

**114**

**marzo 2014**

ENGRAMMA • 114 • MARZO 2014  
LA RIVISTA DI ENGRAMMA • ISBN 978-88-98260-59-1

# Aby Warburg e Mnemosyne Atlas

a cura di Monica Centanni, Daniela Sacco

ENGRAMMA. LA TRADIZIONE CLASSICA NELLA MEMORIA OCCIDENTALE  
LA RIVISTA DI ENGRAMMA • ISBN 978-88-98260-59-1

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- 5 Aby Warburg e Mnemosyne Atlas  
Editoriale di Engramma n. 114  
Monica Centanni, Daniela Sacco
- 6 A tribute to Aby Warburg by Giorgio Pasquali  
English edition by Elizabeth Thomson (first edition "Pegaso" 1930)
- 20 Ricordo di Aby Warburg ("Pegaso" II, 4, 1930, 484-495)  
Giorgio Pasquali
- 33 Aby Warburg and his biographers. An intellectual portrait  
in the words of Giorgio Pasquali (1930), Gertrud Bing (1958),  
Edgar Wind (1970)  
M. Centanni and G. Pasini, edited by E. Thomson
- 43 Aby Warburg e i suoi biografi. Un ritratto intellettuale nelle parole di  
Giorgio Pasquali (1930), Gertrud Bing (1958), Edgard Wind (1970)  
Monica Centanni e Giovanna Pasini
- 53 Metamorfosi delle virtù d'Amore nella Firenze medicea.  
Una lettura della tavola 39 dell'Atlante Mnemosyne  
a cura del Seminario del Centro studi classicA
- 73 The Braided Weave of Mnemosyne:  
Aby Warburg, Carl Gustav Jung, James Hillman\*  
Daniela Sacco
- 98 Le trame intrecciate di Mnemosyne.  
Aby Warburg, Carl Gustav Jung, James Hillman\*  
Daniela Sacco
- 116 "Più positivo dei positivisti". Antropologia, psicologia,  
evoluzionismo in Tito Vignoli  
Elena Canadelli



# A tribute to Aby Warburg by Giorgio Pasquali

English edition by Elizabeth Thomson (first edition "Pegaso" 1930)

(English version)

1930: Giorgio Pasquali remembers his friend Aby Warburg, who had recently died. In Hamburg, in October 1929, Aby Warburg died. A few months later, Giorgio Pasquali wrote a memoir about him which was published in the periodical "Pegaso" and which Gertrud Bing would later describe as "one of the most beautiful and intelligent tributes ever dedicated to Warburg".

Last autumn, scientific reviews started to spread throughout the world, or at least the international world of academia, the news of Aby Warburg's death, and many of us here including university academics must have asked themselves if that name, apart from belonging to an institution, perhaps belonged to a man too – the "Warburg Library for the Science of Culture" in Hamburg was more famous than its founder, director, and (with other members of his family) its main backer. The Warburg Library already has one of the most complete collections of specialized prints and iconographic materials for anyone wanting to study the history of culture in general, the history of the culture of the Renaissance in particular, and very specifically our Renaissance, Florentine and Italian. Once a month it becomes a conference hall to discuss various disciplines including philosophy, the history of religions, the figurative arts, astronomy and astrology as they are all subjects that gravitate towards the history of culture. Each and every conference is a scientific event held by an expert of international repute (Arturo Farinelli is one such Italian expert who has taken part). The Library has promoted two series of books, begun in recent years, but both now famous. That Warburg the man, Warburg the great researcher, should vanish, disappear whilst still alive, behind the institution he so wanted, is in keeping with his intentions: more than anything else, he wanted to be a teacher and an organiser, and desired that certain scientific theories of his, not many in number perhaps but great and systematically developed, should live on and be fruitful especially in the minds of his followers who from the beginning he considered his collaborators and designated his heirs. Nor is it a coincidence that, although he was mostly content to publish his more significant findings in extraordinarily succinct and compressed forms mostly as reports or summaries of conferences, his ideas, whilst he was still alive, were ex-

pounded with all their systematic links and connections by the scholar who for many years was closest to him – Fritz Saxl.

However, his personality both as an individual and a scientist was powerful, and it would be wrong not to mention him here in Italy. He spent much of his youth in Florence, in brotherly familiarity with the generation of students of art history that now heads our galleries. Until the outbreak of the war, he would leave his beloved Hamburg every year, and return to Florence. And then, when made possible by the outbreak of peace and the gradual disappearance of anxieties that had, as we shall see further on, unsettled his spirit, he resumed his yearly visits until last autumn, when a painless death was to bring to an end a life that for fundamental, if not incidental, reasons had not always been happy. It was in Florence, while he contemplated Florentine art and tried to expose the soul of the Florentine Renaissance, the soul of our Renaissance, that he first considered an issue, that in some way he had already formulated in his dissertation, but that was to remain fundamental to him throughout his forty years of study. Florence was one of the poles of his scientific life, but in truth, he had more than two.

## I

It may seem strange that to speak here of Warburg should not first and foremost be an art historian, one of those who were among his friends since childhood, but someone who has not made a profession of knowledge of figurative art and the Renaissance, but as a very staid classical philologist, a scholar without eyes. But maybe this is no drawback. Warburg, who in his first study had started with stylistic considerations, was not even then satisfied with them, and to my knowledge, showed no fondness for purely technical or aesthetic problems. From that time onwards, he examined art as an expression of culture.

As a boy, Aby Warburg disdained comfortable routes. The son of a wealthy Jewish banking family from Hamburg, (in his veins flowed the blood of a Jewish Italian woman, a certain Del Banco who was a virtuoso opera singer, and who in the C18th had moved from Modena to Hamburg, a fact he was somewhat proud of), he had begun the customary and valuable secondary studies for children of his class at the “royal grammar school,” the prototype of our high school, but without Greek. He had to learn Greek by himself just before going to university. And it was specifically Hellenistic culture that introduced him to one of the areas of research to which he dedicated his life.

He studied in Bonn, Munich and Berlin, and graduated with a dissertation on the *Birth of Venus and Primavera* by Sandro Botticelli, but he had already spent one of his student years here in Florence far away from German universities, working under the guidance of A. Schmarsow. It was to Florence that he returned soon after graduation; it was in Florence, in a seasonal publication for the Institute of Music in Florence, that he published in Italian the first work to follow his dissertation after graduation; it was in Florence that he assisted Schmarsow in founding the German Institute of History of Art, which is now a state institution, and has a marvellous and marvellously liberal library which is one of the most active international centres for the study of our art. It was from here that he left for a long journey that took him to the Pueblo Indians. He returned to Florence, newly-wed in October 1897, and remained until 1901.

Florence and the Indians of North America: a scholar of Florentine art interested in the ethnography of primitive tribes. Earlier we mentioned Greek, Hellenistic, culture. What do these two disparate areas of study have in common? To find the answer it will help to add the names of two more German cities, Bonn and Basle: Bonn where Warburg attended lessons given by the art historian Justi, and the great philologist, Hermann Usener; Basle where Burckhardt and Nietzsche taught and wrote.

In his graduation dissertation, Warburg had already attempted to show that Sandro Botticelli drew on antiquity, sought help from ancient models, made use of figurative formulas taken from sarcophagi, precisely when he wanted to render bodies in motion. This, according to Warburg, is not a characteristic attributable only to him, but can be seen in the works of Agostino di Duccio, il Pollaiuolo, and from a certain time onwards in Ghirlandajo. The Florentine Renaissance discovered movement from antiquity, and would have considered movement as a specifically ancient phenomenon; the whole Renaissance, not just painters and sculptors: Poliziano reproduces Ovid when describing fluttering female garments and wind-blown locks. Leonardo, as art theoretician, writes "and imitate when you can the Greeks and the Latins so as to expose the limbs when the breeze pushes garments against them".

As Warburg later explained, the figures of antiquity struck the men of the Renaissance not only by the movement of human bodies and their clothing, but also by the movement and agitation of their souls, their emotions. In medieval illustrations of *Ovide moralisé* which belongs to the 14th, Orpheus torn by the Bacchae is still a cold and insipid scene of knights

and ladies; in northern Italy which draws on ancient models it becomes a turbulent and frightful image engraved on copper: in the interim, Poliziano had written his verses. A woman crying in an engraving by Mantegna, the *Deposition*, is not drawn from life, but is reproduced from an ancient mask. Filippino Lippi was not yet aware of the *Laocoön* group when he designed a horrifying image of the death of *Laocoön* and his sons. Indeed, the *Laocoön* was much admired as soon as it was discovered because Renaissance man was mentally equipped to appreciate and understand art from Rhodes. To those who had come from a background of classical art and a classical perception of art, the *Laocoön* would have appeared Baroque; to Renaissance men from Florence, classical or antique meant something altogether different from Olympian and Apollonian.

Am I wrong if already in this first work of Warburg I feel he no longer regarded antiquity as the traditional notion of Greek serenity praised in rhetoric? Warburg recognized that classical antiquity has two faces, Apollonian and Dionysian, even though he did not use these terms. The fatuous tale of peoples and eras that knew no pain had no hold on him: he knew that even the most ancient of classical art is the daughter of suffering because it is the daughter of life, and life is about euphoria, passion and even lunacy. Even before Nietzsche, many scholars had observed the wealth of contrasts concealed in the soul of antiquity, and had conceived ancient culture and the spirit of antiquity as a fusion of opposites. But no one had defined this knowledge as a formula even though, from an historical point of view, the contrast between the Apollonian and Dionysian was arbitrary yet clear, and is imprinted in the brain. This conception of Greek life was then developed further and expanded by a friend of Nietzsche, Rohde, who perhaps had first suggested, if not these names, these concepts, and by one of his rivals, Wilamowitz – they had been in agreement with each other for many years although they were unaware of it. And this notion prevailed over the other, and was now considered by all apart from a handful of reactionary provincials as ahistorical, antihistorical and the product of enlightenment thinking.

Warburg approached the Florentine Renaissance already equipped with this new conception of antiquity, and observed immediately that what the Florentines from a certain point onwards had actually admired and imitated in classical art were aspects that were not classical but Dionysian. Imitate is perhaps the wrong word: Antiquity gave to the Renaissance the means of clarifying and expressing feelings and impulses that had lain concealed for a long time, undergoing an aesthetic detox, I would say, using an expres-

sion suggested by Aristotle's *Poetics* that was later to be dear to Warburg, (in all probability, Aristotle had borrowed it from Ionian medicine). An age that aimed merely to reproduce the past would not have produced any great work, and the men of the Renaissance were not, thank heavens, only humanists, any more than they were purists from the age of the Antonines.

His decision to go to the Far West in search of indigenous peoples still untouched by the modernity that levels all, had even deeper roots. In Bonn, Warburg had been a pupil of Hermann Usener and he never forgot him. Of all the great Germans of the second half of the 19th, Hermann Usener was perhaps the philologist with the greatest wealth of ideas, and he made a profound and enduring impact on many fields of classical philology. Soon, however, he put to one side great literature, at all times the vocation of those to whom the gods have granted the privilege of individuality despite their humble birth, and from whom, the common herd are therefore increasingly alienated. As a romantic, Herderian German, he then engaged himself with the phenomenon in which the essence of a people expresses itself best: religion, which can also mean superstition, astrology and magic.

He became an editor of saints' lives in the hope, mostly vain, of finding they had the features of the pagan gods they had replaced. He also traced the earliest history of Christmas with relentless energy and analysis, together with true piety (the book was dedicated to a brother who was a pastor). He also sought in the ancient Greeks and Romans the remains of beliefs and emotions confirming there were times in which those races had been primitive, and were at the stage of the Australians, and more specifically, Red Indians of today. At a certain point in his life, Usener, more than an historian or philosopher, had wanted to be a psychologist. He believed that throughout the world, particular forms of religion corresponded to certain stages of social evolution; on this issue he believed it was possible there was an historical typology.

Another master of Basel, Burckhardt, had already clearly understood the extent to which belief in magic and another superstition disguised as science, astrology, interested the complex and not always harmonious soul of the Italians, the Florentines of the Renaissance. Warburg remembered Usener, and, to understand the Florentines of the Renaissance (this is not a paradox), he sailed across the Atlantic, and crossed the American continent. Clearly, Usener worked on him like Classical Antiquity on our Renaissance, arousing, even heightening, the curiosity which already lay dormant inside him.

## II

In 1901, Warburg returned to Hamburg and settled there. I know little of his life during the years that followed, and it matters not. He will have lived like any other scholar unhampered by the need to earn a living, nor sidetracked by various teaching commitments forcing him to deal with problems which, only when dealt with, arouse interest (being a teacher, I speak from experience). But those were also the years in which Warburg (slowly, as usual) followed up studies already begun and ideas that had flashed through his mind during his Florentine period. I am not referring to the large file on the frescoes by Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinità, which was published shortly after his return to his homeland, nor even to the more recent article on the will of the man who commissioned those paintings, Francesco Sassetti. Of course, finding in the will of a practicing, pious Roman Catholic pagan Fortuna seriously designated as a current cosmic force, one might venture to say as a true divinity not dethroned by the new religion, whose very symbol Giovanni Rucellai wanted as an adornment on the facade of Santa Maria Novella; whose very symbol also appears at the end of the C12th in Verona, on the facade of Saint Zeno; and whose capricious omnipotence is still today continuously acclaimed in the speeches of the common people of Florence, makes one reflect how much more complex and contradictory was the culture of the Renaissance than it seemed even to Burckhardt.

That most people, even among humanists, with their Christian and Catholic perception of life, felt the contrast with the preceding era, the Middle Ages, less strongly is shown by even recent works of our countrymen, who reveal a profound awareness of the problem even when these works seem to have been executed hastily. And that the Renaissance was not merely a literary humanism, that an overwhelming part in it was played by classes that knew little or no Latin, craftsmen and artists with one eye focussed on mathematics, experimentation, and mechanical inventions, by people who all had an eye not on the past but in the future, has been fully demonstrated in recent years with an abundance of detailed evidence by another German Italian, Leonardo Olschki.

When I mention Warburg's new research, which he had worked on during his time in Hamburg between 1901 and the war, I refer to his analysis of magic and astrology during the Renaissance, his sources, and the cultural connections to which they testify. He presented the tastiest fruits of these researches, developed under Hamburg skies, at an international confer-

ence on the history of art held in Rome 1891, where I would think Italians prevailed. During the late Empire, astrology had ruled unchallenged: our Christian week consists of days named after the planetary deities, the “lords of time,” who according to astrology decide the destinies of men, but a poet of the Augustan era, Tibullus, already knew the power of the day sacred to Saturn, Saturday.

Christianity was then able to accomplish the miracle of killing Astrology: at the beginning of the Middle Ages, here in the West it was no longer a vital force. It resumed its vigour in the C13th, precisely when Italy started to witness a rebirth. It had fled from the Church, taking refuge in the Islamic East. From the east, it reappeared, orientalised, in C8th Byzantium; in the C14th it returned to the countries that had once been home to ancient Latin cultures, entering from the extreme western tip of Spain, which during the Middle Ages had been Arab. A manual of magical practices, compiled in the circle of a king of Castile suspected of “paganism”, Alphonse “the Sage”, who died in 1281, bears witness to a notion of nature which opposes man as a little world, a microcosm, with the greater world, the macrocosm; a concept which enables man to believe himself able, thanks to talismans and images of cosmic powers, to force things to bend to his will: all that matters is that the material with which the talisman is made, together with the day and hour of its manufacture, match the nature of the god it represents. The main gods were once again planetary deities. The title of the book that Warburg discovered, *Picatrix*, preserves the name of a legendary wise Ionian doctor, who had really existed but who despite the many works falsely attributed to him, has left us no authentic work, Hippocrates. It is assumed that the author was Greek. The inferred religious and historical notions were no longer ancient Greek, but Hellenistic and oriental derived from the astral religions of the Near East, Babylon. From the C2nd onwards they had penetrated the Mediterranean when the eastern world avenged itself on Alexander’s conquest by forcing its own culture or pseudo culture on Hellenism.

The descriptions of the talismans in *Picatrix* take us back to great sculptural works of art, the Jupiter of Olympia, for example, and a famous group of Mars and Venus, but also to types of mixed gods, savage and clearly oriental. A prayer to Saturn accords, in a way that cannot be random, with the prayers of Greek astrologers preserved in Byzantine manuscripts. Greek art and religion had returned to the west, orientalised, via Hellenism and Islam. This renewed astrology then spread throughout Europe from Spain: Roger Bacon was an ardent believer, and in Italy Cecco d’Ascoli sealed his faith

in it by becoming a martyr. The doctrines of *Picatrix* informed, it seems, the medical work *De vita triplici* of the great Florentine Platonist Marsilio Ficino, who in his other work *De vita coelitus comparanda* (where *coelitus* should be regarded as empirical sky, not the Christian and theological paradise) wanted astrology to govern the rules of the contemplative life of the humanist, the hypochondriac litteratus, subjected to but also the protected by Saturn. And Ficino (this, I believe, is an observation which has considerable bearing on our understanding of the Renaissance) felt himself to be a true humanist in his astrology, to the extent that, against rational doubt about occult powers, he reminded himself that belief in these powers was concordant with beliefs of antiquity. What we would be tempted to consider still medieval during the Renaissance is in truth Greek, i.e. Hellenistic! Albert Durer's famous copper engraving representing *Melancholia*, the temperament derived from Saturn, is inspired by Ficino, whose letters were printed in 1497 by a friend of Durer's. This consideration, clearly mentioned by Warburg, was developed in an exceptional book by two of his followers, both exceedingly talented and learned, E. Panofsky and Fritz Saxl.

Warburg's research was never so fruitful as when as he was able to combine it with that of a pure classical philologist who understood the Greek poets, as his pupils now testify since he died, with all the warmth and clarity of a true humanist, but he wrote mostly on Hellenistic astrology and its associations with the East, Franz Boll. In the appendix to his main work, *Sphaera barbarica*, the Arab text and the German version of the "Introduction" of the greatest astrologer from the Islam of the Middle Ages, Abu Ma'öar († 886) were printed by the orientalist Dyroff. Now, thanks to Abu Ma'öar, Warburg was able to decipher the median frieze of the frescoes that Borso d'Este commissioned Francesco Cossa to paint in Schifanoia, his palace in Ferrara. In addition to the signs of the Zodiac and their lords, three astral symbols are represented, three "decans", or divinities under the domain of each of which are the three groups of ten degrees that add up to the thirty degrees of the sign of the Zodiac. These decans are found in the work of the Arab astrologer, but they also have Indian characteristics, because the Arab derived them from the work of an Indian, Varahamihira. In turn, he drew on the Greek work of Teucer, called the Babylonian, although he was born in Cyzicus in northern Asia Minor.

This astrology probably came to Ferrara from Padua, from the humanist university city: the original frescoes in the Sala della Ragione, which represent planets, Zodiac signs and professions under the influence of individual stars, had been executed in the early C14th, and were probably devised by

the famous magician Peter of Abano. The room painted by Peruzzi in the Farnesina, the foreign ministry in Rome, depicts astral divinities to symbolize Agostino Chigi's birth with such accuracy that a modern astrologer was able to calculate the year.

From humanistic Italy, and specifically from Padova, where many German students had studied, astrology continued its triumphal march towards the Germany of the Reformation. The controversy for and against Luther was also pursued by astrologers. If Luther did not believe in the influence of the stars, Melanchthon did, and in the interest of a favourable omen, friends of Luther, against his wishes, allowed his date of birth to be changed by one year, despite the evidence of his mother. Hellenistic and eastern astrology finally reached the figures illustrated in calendars compiled at the beginning of the C16th for farmers in northern Germany. Warburg spoke boldly and wittily of the route from Cyzicus-Alexandria-Oxene-Baghdad-Toledo-Rome, Padova, Ferrara-Augusta-Erfurt-Wittenberg-Goslar to Lüneburg. A few short stretches were perhaps done in reverse, as can be done today on state railways using a circular ticket, but the general direction and most of the stretches are certain: establishing them was the splendid result of a lifetime's work.

### III.

Warburg directed his attention especially to the Dionysian and demonic elements that the Italian Renaissance had drawn from Hellenism, through both imperial Roman art and manuals from the Middle Ages in the Islamic East. Unprejudiced in his research, he never intended to deny that the Renaissance had also derived from antiquity the "Apollonian" aspects of serenity and gravity. The reaction against Winckelmann never led him to deny what was very real, albeit too partial and exclusive, in the traditional notion of antiquity. But he did ask himself: is the new idea and feeling for the culture and art of the Renaissance in Italy and Florence a triumph: triumph over what? What was this aesthetic world whose yoke had been shaken by the great Florentine artists of the Renaissance? Warburg's reply was succinct: Flemish naturalism. In the long run, his worldwide investigation failed to be thwarted by national, territorial or racial boundaries. He knew that during the Middle Ages, our Western world may not have been as level as it is now, but it was just as easy to travel through, albeit more slowly, via spiritual movements. The Italians of the late Middle Ages and of the Renaissance, and especially Florentine merchants, travelled, and Flanders, during the C15th, was in a certain sense less distant from Italy

and Florence than it is today. The representatives of the great Florentine trading houses, who later became the forebears of the aristocracy, which is of course mercantile in origin, had portraits of themselves painted in Flanders by the great Flemish artists; the Medici decorated their palazzos with Flemish canvases; in paintings by Italian artists figures are depicted dressed “alla francese”. However, again, Warburg used these iconographic and stylistic observations to recognize a cultural difference, an evolution in the soul of the times of which art is almost a symbol. He followed the dawn and the later vicissitudes of this Flemish naturalism in the figures of the Olympian gods contained in the illustrations of a medieval book, the *Libellus de imaginibus deorum* by a certain Albricus, of whom little is known but who could perhaps be identified as Alexander Neckam of St. Alban, a learned cleric who died in London in 1217. He, and likewise the other English Franciscan who includes in his edifying considerations, the so-called *Fulgentius metaphorialis*, descriptions of ancient deities, did not draw on figurative art, but via Latin compilations, on Stoic and Neoplatonic Greek philosophers of the imperial era, who to save the gods had reduced them to symbols. But Albricus, who had not written for painters, was soon illustrated: and the illustrations were continually renewed in the three centuries that the book took to travel from England through France and Burgundy, to northern Italy. The early illustrators were truly medieval or saw gods in the symbols and nothing more; but soon the French experienced southern influences, in the style of Giotto, and soon learned to give their miniatures unity by restricting the number of characters. Later this style also changed: the followers of Giotto, so austere in their architecture, were taken over by a new naturalism; illustrations became more narrative in style, and artists delighted in depicting myths like never before, and had no compunction in straying from the texts, and introducing figures; nor did they hesitate to draw naked bodies, albeit not yet classically nude, or antiquicising. This art travelled southwards to Italy around 1420 and there was transformed again: a codex discovered by Warburg in the Vatican, probably written in Pavia, portrays uncontainable *joie de vivre*, an aesthetic interest that knew how to move away from tradition, whenever art so required, a happy fusion of Italian and French. Around 1460, Mantegna’s so-called playing cards continued the French tradition of the north inspired by Albricus, but the figures till now flat, became plastic, and one of them, in fact, is a copy of one of the most famous ancient works of art during the C15th, a Hermes of C5th BC brought to Italy by Ciriaco d’Ancona. This was the first connection between illustrations that were intended to portray the gods of antiquity, and really ancient statues of the gods!

As mentioned earlier, the middle register in Schifanoia shows Eastern, Arab and Indian influences, while the upper register representing the triumph of the Olympians, though inspired mostly by a recently rediscovered classical poet, Manilius, does not hide northern, even western, influences in certain figures from Flanders and France. The gods advance on their triumphal chariots, as masked figures would parade at festivals of the time, in so-called “triumphs”. Those festivals were intended to be classical, but they were a combination of a continuation of forms that were familiar in Dante’s day, and of ceremonies of medieval France, the most chivalrous and festival-loving country in the Europe of that time; another source as Burckhardt already knew, will have been the procession, also a Christian and Medieval institution. Even here, with regard to the Renaissance, this fusion is more complex than is commonly believed. Warburg wanted to outline the history of cultural relations between North and South by making use of precisely these festivals; and it was precisely on these festivals, Italian and Tuscan, that he had collected a lot of rare material. Another conference held in Florence a few years ago dealt with this subject: I am happy to have been among the listeners.

#### IV

Warburg, to remain loyal to his Hamburg and the library that he was putting together, twice declined the chair in History of Art that was offered him with customary freedom of spirit by the Prussian Ministry. But as he did not want to go to the mountain, the mountains came to him. In 1913, when the *Vorlesungen* – a cycle of free lectures at the celebrated Hamburg Colonial Institute – gave rise to the University of Hamburg, he was appointed honorary professor of Art History.

He was a born teacher, so much so that his most important findings rather than reasoned in memoranda and papers, were more often illustrated in summaries of conferences, on loose sheets of paper or appendices of newspapers, sometimes difficult to find unless received as gifts from him, and in this he was most generous. He had the most important, most essential, gift of the teacher – warmth and humanity: Warburg never felt the difference in age between himself and his young students, and never gave the impression of being distant when dealing for the first time with a young person who might approach him with mixed feelings about some modest achievement, half proud of it yet anxious what the famous man would think. And in difficult times, he considered it his duty to help beginners, even financially, without humiliating them, finding them paid scientific work, using them as assistants in his greatest undertaking – the Warburg Library.

Warburg felt the need to expand. This man who was troubled by frightening visions could suddenly regain his sense of joy, and would be calm and witty whenever he spoke to a group of people willing to understand him. I have attended many of his conferences. I do not know if he was or was not a good talker in the conventional, rhetorical sense of the word, but I know that at times he spoke at length and for much longer than the academic hour, sometimes even two hours, or more, and yet I never tired of listening to him. Because he never thought of form, but always of the thing, he was always efficient and never boring. He spoke without a manuscript, often without notes, without having in front of him much more than the figurative material needed. He spoke from the fullness of his heart doing nothing to obscure his accent typical of a gentleman from Hamburg, which irritated certain Germans of the South more than us foreigners. He did not hesitate to weave jokes into his speeches, if the jokes were on his lips, or to speak personally to someone in the audience when he knew they would be particularly interested in some detail. He was a spontaneous talker, who some of my colleagues would probably have considered devoid of academic dignity. But his didactic style (and his style was always didactic) was more animated than austere, and he did not shrink from using images of everyday life, from using fashionable phrases giving them new meaning, from using proverbs: he used cynical or even stoical invective, perhaps, or Socratic and Platonic exchanges of ideas, but his conferences were never dull.

He was an entertaining teacher, because he was an entertaining man. I believe that many Germans and foreigners, i.e. Italians, will remember with pleasure the hours spent in the company of this tiny man, with his pepper and salt coloured moustache, and unspeakably sad eyes. It was a real treat when he made the most of a talent more widespread amongst the Germans than any other nation, and imitated types and people who had struck him (I saw a great philologist from Berlin, a new and improved Fregoli, aping a Faculty meeting in front of twenty four people). I do not know if he spoke Italian perfectly, but he knew how to mimic Florentine ways and speech in such a way that, when asked to temporarily hold the fort for a lottery ticket seller who needed to change his excessively large bank note in a nearby shop, he agreed, and managed to hoodwink another man who had also come to buy a ticket, until the laughter of Warburg's companions revealed the howler.

Such a man must have had many friends among his peers and among young people. Charm and charisma are essential for anyone who wants to win over to the service of his own discipline his fellow humanists. Thanks mainly to the human warmth that emanated from the tiny individual that

was Warburg, he was able for the benefit of his history of culture to capitalise on the old and the young, theologians, classical philologists, archaeologists, orientalis, medievalists, pure historians, philosophers, astronomers and doctors. And thanks to these qualities of his personality, which he combined with considerable organisational skills, his work will continue in all directions even after his death, even in those which are barely hinted at in the work itself.

## V

Between 1918 and 1924, Warburg fought a mental illness. Since his death, reliable witnesses have now made known to us that at one time he had begun to live his problems not only as a matter of record. Since his time in Bonn, he had held a strong urge to discover what timeless truth animated magic, the astrology of Hellenism and of the Renaissance, including the magic of primitive man, but little by little, this urge became central to his psyche. In a certain sense, he believed in magic, and experienced the same irrational fears as primitive man. The disease was in a sense a continuation of his scientific research, and, what is stranger, he continued his scientific research throughout his illness using his dark experiences to his advantage.

His dearest student relates: "In 1930 the professor talked about Luther in the afternoon, (his incisive and rational study on Luther and astrology during the Reformation was finished during his period of mental illness), in the afternoon he wrote wonderful pages on logic and magic; in the morning he had been a man who believed in magic, who believed in the demonism of inanimate things." But he was able to endure the illness, and defeated it by means of scientific thought and scientific research: in a strange splitting of himself, Warburg never ceased to observe himself, and in himself discover primitive man who finds his reason in magic. The years after his recovery were, and this too is remarkable, the most peaceful in Warburg's life; I saw him calmer and happier on his return to Italy in 1927, than he was when I left him in 1915, frightened at the thought of the inevitable war between Germany and Italy that would, he feared, create an enduring abyss between the two countries he loved. He died suddenly, but his life is in a certain sense complete.

He leaves ready for publication a figurative atlas, which takes its name from memory, *Mnemosyne*, which aims to show how different countries and different generations, the Eastern Mediterranean in the Middle Ages and the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Italian and German, and fi-

nally the generation and the circle of Rembrandt (he had completed some research on Rembrandt), had successively conceived, and by conceiving transformed the “pathetic”, Dionysian legacy of antiquity. He wanted to continue to live in that atlas for posterity. Young scholars will work according to his intentions, according to his spirit, if they do not accept with conviction concepts that are closely linked with his own powerful personality, and if instead they use the atlas as a touchstone for their own thoughts. Art historians and cultural scientists have a duty to make the work of Warburg fruitful, letting it operate on them, thereby transforming it.