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Aby Warburg e le origini di Mnemosyne

a cura di Monica Centanni, Daniela Sacco

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Aby Warburg and the "Wie der Metapher"

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Christopher D. Johnson

The following excerpt is from chapter 2, "*Ad oculos*: Ways of Seeing, Reading, and Collecting." In the pages preceding it, I discuss Warburg's compelling, if idiosyncratic interpretations of Alberti and Poliziano in light partially of Ernesto Grassi's work on metaphor and Renaissance humanism as well as Michael Baxandall's analyses of the rhetorical basis for the concepts and terminology used in Renaissance discussions of art. Subsequently, with Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Shepherds* serving as the chief artefact, a brief exercise in close looking is offered – both to recall the seminal place this painting had for Warburg's thinking and to signal the limits of a strictly iconographical method in interpreting Renaissance painting, or for that matter in interpreting Warburg's writing about it or other cultural objects/events, such as the *Schlangenritual*

The section before the extract proper concludes: ". . . the difficulties of distinguishing here [in the *Schlangenritual* text] between metonymy and metaphor or, in the analysis of the *Adoration*, between symbol, allegory, and metaphor are considerable. Nonetheless, they need to be addressed, especially as Warburg tends to swing back and forth in his preference for the term*metaphor* or *symbol*, while in practice he often argues by metonymy

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

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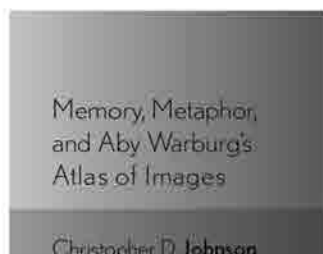
in order to unfold what has been plausibly taken as an allegorical vision of history and culture. Iconography can illuminate the symbolic meanings of the goldfinch and the pebbles in Ghirlandaio's *Adoration*. It can also teach us what hierarchy we should ascribe to the objects and events depicted in the painting such that, for example, we could sublimate the procession of the Three Kings through the Roman triumphal arch into the symbolic, eternal circle formed by Mary's dress. But both iconography, which generally pursues the task of interpretation by thickening various discursive contexts informing an artwork, and iconology, which would decipher the larger symbolic meanings of an artwork, often employ the tropes of rhetoric with maddening degrees of imprecision."

The two sections that follow thus attempt to sharpen how and why what Warburg will call – in the *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibiliotek* and in the *Überschriften* to panels 45 and 49 of the Mnemosyne-Atlas (written by Bing, but presumably following Warburg's direction) – the "Wie der Metapher" is central to understanding his late work and thought.

Gombrich on Metaphor

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

Gombrich's more concrete aim here is to demonstrate how *imprese* (heraldic devices usually including words and images) were interpreted in the Renaissance in ways that contemporary art criticism's "rational analysis" may ignore[1].To this end, he traces "three ordinary functions of images" that "may be present in one concrete image; thus a motif in a painting by Hieronymus Bosch may *represent* a broken vessel,*symbolize* the sin of gluttony and *express* an unconscious sexual fantasy on the part of the artist but to us the three levels of meaning remain quite distinct."[2] After further historicizing such images, Gombrich asserts:

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

2 Ibid.

For where there is no clear gulf separating the material, visible world from the sphere of spirit and of spirits, not only the various meanings of the word "representation" may become blurred but the whole relationship between image and symbol assumes a different aspect. . . . Warburg described as "*Denkraumverlust*" this tendency of the human mind to confuse the sign with the thing signified, the name and its bearers, the literal and the metaphorical, the image and its prototype. . . . Our language, in fact, favours this twilight region between the literal and the metaphorical.[3]

Yet if this *Denkraum*, "this twilight region," is where the artist and emblem-maker invent, then, as Gombrich well knew, Warburg also constantly regrets the "loss" of this "thought-space," which he also dubs the *Zwischenraum* and *Wunschraum*. Confusion, superstition, and stultifying abstraction may result when the stringencies of language, the tyrannies of taste, the thirst for power, and ideological, methodological, or systematic certainty become supreme. Characteristically casting his thinking in spatial terms, Warburg often describes the "loss" of this space as essentially tragic, for it forecloses the possibility of an "Ikonologie des Zwischenraums," of the "Entwicklungspsychologie des Pendelganges zwischen bildhafter und zeichenmäßiger Ursachensetzung" (developmental psychology of the pendular motion between pictorial and semiotic induction).[4]

But again, Gombrich would explicate here how in the Renaissance and, more particularly, in Renaissance emblematics, the image can at once be psychologically vivid, aesthetically pleasing, and pedagogically useful. Thus it is all the more important, he notes, to reject Benedetto Croce's separation of rhetoric from art-historical analysis.[5] Aside from the mnemonic value of emblematic images, in going beyond the one-to-one correspondence between word and thing, they achieve what a single discursive act ordinarily cannot: the simultaneous production of various, conflicting meanings in one intuitive gesture.[6] To historicize such intuition Gombrich rehearses classical ideas about metaphor: how Aristotle praises metaphor for its *ener-*

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

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

5 Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 129.

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

geia, or its ability to actualize abstractions in vivid images; and how Cicero recommends it for its skill in furnishing names for things, feelings, and ideas when ordinary language fails to do so (i.e., catachresis). Then Gombrich distinguishes between the symbol as "conventional code" and metaphor whose terms are "not reversible" and hence produce meanings that demand significant hermeneutic labor.[7] For him, the symbol is essentially a "sign" and thus has very little art-historical value. Regarding metaphor, though, he delineates two kinds: the first corresponds roughly to Aristotelian metaphor, which cultivates "a method of visual definition" for a concept or an emotion, while the second, "mystical" species of metaphor undertakes the expression of subjective even hermetic truths rather than easily intuited, objective representations of a thing or idea.[8]

To illustrate this distinction Gombrich traces how Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593), "the standard encyclopaedia of Personifications," effectively follows Aristotelian tradition in applying the four causes (material, efficient, formal, and final) to find many different symbolic, didactically successful ways of representing, of making visible, a single concept, such as Friendship (Amicitia) or Strength (Fortezza).[9] That Ripa mainly uses the human figure as the source for metaphoric "accidents" to represent abstract attributes makes perfect sense, Gombrich argues, given how our familiarity with the body nicely mediates the strangeness of the abstract concepts that Ripa wishes to give concrete, visual form. As Ripa writes in his *Proemio*,

> Leaving aside then that part of the image of which the orator makes use, and of which Aristotle treats in the third book of his *Rhetoric*, I will talk only about that which pertains to painters, or about those who, whether by means of color or by another visible means, can represent some visible thing different from the part of the image (that Aristotle discusses), and in conformity with another thing. (I will talk of it) because, just as this persuades many times by means of the eyes, that other thing moves the will by means of the word, and because this concerns things like metaphors, things that lie beyond humanity, but which are conjoined to us, and are therefore termed essential.[10]

7 Gombrich, The Aims and Limits of Iconology, in Gombrich on the Renaissance, 13.

8 Ibid., 13. He later casts the "free-floating symbol" as equivalent to "metaphor" (20).

9 Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 139–143.

10 Cesare Ripa, Iconologia, overe descrittione di diverse imagini cavate dall' antichità, e di propria inventione (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970).

But creating such "illustrated metaphors," I would add, is a philological as well as a rhetorical and material undertaking.[11] Ripa's entry for *Mondo*, for instance, relies on Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (1360), Pierio Valeriano's *Hierogliphica, sive de sacris Aegyptiorum*(1567), and verses by Silius Italicus to depict the "world" as the satyr Pan, a metaphor that plays on the etymology of the Greek *to pan* (all that is, the universe) and the mythological figure whose attributes include a "faccia rossa, & infocata" (fiery, red face), which signifies "quel foco puro, che sta sopra gli altri Elementi, in confine delle celesti sfere" (that pure fire, which is above the other elements, in the realm of the celestial sphere)[12]. Just as his contemporaries, Kepler and Bruno, heavily mine classical mythology, philosophy, and literature to forge their cosmographies, Ripa ransacks Greek mythology and the riches of humanist philology to provide painters with the means to make the elements visible and persuasive. But he would also give painters a language by which they can contemplate their efforts.

Dissatisfied, however, with the ultimately ornamental function he sees Ripa (and Aristotle) ascribing to metaphor, Gombrich, leaning on Cicero's judgment that metaphor is mainly catachrestic, interprets Neoplatonic symbolism in terms of metaphor's ability to be "a permanent and continuous process" whereby hermetic and inexpressible truths are expressed.[13]

Significantly, he also invokes Warburg's notion of the astrologer's *Schlitterlogik* (a neologism that translates literally as "sledding-logic," and so suggests a slippery, shifting, even sophistic logic) to characterize Ficino's comparison of how vibrations from a plucked lute string make neighboring strings sound with how an amulet once engraved with astral imagery causes a sympathetic reaction from the stars above.[14] Despite such illogic, Gombrich argues that this species of metaphor, as the means of forming concepts, is the rule rather than the exception. Citing metaphorologists ranging from Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius to Emanuele Tesauro, Vico, and Benjamin Whorf, Gombrich contends it is such metaphor rather than ordinary language that creates the "categories" enabling us to form concepts.[15]

11 The term is Gombrich's; see "Icones Symbolicae," 143.

12 Ripa, Iconologia, 330.

13 Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 166.

14 Ibid., 173.

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

But of course this ability to forge unity or synthesis out of multiplicity goes by various names; Kant, for instance, ascribes to the schema and therefore also the symbol an analogous task of mediating between the sensible and the abstract, while Warburg, as we shall see, inherits aspects of this Kantian tradition and makes *Umfangsbestimmung* the fundamental hermeneutic act of the painter, art historian, and, indeed, any thinker who would achieve a *translatio* between the many and the one.

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

> It is precisely because our world is comparatively stabilized by language that a fresh metaphor can be felt to be so illuminating. We almost have the feeling it gave us a fresh insight into the structure of the world by piercing the veil of ordinary speech. It is this experience, so it seems, that underlies the illumination of which we hear in the literature on *imprese*. . . . The linear character of language makes it hard to hold in mind a description such as "the wife of a nephew of my father-in-law" and to make sure that it means the same as "the wife of my first wife's cousin" but draw a diagram and the identity can be seen at a glance.[16]

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

Aside from such affinities, though, Warburg's use of and ideas about metaphor starkly diverge from what Gombrich describes here. Far less interested in the metaphors that painters and emblem-makers inscribe into their works and that, accordingly, can be deciphered through iconological readings, Warburg instead focuses on second-degree metaphors, or metaphors indicating the artist's (and cosmographer's) relation to antiquity, myth, nature, emotion, reason, and other such "forces," and thus metaphors also describing his own critical task. Moreover, as we shall see, Warburg's pathos-laden thoughts on metaphor differ crucially from the systematic, progressive theory of symbolic forms fashioned by Ernst Cassirer, his colleague and friend. This is why focusing on metaphor rather than on the symbol is the most promising, if admittedly circuitous, route to interpret-

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16 Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," 167. Also: "The emblem seemed to offer an escape from the limitations of discursive speech."

ing Warburg's achievements, not only because such an approach attends to Warburg's oblique directions, but also because the notion of *translatio* possesses temporal, spatial, and cognitive dimensions missing in most accounts of the symbol.[17] Metaphor, moreover, hews to the all-important principle of decorum, whereas the symbol, lacking an obvious rhetorical function, need not. In "Aims and Limits of Iconology," Gombrich labels "the dominant consideration of the whole classical tradition, the notion of decorum."[18] In this sense, Warburgian metaphor is rather conservative, notwithstanding its enormous intellectual ambitions[19]. It is, pace Gombrich, Aristotelian, as it aims at a "method of visual definition"; yet it is also "mystical," insofar as it makes idiosyncratic claims about the universal, eternal nature of things. Guided by the mediating "'wie' der metaphorischen Distanz," Warburg dedicates his entire intellectual career to mapping new ways of linking words and images, a career that takes him from Botticelli's paintings, to the kivas of northern New Mexico, to the quattrocento churches of Florence, to the astronomical almanacs of northern Europe, to the edge of sanity and back again, and finally to the pages of Giordano Bruno and a return journey to Italy.

In his early essays and lectures, Warburg creates the foundations for the science of iconology, which will later be refined and practiced by Panofsky, Gombrich, Saxl, and others. Yet by the time he commences *Mnemosyne* he has abandoned the relatively narrow approach to the interpretation of symbolic images fostered by iconology's focus on establishing "intrinsic" or stable meanings. Instead, Warburg labors to interpret images and their symbolism as a form of metaphor and metonymy that places meanings constantly in motion, even as he invents what Agamben dubs "the nameless science" of images, a science that thrives in "intervals" between disciplines and within the hermeneutic circle that for Warburg becomes "a spiral that continually broadens its turns."[20] To understand better this "nameless sci-

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

18 Gombrich, Aims and Limits of Iconology, 7. Milton famously calls decorum that "grand masterpiece to observe."

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

20 Agamben, Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science, 90, 96.

ence" and the tensions it produces in Warburg's œuvre between explication and implication, representation and expression, iconography and iconology, is not enough: a metaphorology is needed.

Metaphor and Pathos Formula

To place *ad oculos*, "before the eyes," is the principal cognitive and rhetorical task Aristotle ascribes to metaphor, defined in the *Poetics* (1457b) as "a movement [epiphora] of an alien [allotrios] name from either genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or by analogy."[21] In the *Rhetoric* (1410b), Aristotle claims that urbanity (*asteia*) and actualization (*energeia*) of style and thought are best realized by metaphor, the trope whose unique power of "bringing-before-the-eyes [pro ommaton poiein]" naturally pleases the auditor-spectator-reader and thus facilitates learning. See also Aristotle, Poetics 1457b. [22] When a successful metaphor permits such visualization, the "surprise" of discovery is experienced. Metaphor satisfies a natural thirst and admiration for the foreign and exotic. However, metaphor possesses also a fundamental cognitive virtue: "Metaphors should be transferred from things that are related but not obviously so, as in philosophy, too, it is characteristic of a well-directed mind to observe the likeness even in things very different."[23] Eloquent poets, orators, and philosophers use metaphor to bring before the eyes a pleasing but surprising comparison of things at once similar but different, in order to produce knowledge quickly.[24] Still, as Gombrich notes and Paul Ricœur demonstrates at length in *The Rule of Metaphor*, subsequent metaphorology has often moved beyond Aristotle's visual model based on the simple substitution of one term for another (i.e., a "lion" for "Achilles"), in favor of metaphor as a more "mystical," less easily intuited, more subjective, and thus more cognitively dissonant representation of a thing or idea.[25]

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

22 See also Aristotle, Poetics 1457b.

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

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

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

As its etymology suggests, to write about metaphor is to rely on the met-aphorics of space. Translating the Greek *meta-pherein* as *translatio*, Quin-tilian calls metaphor the "commonest [frequentissimus] and far the most beautiful [pulcherrimus] of Tropes." A metaphor occurs when "a noun or a verb is 'transferred' from a place in which it is 'proper' to a place in which either there is no 'proper' word or the 'transferred' term is better than the 'proper' one."[26] Negotiating "place" and propriety, metaphor plays an essen-tial aesthetic and semantic role: "It adds to the resources [copiam] of lan-guage by exchanges or borrowings to supply its deficiencies, and (hardest task of all) it ensures that nothing goes without a name.[27] Here Quintil-ian conflates the task of catachresis, of providing a word or expression for something that lacks one, with that of metaphor. But catachresis has often been confused with *audacia* or an overly bold or far-fetched metaphor.[28] This confusion, Patricia Parker remarks, institutes a startling dynamic: "The violent intrusions of catachresis and the possibility of transferences that, unwilled, subvert the very model of the controlling subject, are the goth-ic underside of the mastery of metaphor, the uncanny other of its will to control."[29]

Keenly desirous of such "control" and always wary of this "gothic under-side," Warburg describes metaphor less as a trope and more as a theoret-ical stance toward the world (cosmos), art, and self-consciousness. While metaphor vividly fuels his numerous, often aphoristic, sometimes cryptic efforts to give an account of the content, form, and aims of *Mnemosyne*, it also ultimately constitutes the intellectual idea(l) that Warburg fervently seeks to discover in his subject matter. In particular, the metaphoric ability he finds in certain currents of Renaissance art and cosmography to com-pass difference while still giving expression to a single intuition is the same metahistorical and metarhetorical ability he aspires to in his novel version of intellectual history.

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

27 Quint. Inst. 8.6.5.

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

29 Parker, Metaphor and Catachresis, 73.

Metaphor for Warburg describes how artist and thinker create *Distanz*, that cognitive, psychological, historically self-conscious stance by which extreme emotion and scientific detachment, the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, the ecstatic nymph and saturnine thinker, can coexist long enough for the spectator to recognize how certain formal, artistic, yet also contingent expressions of human experience repeat and transform themselves throughout history. These expressions or *Pathosformeln*, with their fusion of content and form, Warburg casts as paradigmatic, combinatory elements in his *Kulturwissenschaft*. As the basic vocabulary of emotion, these "Urworte leidenschaftlicher Dynamik" (originary words of a pathos-laden dynamic) are shaped and reshaped in myriad discourses and formal techniques of representation. These Goethean "Urworte" fuel Warburg's pioneering efforts in iconology;[30] but again, as he labored on *Mnemosyne*, his iconology of pathos formulas begins to yield to a new metaphorology.

Warburg first adumbrates what he means by a *Pathosformel* in a brief 1905 essay on Dürer's drawing "Death of Orpheus," in which the Nuremberg artist imitates another drawing by an unknown artist associated with Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1431–1506). (Tellingly, the essay's argument rests partially on a set of images that were published together with the essay – many of which will resurface in the *Atlas*.) Wishing to move his readers beyond Winckelmann's Apollonianism, Warburg compares Dürer's drawing to an image on a Greek vase and declares: "Die typische pathetische Gebärdensprache der antiken Kunst, wie sie Griechenland für dieselbe tragische Szene ausgeprägt hatte, greift mithin hier unmittelbar stilbildend ein." (Classical art's typical pathos-laden language of gestures, as Greece had stamped it for the same tragic scene, intervenes here in a way that is directly, stylistically formative.)[31] Through such stamping the tragic survives as a stylistic force in the formal but still "pathetic language of gesture." This *Nachleben* is a historical *translatio* signaling at once a process of internalization and externalization, of giving external form to the internal psychic "engrams" that Warburg, adapting Richard Semon's theory of the

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

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

engram as a "memory trace," takes as constants in human experience.[32] As Agamben interprets them, engrams "are the crystallization of an energetic charge and an emotional experience that survive as an inheritance transmitted by social memory and that, like electricity condensed in a Leyden jar, become effective only through contact with the 'selective will' of a particular period."[33] Yet whether Warburg really equates *engram* with *symbol*, as Gombrich asserts, is doubtful; rather, memory's *engram* corresponds much more closely with metaphor's *energeia*.[34]

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

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

33 Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science," 94.

34 Gombrich, Aby Warburg, 243. But Kany equates "Energie," symbols, and pathos formulas (Mnemosyne als Programm, 168).

of Dionysian legend."[35] Here subjective "Erlebnis" is balanced by objective form such that Dürer narrows the gap, achieves a historical *translatio*, between antiquity and his own time. Further, that Dürer is said to reject the arrival of the "Baroque language of gesture," ascribed to Leonardo and Michelangelo, is emblematic of Warburg's nascent map of historical change.[36]Warburg casts the northern artist as a mediator between the excess or "superlatives" expressed by the Laocoön statue unearthed in 1506 in Rome and a classical ideal of form able decorously to represent pathos. But why the advent of what has come to be called the Baroque troubled Warburg so much more than it did Dürer, who by Warburg's own account was anxious to adapt to the "new" style, is a question that must be postponed until we have a better sense of the "values" that Warburg's art history cultivated. Likewise, an explication of Warburg's curious use of the word "superlatives" and its importance for his conception of metaphor will have to wait until we have a better understanding of the latter and its pragmatic consequences.

Some twenty years after the essay on Dürer, wrestling with his *Bilderatlas*, Warburg effectively leaves the iconographic path that his successors, Panofsky, Gombrich, and Wittkower, will later follow in his name. He chooses instead to convert his *Pathosformeln* into "dynamograms" – metaphors infused with Bacchic, emotive energy that also, remarkably, obey the grammar of form. When translated into the Renaissance and beyond, these serve as markers for him to map the *Denkraum* in which the belated spectator can discover historical meaning, achieve perspective, and win that spiritual *Ausgleich* for which he yearns. This attempt at *Orientierung* was, Gombrich observes, no mere intellectual or historicist exercise; it demanded Warburg's own "exaltation and awe in front of this fateful process."[37] That any interpretation of the Renaissance's interpretation of the "afterlife" of classical artistic forms must be riddled with conceptual aporias, anachronistic needs, unconscious drives, and subjective aspirations was as clear to Warburg as were the similarities and differences that often, but by no means exclusively, seemed to serve as the criteria for arranging individual

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

36 RPA, 556–558.

37 Gombrich, Aby Warburg, 245.

photographs into tableaux. And yet for all of its subjective, psychological force, like much Renaissance encyclopedism, *Mnemosyne* depends inordinately, catachrestically, on basic spatial metaphorics to make its epistemological claims.[38] When he presents the *Atlas* as a way of mapping the "Wanderstraßen der Kultur," Warburg literally and figuratively points to cartography as the model for his historical vision.[39] Not only, as we saw, did he have actual maps prepared for the opening panel, but the essentially spatial epistemology of the *Atlas*, with its metonymic and diagrammatic logics, would discover how cultural change circulates between east and west, north and south, as well as how it is affected over time. Put another way, his cartographic metaphorics reinforces the importance of achieving "metaphoric distance." And if, like many of his encyclopedic predecessors, Warburg, too, mines a vein of pathos from the impossibility of such ambitions, unlike most of its counterparts, the *Atlas* spurns the *copia* of discourse for a more immanent metonymy of images. The photographs of the constellations of photographs that remain are to us, for all their spectral qualities, still ostensive – to create metaphoric distance they point to artifacts presenting literal motion. As such, Warburg may be said to offer a variation on what Roland Barthes calls "the Poetics of the Encyclopedic image, if we agree to define Poetics as the sphere of infinite vibrations of meaning, at the center of which is placed the literal object."[40]

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

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

40 Roland Barthes, "The Plates of the Encyclopedia," in A Barthes Reader (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 230.