43, 48. In his otherwise rather unfair and hostile review of Gombrich's excellent biography, Wind wrote: "One phrase of Warburg's psychological thinking embarrasses Professor Gombrich particularly: like Vischer, Warburg believed that the physiology of the brain would one day offer the possibility of giving a scientifically exact account of the workings of empathy and its ramifications [...]. It is to be hoped that this interesting phase of Warburg's thought will be studied by an historian who has mastered the physiological psychology of that period. The interest is more than antiquarian" (Wind 1971, p. 735). Wind was right.

indifference – to them? He would study all these phenomena and the tensions between them, not only in the arsenal that was his library, but also in the observatory (his *Beobachtungsturm*, observation tower, as he called it) and laboratory he hoped it would become.⁴²

For Warburg it was essential to understand the dialectics of high and low, of realizing that “Athens ever and again wishes to be newly reconquered from Alexandria” (*Athen will eben immer wieder neu aus Alexandrien zurückerobert sein*), as he famously put it in the essay on “Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten.”⁴³ Orient is always present in Occident – not in the biased and negative way suggested by Strzygowski, but constructively.⁴⁴ It is as if form always desires injections of wildness for its originality, novelty and generative potential. But these qualities come at a price. One has to seek the points of mediation not only in the polarities of automaticity and poetic invention (as suggested in the late reworkings of the last of the four theses of Warburg’s Botticelli dissertation),⁴⁵ but also in the *Auseinandersetzungen* between cultures – as Warburg himself bitterly learned in 1915 and tried to justify historically in the extraordinarily dialectical and ultimately irenic essay on pagan-antique prophecy in Luther’s time.⁴⁶

Both this essay and that on Palazzo Schifanoia perfectly illustrate the Warburgian approach to past genealogies and to the relations between popular and elite forms of representation, in both image and in word. They exemplify how Warburg proceeded: the most minute historical analyses, grounded in the most precise philology, and then, suddenly, in the midst of these immensely complex yet often poetic sentences there emerges into the bright light of clear expression the most explosive general statement, often political, often sociological, almost always a product of reflection on the relations between images, superstition,

42 For the extraordinary lecture which he gave to the small group gathered to discuss the constitution of the *Kuratorium* of his Library (consisting of his brothers, his cousin, Saxl and two others), see Warburg 2010a; as well as pp. xxx, xxx, xxx and notes 7 and 54 here.

43 Warburg 2010h, p. 485.

44 The most famous of Strzygowski’s books on this subject was *Orient oder Rom* (1901).

45 The last thesis reads: “Der künstlerische Manierismus oder Idealismus ist nur ein besonderer Fall des automatischen Reflexes der künstlerischen Einbildungskraft.” However, his draft for this passage was significantly different. It originally read: “Der künstlerische Manierismus oder Idealismus ist nur ein besonderer Fall des automatischen Reflexes des organisierten Körpers.” To this he added and then crossed out an explanatory “mithin: unsere (Vibrationstätigkeit)”. For the relevant texts see Warburg 2015c, pp. 286–287. In 1906 he made a revealing annotation on the printed version: “anst[elle]: automatischen Reflexes: ausgleichende polare Reflexbewegung, die durch Steigerung der Einzelausdrucksform die Abkehr von der Wirklichkeit auszugleichen sucht; Ersatz d[es] positiven Hintergrundes durch d[en] Superlativ der Geste. Die Energie der poetischen Stimmung ist f[ür] uns deshalb so stark fühlbar, weil die Energie der [sic] realen Zusammenhanges (den wir historisch so ungern bemerken) eben in Energie der idealisierenden [und] rätselhaft verhüllenden Abkehrbewegung zu uns spricht” (ibid., pp. 290–291); see also Warburg 2010p, pp. 109, 123. He articulates a similar position in a remarkable series of notes relating to the importance of the ancient dynamogram in his very final doctoral seminar of 1927/28: “Die energetische Polarisierung bildhafter antiker gedächtnismässiger Einprägungen als urtümlicher seelischer Vorgang” (quoted after Gombrich 1986, p. 248). See also the passage on reflex responses quoted in note 49 below.

46 A notable contribution to the discussion of the relationship between the events of 1915 and this essay is to be found in Wedepohl 2008.

religion and society. He learned about the importance of these relations, as Saxl pointed out, from Usener as much as from anyone else.⁴⁷

Warburg's approach to the tensions inherent in visual representation could nowhere be more relevant than in the contemporary use and abuse of images by Daesh (the subject of one of the most successful events at the Warburg Institute in the anniversary year, put together with the help of the *Bilderfahrzeuge* group).⁴⁸ Never would it have been possible to imagine (and never would anyone have wanted to imagine) the effectiveness and force of images of the past in the present through the digitization and dissemination of images of the destruction of some of the most compelling, influential and beautiful images that have survived till our time – and all as if in real time, instantaneously or apparently instantaneously. This would have horrified Warburg – images produced by hand but transmitted in new, yet exact images from which the hand was absent. Nonetheless, he would have acknowledged that the effectiveness even of these new kinds of images had to do with the lessons of the *Pathosformel*, that is, of the automatic imitation of striking gestures (in this case literally striking gestures) to evoke some of the most powerful emotions, emotions whose power depends not on spiritualized poetry but on embodied involvement, or both – the poetry of the work, the shock of the effects of the imitated gesture.⁴⁹ This was the art history which Warburg in 1903 thought of as the art history of *homo sapiens* as mimetic being – an art history of which he considered himself the unique representative.⁵⁰

* * *

47 As in note 2 and p. xxx above.

48 See the schedule of the workshop "Contemporary Image Conflicts: Violence and Iconoclasm from Charlie Hebdo to Daesh", held at the Warburg Institute on January 14, 2016, at: <https://iconology.hypotheses.org/1577> (accessed February 23, 2021). For the foundation and organization of the *Bilderfahrzeuge* group at the Warburg Institute, see <https://iconology.hypotheses.org> (accessed February 23, 2021) as well as p. xxx above.

49 On automatic responses, see also his comments related to facial expressions of emotion in the lecture "Vom Arsenal zum Laboratorium": "Dass der allgemeine Gesichtsausdruck eine reflexmässig wiederholte Aeusserung sei, die auf rein geistigen Anreiz so reagiert, als ob man sich eines sinnfälligeren Reizzustandes erinnert, ist ja gerade das Hauptthema des Buches von Darwin [*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1888]." He goes right on to speak of a "Reizerinnerung nach dem Gesetz des grössten Kraftmasses bei Gesichtsausdrucksbewegungen" (Warburg 2010a, pp. 687–688). See also note 45 above.

50 This self-categorization occurs in the letter he wrote to his colleague, friend and distant cousin, the art historian Adolph Goldschmidt, on August 9, 1903 (the so-called "Lehrter Bahnhof" letter), in which he already describes two different trajectories of art history and their respective representatives. The second trajectory was the one which set itself the goal of studying the "sociological conditions" which constrain and inhibit artists. These conditions were divided into different categories, usually represented by more than one scholar; but in the case of the category of conditions that pertain to the "Natur des mimischen Menschen", Warburg declared himself to be the only representative (Warburg 2010a, p. 676). On automaticity and poetry, see also the previous note and related text.

The initial idea for the conference of which this volume is a record was to examine not only the work of Aby Warburg, but also his heritage. By this, as with *Nachleben*, we intended not just the study of Warburgian concepts and methods, but also their implications for the future of the humanities. Only a few speakers risked this. Most concentrated on the interpretation of his work, his influence on other thinkers and his relationship with his teachers and his peers. Many depended on newly discovered material, mostly from the rich archives at the Warburg Institute. This would not be to say that the conference papers were not full of implication for others studying Warburgian subjects; but if we return both to the work published in his lifetime and to the material which has emerged since the publication of Gertrud Bing's edition of his essays in 1932 and Dieter Wuttke's anthology of those essays in 1979,⁵¹ there are many pointers to how one might reconceive of the basic epistemological paradigms and parameters of the humanities now.⁵²

7. Bridges across Borders: From Art History to Kulturwissenschaft

The first, admittedly schematic outline of what Warburg hoped to achieve was set out in a letter drafted in August 1903 to his cousin Adolph Goldschmidt (already then a well-known historian of medieval art).⁵³ These basic elements of his thinking about the discipline of art history were then developed in the codas to the great lectures on Palazzo Schifanoia and on pagan-antique prophecy in Luther's time, and finally in the lecture he gave to his brothers, his son, Saxl and two others at a meeting to discuss the constitution of the *Kuratorium* of his Library on December 31, 1927, in which he reviewed its evolution and prospects.⁵⁴ Together they offer the best indications of his view of the passage from art history to a global cultural history.

Warburg saw: 1) that while standard aesthetic art history and connoisseurship were, as he put it, merely decorative flowers in the field of art history, they would not be able to provide an account of the sap that rises from the roots and drives the growth of the flower.⁵⁵ Further,

51 Warburg 1932/1998; Warburg 1992 (originally published in 1979).

52 In addition to the suggestions made in this essay, I have also set out some of these in my lecture "Per Monstra ad Sphaeram: Aby Warburg and the Future of the Humanities", which I first delivered at the Siemens Stiftung at Nymphenburg in Munich on March 1, 2016 (see note 16 above).

53 Warburg 2010o; Gombrich 1986, pp. 141–145. See also note 50 above.

54 Warburg 2010a. See also notes 7 and 42 above and 73 below.

55 Referring to the hedonistic aesthetes from whom he had so firmly sought to detach himself, he took a swipe at those who were only "satisfied with a flora of the most odorous and most beautiful plants" (*Mag wer will sich mit einer Flora der wohlriechenden und schönsten Pflanzen begnügen*), "this would never lead to a botanical physiology explaining the rising of the sap, for this will only yield its secrets to those who examine life in its subterranean roots" (*eine Pflanzenphysiologie des Kreislaufs und das Säftesteigens kann sich aus ihr nicht entwickeln, denn diese erschliesst sich nur dem, der das Leben im unterirdischen Wurzelwerk untersucht*) (quoted after Gombrich 1986, p. 245; Warburg 2010l, p. 631). See also WIA, III.98.6.1, p. 82 (cited in Gombrich 1986, pp. 266–267); III.55.1–9; Warburg 2010m, p. 203; Warburg 2000a, p. 3. See Ginzburg 1989a, esp. p. 30, on Warburg's impatience with traditional aestheticizing art history. Cf. also notes 72 and 73 below.

he realized: 2) that art history had to subsume all images;⁵⁶ 3) that art history had therefore to become image history;⁵⁷ 4) that this in turn had to become an image science;⁵⁸ 5) that art history could not be studied outside the parameters of the history of religion and therefore of superstition as well;⁵⁹ 6) that astronomy could not be understood outside its roots in astrology;⁶⁰ 7) that culture and science rested on magic and superstition; 8) that superstition had its origins in the deepest past and across cultural boundaries;⁶¹ 9) that art history was therefore part of cultural history;⁶² 10) that cultural history should become cultural science, *Kulturwissenschaft*.⁶³ Above all, Warburg realized that the prime task of the cultural historian and the cultural scientist was: 11) to achieve a *Brückenbau*, bridge-building, across the cultures and between the arts and sciences.⁶⁴ That *Brückenbau*, it can now be seen, entailed a bridge

56 "[S]oweit nämlich alles Bildschaffen in ihr Studiengebiet einbegriffen ist" (Warburg 2010h, p. 425).

57 Aside from the passage cited in the previous note, see also below on Warburg's final insistences on the importance of the minor arts (and applied works of art as well).

58 Implied quite clearly – once again! – in the concluding sentences of "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten" (Warburg 2010h, p. 485).

59 Ibid.

60 Another theme that runs like a figured-bass throughout his work, but see Warburg 2010e (also for the many insistences on the importance of astrology for the understanding of Renaissance art); and especially the lecture Warburg gave in Memory of Franz Boll on April 25, 1925 (Warburg 2008b), see note 10 above.

61 Perhaps the most critical passage of this kind is that in the dark conclusion to "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung", where he notes: "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", and so on (Warburg 2010h, pp. 484–485; and continued as in note 87 below). The conclusion moves forward even more darkly to: "Denn eigentlich ergreift der Aberglaube nur falsche Mittel, um ein wahres Bedürfnis zu befriedigen, und ist deswegen weder so scheltenswert, als er gehalten wird, noch so selten in den sogenannten aufgeklärten Jahrhunderten und bei aufgeklärten Menschen" (Warburg 2010h, p. 486).

62 The theme is omnipresent in his work, but for a clear statement, see again the peroration to the "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung" (Warburg 2010h, p. 485).

63 For the background to Warburg's clear notion of *Kunstgeschichte* as *Kulturwissenschaft*, apparent throughout almost all his writings, the literature is now large, ranging from Edgar Wind's "Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*" (Wind 1993) to Ernst Cassirer's *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* (Cassirer 2000). The essay was originally published in 1942: "Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften" (Cassirer 1942). As Peter Miller notes in his essay in this volume, Cassirer used it as an opportunity to distinguish his Warburgian understanding of *Kulturwissenschaft* from that of those earlier neo-Kantians. As will have become clear from all the above notes, almost all these aspects of Warburg's ideals and commitments appear clearly in the wonderful codas to the essays on the the frescoes in Palazzo Schifanoia and pagan-antique prophecies in Luther's age (Warburg 2010i and Warburg 2010h).

64 The term occurs frequently throughout all his work, but perhaps no more ambitiously (and more revelatorily, almost epiphanically) so than in his introductory lecture of September 30, 1926 (see note 20 above). He began with these words: "Ich möchte Ihnen im Namen der Kulturwissenschaft, die sich auf bildpsychologischer Grundlage an das Problem der europäischen Geistesgeschichte heranwagen muss, dafür danken, dass Sie mir Gelegenheit gegeben haben, von unseren Vorversuchen Kenntnis zu geben." He goes on to refer to the translations from Indian and Arabic texts that had helped to construct the "großen Brückenbau der ungeschriebenen pragmatischen Universalgeschichte des menschlichen Geistes" (Warburg 2012e, p. 61 n. 8), with the relevant references to the notes for this lecture, held in the Warburg Institute Archive.

from the Enlightenment values for which he strove (as appears so clearly and conclusively at the end of his seminar on Burckhardt) to all those cultural forms and mental habits and inclinations which subverted the Enlightenment but which drove memory and ensured the complex vitality which ensues from cultural exchanges and transformations. Little “after” in the afterlife without it; even less “life” without it.

What would this new paradigm consist of? It would be based on a philology that was rigorous and a history that was both detailed and aware of what stood beyond the *Grenzen* – the borders – culturally, geographically, academically and epistemologically. It would embrace what stood beyond all these borders. The *Grenzpolizei*, Border Police, were the opponents. The new paradigm would not just derive from, but be constituted by:

- 1) Anthropology
- 2) Psychology⁶⁵
- 3) Politics – that is, not just the sociological dimensions of cultural history, but also its political ones⁶⁶
- 4) The study of religion and the history of religions⁶⁷
- 5) Biology

Along with comparative cultural history, these are mostly fields which have pretty much fallen out of Warburg Institute programmes in recent years, biology perhaps most of all. With a few exceptions, most notably, perhaps, in the work of Carlo Severi,⁶⁸ the role of biology in Warburg’s writing has been little studied.⁶⁹ It is not always explicit, but it was critical for his engagement with Darwin, Richard Semon and, to a lesser extent, with Ewald Hering, for example.⁷⁰ It formed the basis of his thinking about the relationship between movement and emotion, between gesture and the expression and communication of pathos. It subtended

65 Indeed, it is worth remembering that, as he put it in one of his notes (headed “Gedächtnis”) for the lecture on the Snake Dance, Warburg envisaged the aim of his library to be no less than “eine Urkundensammlung zur Psychologie der menschlichen Ausdruckskunde” (Warburg 2010n, p. 582; see also Gombrich 1986, p. 222).

66 Warburg’s explicit statement that the art history with which he was concerned fell into the sociological realm rather than the iconological one appears already in the letter on the different directions of art history to Adolph Goldschmidt of 1903 (see note 50 above; but also Wedepohl 2014).

67 Especially throughout “Heidnisch-antike Weissagung” (Warburg 2010h).

68 As most notably in Severi 2003.

69 Noting Vignoli’s approach in his *Mito e Scienza* of 1879, already translated into German in 1880 as *Mythus und Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Brockhaus), Gombrich yet again put the matter in a nutshell: “[T]he barriers which former ages had erected between the various disciplines such as philology and history, biology and philosophy, could only form obstacles which had to be broken down [...]. Anthropology, ethnology, psychology, and biology must join forces. Psychology has arrived at a dead end by losing contact with physiology and anthropology” (Gombrich 1986, pp. 68–69).

70 On Warburg’s relationship with Hering and with the neurophysiology of his day, see Pinotti 2004; Wedepohl 2014b, pp. 393–394. But see also the essay by Pinotti in the present volume, especially section 5 (“Material Memory, Epigenesis and Engrams”).

his concerns about the dynamogrammic and the engrammatic, and therefore also about the relationship between biology and sociology in the constitution of memory and cultural memory.⁷¹ The two disciplines – sociology and biology – are linked together throughout his work. The intimacy of the bond is apparent in the very language Warburg uses, as in the remarkable statement in the notes for his lecture on the Valois Tapestries in April 1928 at the re-opening of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, where he observes: “The task of social memory here shows itself clearly in its mnemonic function, preserving, by means of ever renewed contact with the monuments of the past, the rising of sap from the fertile subsoil of the past into *antikisierende* forms, so that a form instinct with energy does not become a [merely] calligraphic dynamogram.”⁷² While never clearly articulated by Warburg, the notions of both dynamogram and engram provide further proof of his engagement with the biology of movement and of memory which he may not have defined, but which he hoped to explore in the laboratory he anticipated. He would have been the first to marshal the possibilities offered by the current cognitive neuroscience of bodily and emotional responses, not only for understanding the relationship between dynamograms and engrams but also for the underlying issues they raise about the imbrication of movement, emotion and long-term memory.

8. Arsenal to Laboratory

It is in this context as well that the lecture which Warburg gave to the small meeting set up to discuss the constitution of the *Kuratorium* of his Library in 1927 (“Vom Arsenal zum Laboratorium”) is to be understood.⁷³ The arsenal, of course, consisted of his books, but his preliminary experiments, his “Vorversuche” as he called them, necessitated a laboratory. Both terms may

71 As in the critical passage already cited in note 10 above from the introduction to the *Mnemosyne* project: “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 einhämmt, dass diese Engramme leidenschaftlicher Erfahrung als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut überleben” (Warburg 2010, p. 631). However, see also the passage where he once more uses the botanical paradigm in connection with the significance of social memory and the function of the mnemonic – presumably the engram – “in preserving, by means of ever-renewed contact with the monuments of the past, the rising of the sap from the fertile subsoil of the past into classicizing form (*antikisierende Gestaltung*)” (quoted after Gombrich 1986, p. 267). See note 55 above and notes 72 and 89.

72 “Die Aufgabe des sozialen Gedächtnisses tritt hierbei als mnemische Funktion klar zu Tage, durch stets erneute Berührung mit den Denkmälern der Vergangenheit selbst das Säftesteigen aus dem Muttergrund der Vergangenheit bis in die antikisierende Gestaltung zu wahren, damit nicht aus der energetisch-erfüllten Gestaltung ein kalligraphiertes Dynamogramm werde” (WIA, III.98.6.1, fols. 81–82). This passage is cited by Gombrich 1986, pp. 266–267 (who has “a form instinct with dynamism from becoming an empty flourish”), just two pages after rightly noting that the tapestries showing the festivals in honour of the Medici “formed the centre of [Warburg’s] exposition, but the real purpose was again to protest against the artificial division between works of fine art and applied art and to demonstrate the importance of the latter for the psychologist of civilization”. The metaphor for the rising of the sap from the fertile subsoil of the past is a particular theme of Warburg’s in these years, which appears again in the introduction to the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* in relation to his disdain for “hedonistic aesthetes” (Warburg 2010, p. 631, as well as note 55 above).

73 As in notes 7, 43 and 55 above.

have been intended in a metaphorical way (the military metaphor was always important to him in his pugnacious commitment to his intellectual and institutional ideals), but one has the impression that the second – the idea of a scientific laboratory – may have been less so and represented a practical desire.

That desire, of course, was adumbrated earlier. There can be no clearer or more moving indication of Warburg's sense of the role of a laboratory in bringing the humanities together with the sciences than the concluding plea of the lecture on pagan-antique prophecy in Luther's time: "May the history of art and the science of religion"⁷⁴ – between which lies nothing at present but wasteland overgrown with verbiage – find themselves one day in learned and lucid minds (minds destined, let us hope, to achieve more than the present writer) and share a workbench in the laboratory of *the cultural science of image history*.⁷⁵ This was not just a further plea for the union of the history of art and the study of religion, but a blunt and forceful expression of the need for the kinds of precision of discourse which he felt was lacking in the humanities and could be learned from the more exact methodologies of what we call science.⁷⁶

At the opening of the conference of which this volume is a record, I announced that we would soon have a post at the Institute for a psychologist who is also a neuroscientist and that we would be making space for their laboratory, in keeping with that interest in the biological bases of human behaviour which Warburg believed to be indispensable to any adequate psychology of civilization. Such a laboratory, it seemed to me, would also have to be concerned with issues relating to image perception and consumption in our present age of digitization – an age in which images proliferate more than ever before, in which virtual reality often replaces reality as a producer and consumer of emotion, and in which human responses to robots and machines need to be precisely measured and adequately theorized. Warburg's prophetic ideas about the relationships between movement and emotion, already suggested to him by his reading of Lessing, could be tied in not just with research on embodiment and

74 The usual translation of *Religionswissenschaft* in English is "religious studies", but I have preferred to use the more literal translation "science of religion" here to maintain the distinction Warburg clearly intended between *Geschichte* and *Wissenschaft*, even though I am fully aware that when we refer in English to "science" we generally intend the Natural and Social Sciences, rather than anything we would be inclined to place amongst the humanities. See also the following note.

75 My translation here adapted lightly from David Britt's translation of: "Mögen sich Kunstgeschichte und Religionswissenschaft, zwischen denen noch phraseologisch überwuchertes Ödland liegt, in klaren und gelehrten Köpfen, denen mehr zu leisten vergönnt sein möge als dem Verfasser, im Laboratorium kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildgeschichte an einem gemeinsamen Arbeitstisch zusammenfinden." The phrase *kulturwissenschaftliche Bildgeschichte* is italicized by Warburg (Warburg 2010h, p. 485) and has been rather misleadingly translated as "*the iconological science of civilization*" (Warburg 1999n, p. 651). Not that my effort at a translation of *kulturwissenschaftliche Bildgeschichte* is much more successful either.

76 One might perhaps argue that all Warburg was doing here was repeating his frequent exasperation at and rejection of aestheticizing art and connoisseurial art history (precisely the kind of art history he looked down upon in the letter to Goldschmidt of almost a quarter century earlier, as in note 50 above); but I think that the juxtaposition of *Wissenschaft* and *Geschichte* here makes his sense of the epistemological polarity clear enough.

implied motion, but also with the newest research on attention and decision-making. This is work which has already commenced amongst our new cognitive neuroscientists, along with the examination of both broader and more specific pressures on empathetic, apathetic and biased responses to people and images.⁷⁷

9. Bilderfahrzeuge: Power and Danger

Warburg firmly considered himself to be a sociologist of images and a psychologist of civilization, not an iconologist or a connoisseur.⁷⁸ This positioning, alongside his desire for a laboratory conceived of as an observation tower – indeed a fortified and rotating observation tower⁷⁹ – made the recent integration of the *Bilderfahrzeuge* group into the Warburg Institute all the more welcome.⁸⁰ It could not, in its very constitution, be more perfectly reflective of the conjunction between Warburgian theory and the thousands of ways in which “image vehicles” now traverse cultures across the globe. Their power and their vicissitudes are aptly demonstrated by the very effectiveness of Daesh’s use of images of image destruction as a means of publicity and recruitment. The festivals of violence which Daesh put on by killing people in the arenas of Palmyra or by destroying idols in the temples of Nineveh and the Museum of Mosul⁸¹ were as much an index of our age as were the festivals of the Medici in the Renaissance or those of the Martyrs of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.⁸²

These days, as in the past, it is hard not to feel a visceral shock at the cruel treatment of images and people, whether casually or as performances. The impresarios of pain know this. They know that their actions on images and people lose their effect through habituation, so they go to ever greater extremes. We flinch, shudder and feel pain at the brutal destruction not just of people but of images, whether of historical monuments, great works of art, or – most of all – of people. Sight provokes and enhances that viscosity – and, it so happens, vice-versa. Even in the case of apparently inanimate monuments we may feel the pain of assaults on them and the wounds they sustain. They seem to contain, even within their materially circumscribed and only apparently immobile objecthood, something of the life which inheres in them, whether because of what they show or how they are shown. Hence the impressions they make, whether as vehicles of sympathy for lost gods, or antipathy to present ones, or simply because of their fate as embodied images, seem to coincide magically.

77 For the BIAS (*Body and Image in the Arts and Sciences*), project at the Warburg Institute under the direction of Professor Manos Tsakiris, see <https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/research/research-projects/bias-body-and-image-arts-and-sciences> (accessed February 23, 2021).

78 See also notes 50, 55 and 72 above, as well, of course, as his constant reference to himself as a ‘seismograph’ of civilization.

79 Sometimes just a *Drehturm*, sometimes a *Beobachtungs-Drehturm*, or even, in a remarkable expansion of an already military metaphor, a *Beobachtungs-Panzerdrehturm der Besonnenheit* (Warburg 2010a, p. 692).

80 As in note 48 and pp. xxx above.

81 As in Freedberg 2022 and Freedberg 2017b.

82 On these, see now Freedberg 2014.

We can now tell why it is not a matter of magic, but of science and reason, upon which the psychology of such responses rests.⁸³ Every day new contributions are being made to the understanding of the neural correlates of interoceptive responses to the sight of images, and the history of art can no longer afford to stand away from such evidence. The anthropology and the sociology upon which not only the *Bilderfahrzeuge* group but all historians of images depend (or ought to depend) can no longer dispense with cognitive neuroscience.

10. The Destruction of People and the Endurance of Images

In such co-operative ways it will be possible to build the bridges of which Aby Warburg dreamed. Then we might begin to understand how images become more important than people in the hands of their exploiters. One can finalize people but one cannot finalize images. One can press the trigger as easily as one presses a button or switches off a computer screen, even a cell phone; but one cannot end the image, because it continues to exist both virtually and digitally – potentially everywhere. Regions disappear under the force and torrent of the ineliminable *Bilderfahrzeuge*. Daesh used images to show how one can terminate people in a way that one cannot terminate their images. To show the destruction of images via images allows the image *vehicles* to be more effective than the cruel destruction of people themselves. Moreover, the images endure (so do the favoured motifs within them, even when transformed and edited), whether as tools of recruitment, aids to propaganda, or simply as terrifying reminders of the implacability of power.

11. Digitization and Contemplation: Empathy and Distance

In the age of digitization, the importance of the heritage of Aby Warburg becomes clearer than ever. The more intensely he worked on the *Bilderatlas* towards the end of his life, the more obsessed he became with the twin notions of *Denkraum* – space for contemplation – and *Besonnenheit*, impossible to translate and old-fashioned even in modern German, but let us here call it a state of conscious and self-aware reflection.⁸⁴ Whatever Warburg intended more precisely by these terms, they reveal a concern about the impossibility of adequate reflection in a world full of ever more accelerating forms of transmission and the dangers of facile absorption in the vast and swift-moving stream of images. Empathy with images comes all-too easily, especially because of the facility and inevitability of imitation of the movements of others. In the light of his early choice to place himself as an art historian in the unique category he defined by the “conditions and constraints of mimetic humanity” (*Bedingtheiten durch die Natur des mimischen Menschen*),⁸⁵ it is hard to imagine that Warburg

83 Or at least of *faith* in science and reason, however misjudged this may sometimes seem to be.

84 See also notes 12, 21, 33, 80 above and p. xxx with note 93 below.

85 Warburg 2010a, p. 676, as well as note 18 above. On this topic see Wind 1931, pp. 174, 177; and “Mimesis and Experience” in Rampley 2000, pp. 15–34.

would not have grasped the potential of the discovery of mirror neurons.⁸⁶ He would immediately have understood their implications for understanding the mechanisms underlying the capacity of the *Pathosformel* to engage the emotions of its respondents through their inward emulation of the gesture they see or their simulation of the observed movement of others. Hence the desire to understand the movements which underlie the emotions that roil, trouble or console others, whether in pictures or reality.

These concerns lay at the heart of Warburg's work. Just before his famous statement about the wish of Athens always to be reconquered by Alexandria, he made the gnomic and suggestive claim: "The revival of the demonic antique completes itself by a kind of polar function of empathetic image-memory. We are in the age of Faust, when the modern scientist – between magical practice and cosmological mathematics – seeks to achieve a space for reflection between himself and the object. Athens ever and again wishes to be newly reconquered from Alexandria."⁸⁷ It was this preoccupation which led him to refer so damningly to the effects of technology on reflection and contemplation: "telephone and telegraph destroy the cosmos" (*Telegramm und Telephon zerstören den Kosmos*), as he stated in the lecture on the Hopi Serpent Ritual that allowed him to be liberated from the confines of Kreuzlingen.⁸⁸

In the last years of Warburg's life, when he returned to Burckhardt in terms of a natural metaphor (the Renaissance as the rising of a generative sap, fructifying future development),⁸⁹ the pressures of technological transmission necessitated a deep reflection on the possibilities of reflection itself, on the need for detachment from too swift a yielding to the seductiveness of images. What was at stake, as Walter Benjamin would also have acknowledged, was too empathetic an engagement with *Pathosformeln* and the need to inhibit the drive to absorption.⁹⁰ More than ever we need the kind of *sophrosyne* which is essential for *Besonnenheit* and which gives space for reflection or *Denkraum*, precisely because of the effort required to be more fully conscious of ourselves in the midst of absorption in the entrainments of the thyrsus-bearers. Drunken, even ecstatic entrainment may be essential for the arousal of poetic invention, but assessment of ourselves in relation to culture, even the finest of its productions, requires a distancing from that inebriated, all-too-empathetic state. "The conscious creation of distance between oneself and the external world can

86 See, e.g., David Freedberg, *Empathy, Motion and Emotion*, in: Klaus Herding, Antje Krause-Wahl (eds.), *Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen. Emotionen in Nahsicht*, Berlin: Driesen, 2007, pp. 17–51 and David Freedberg, Vittorio Gallese, *Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Esthetic Experience*, in: *Trends in Cognitive Science* 11.5 (2007), pp. 197–203.

87 "Die Wiederbelebung der dämonischen Antike vollzieht sich dabei, wie wir sahen, durch eine Art polarer Funktion des einfühlenden 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" (Warburg 2010h, pp. 484–485). Cf. also note 62 above.

88 Warburg 2010b, p. 561.

89 On the rising of this sap (*Säftesteigen*), see notes 55, 71 and 72 above.

90 For perhaps the fiercest of Benjamin's critiques of empathetic responses, see Benjamin 1999, pp. 845–846.

probably be designated as the founding act of human civilization" (*Bewusstes Distanzschaffen zwischen sich und der Aussenwelt darf man wohl als Grundakt menschlicher Zivilisation bezeichnen*), is exactly how Warburg's draft for the final introduction to the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* began.⁹¹

What would he have said, we must ask ourselves, about the instant availability, consumption and dispensability of images on the internet? What would he have said about Instagram and Snapchat, about the ways in which the public seems unable to look at pictures except prosthetically, with the aid of iPhones on sticks, in galleries and museums? What lessons for our own time might we draw from his work? The problem, of course, is that of how to detach ourselves from too swift an absorption in images in order to achieve at least some space for contemplation and self-awareness.⁹² This is one of the central issues of our time. We must use every tool at our disposal to detach ourselves from the seductive entrainments of image propaganda and the insistent substitution of image for reality. We must aim better to understand the new epistemologies of biology, psychology and the cognitive neurosciences in order to see how they relate to images and the successful propagation of unreality – as well to as the multitude of therapies they offer. This is where Warburg was when he insisted on both the epistemological benefits of *Brückenbau* and the political consequences of superstition and nationalism. At the foundation of his thinking lay a profound ecumenism.⁹³

91 Warburg 2009, p. 276. In Bing's transcription of Warburg's dictation on June 11, 1929 (Warburg 2010l, p. 629). This pregnant opening then continues with the equally significant words in which Warburg's extraordinary combination of sociology, history and commitment to the notion of *Urbedingungen* reappears with almost blinding clarity: "[W]ird dieser Zwischenraum das Substrat künstlicher Gestaltung, so sind die Vorbedingungen erfüllt, dass dieses Distanzbewusstsein zu einer sozialen Dauerfunktion werden kann, die durch den Rhythmus vom Einschwingen in die Materie und Ausschwingen zur Sophrosyne jenen Kreislauf zwischen bildhafter und zeichenmässiger Kosmologik bedeutet." For more on the critical notion of the *Zwischenraum* in Warburg, see Freedberg 2018, pp. 50–51 (*Zwischenraum I: The Space between Polarities*) and pp. 57–58 (where my original subheading "*Zwischenraum II: Handling, Contemplation and the In-Between*" was unfortunately cropped to omit the signpost *Zwischenraum II*).

92 See now Freedberg 2017a.

93 Precisely "im Laboratorium kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildgeschichte", as he called it in the peroration to the essay "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung" (Warburg 2010h, p. 485). Here, finally, it would be possible to realize that "die hier behandelten Bilder und Worte – nur ein Bruchteil von dem, was zur Verfügung hätte stehen können – etwa als bisher ungelesene Urkunden zur tragischen Geschichte der Denkfreiheit des modernen Europäers aufzufassen [sind]" [these images and words – just a fraction of what could have been used – can be regarded as hitherto unread records of the tragic history of freedom of thought in modern Europe] (Warburg 2010h, p. 485). In his very final lecture, three months before his death, which he gave to a small group of graduating doctoral students in Hamburg, he spoke movingly and eloquently of the need to understand the "process of mutual engagement and understanding" (*Auseinandersetzungsprozess*) between religion and science and to establish in Northern Europe "a receiving station [...] that can thus assist us in containing the chaos of unreason by means of a filter system of retrospective reflection" (*eine Auffangstelle [...], die uns hilft, so oder so dem Chaos von Unvernunft ein Filtersystem der retrospektiven Besonnenheit entgegenzusetzen*) (Gombrich 1986, p. 281). Cf. Gombrich comments on the creation of "eine Wissenschaft der bildlichen Orientierung [...] die uns berechtigte, von einer neuen kulturwissenschaftlichen Kunstgeschichte zu sprechen, die weder zeitliche noch räumliche Grenzen kennen darf" (Warburg 2010a, p. 691).

As if aware of the difficulty of ranging across such broad fields of thought, let alone of offending the *Grenzpolizei* as he crossed from one discipline to another, from history of art to history of science to anthropology, psychology and an inchoate biology, Warburg continued to insist on this *Brückenbau*. This is the one other term beyond the now usual ones which we must add to our Warburgian vocabulary, always and without fail. It was this task of constant reconstruction that brought speakers, moderators and so many others together from June 13 to June 15, 2016 in the hopes of a renewal and revitalization of the aims and purposes of the work of Aby Warburg. In writing about the past, he left us a heritage – and a responsibility – for our time and the future.

