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The Remembrance of Things Past

On Aby M. Warburg and Walter Benjamin

Cover illustration: Front Façade of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg
(Photo: Warburg Institute)

For Peter Barnett

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Figure 1   Frontespiece of the Warburg Institute copy of Walter Benjamin, *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 2   Humiskachina Dancers, New Mexico, 1895/6 (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 3   Virgil Solis, *Moses and the Brazen Serpent* (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 4   Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* (Photo: Alinari)

Figure 5   *The Death of Orpheus*, from Ovid, *Metamorphosis* (Leipzig, 1582) (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 6   Front Façade of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 7   The Museum of Ferrante Imperato, from Imperato, *Historia Naturale* (Venice, 1672) (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Figure 8   Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Founding of the Franciscan by Pope Honorius III* (Photo: Witt Library)

Figure 9   Aby M. Warburg, *Mnemosyne* Atlas, Plate 79 (Photo: Warburg Institute)

Introduction

It is well known that Walter Benjamin felt a particular affinity for Aby M. Warburg. The failure of his Habilitationsschrift having precluded an orthodox academic career, Benjamin saw in Warburg the private scholar a model for his own future. Benjamin's interest in Warburg, however, was also grounded in the various parallels between the thought of the two. Most obviously, Benjamin's Habilitationsschrift *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*[1] published in 1928, makes reference both to one of Warburg's most substantial works, his *Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten*, and also to Panofsky and Saxl's study of melancholy in the Renaissance.[2] That Benjamin regarded Warburg as more than simply a respected scholar in a field of study adjacent to his own is apparent from biographical sources, most important of which is the well known letter he sent to Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1926. In this he wrote:

> Vielleicht darf ich neben der Teilnahme von [Walter] Brecht auch auf das Interesse des hamburger Kreises um Warburg hoffen. Jedenfalls würde ich unter seinen Mitgliedern (zu denen ich selber keine Beziehungen habe) am ersten akademische und verständnisvolle Rezensenten mir erwarten.[3]

Benjamin's judgement was mistaken and his hopes were to remain unfulfilled. Hofmannsthal sent a copy of the chapter from Benjamin's Habilitation on melancholy, recently published in the *Neue Deutsche Beiträge*, to Panofsky, whose response was distinctly unenthusiastic.[4] Nevertheless, Benjamin still dwelt on the similarities between his work and that of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, noting in a letter to Siegfried Kracauer that 'die für unsere Anschauungsweise wichtigsten wissenschaftlichen Publikationen sich mehr und mehr um den Warburgkreis gruppieren,

und darum kann es mir nur um so lieber sein, daß neulich, indirekt, die Mitteilung kam, Saxl sei intensiv für mein Buch interessiert.'[5]

Warburg bought a copy of the work for the library (Fig. 1) and although Benjamin may still have hoped for some kind of contact, this was increasingly unlikely.[6] Benjamin's own interests had moved away from the historical scholarship of the Habilitation to other areas; by the end of September 1926 he had already completed the manuscript of *Einbahnstrasse*, eventually published by Rowohlt in 1928. In addition, inspired partly by Asja Lacis, he had become increasingly preoccupied with communist thought which, spurred on by his visit to Moscow at the end of 1926, resulted in a number of articles on contemporary Russian culture. Benjamin the would-be literary historian had become a cultural critic. Ironically, while Benjamin hoped to attain a more secure existence through association with the Warburg circle, it is now the case that much recent interest in Warburg is due to the prominence of Benjamin, and to the desire to explore his intellectual antecedents and contemporaries. Hence, while a popular cultural history of Weimar Germany could state thirty years ago that 'the Warburg Institute appears as one of the greatest glories and most characteristic expressions of the Weimar spirit,'[7] it is the work of Benjamin that has most often stood as the exemplar of Weimar intellectual culture. Nevertheless, even a brief comparison of the two reveals important parallels, ranging from their private libraries and their ambivalence over their Jewish background, to features common to their final incomplete works, Benjamin's *Passagen Werk* and the *Mnemosyne* Atlas of Warburg. Although the relationship between the thought of the two has been explored before, this has largely been with a view to illuminating the thought of Benjamin.[8] In contrast, the aim of this study is to attempt a more comprehensive comparison of their thought. In many cases one cannot speak of a direct influence of the one on the other: but one can, following Benjamin's own notion, lay out their ideas alongside each other in the form of a constellation, whose elements inform and reflect off each other. Moreover the similarity of their thought is due, to a substan-
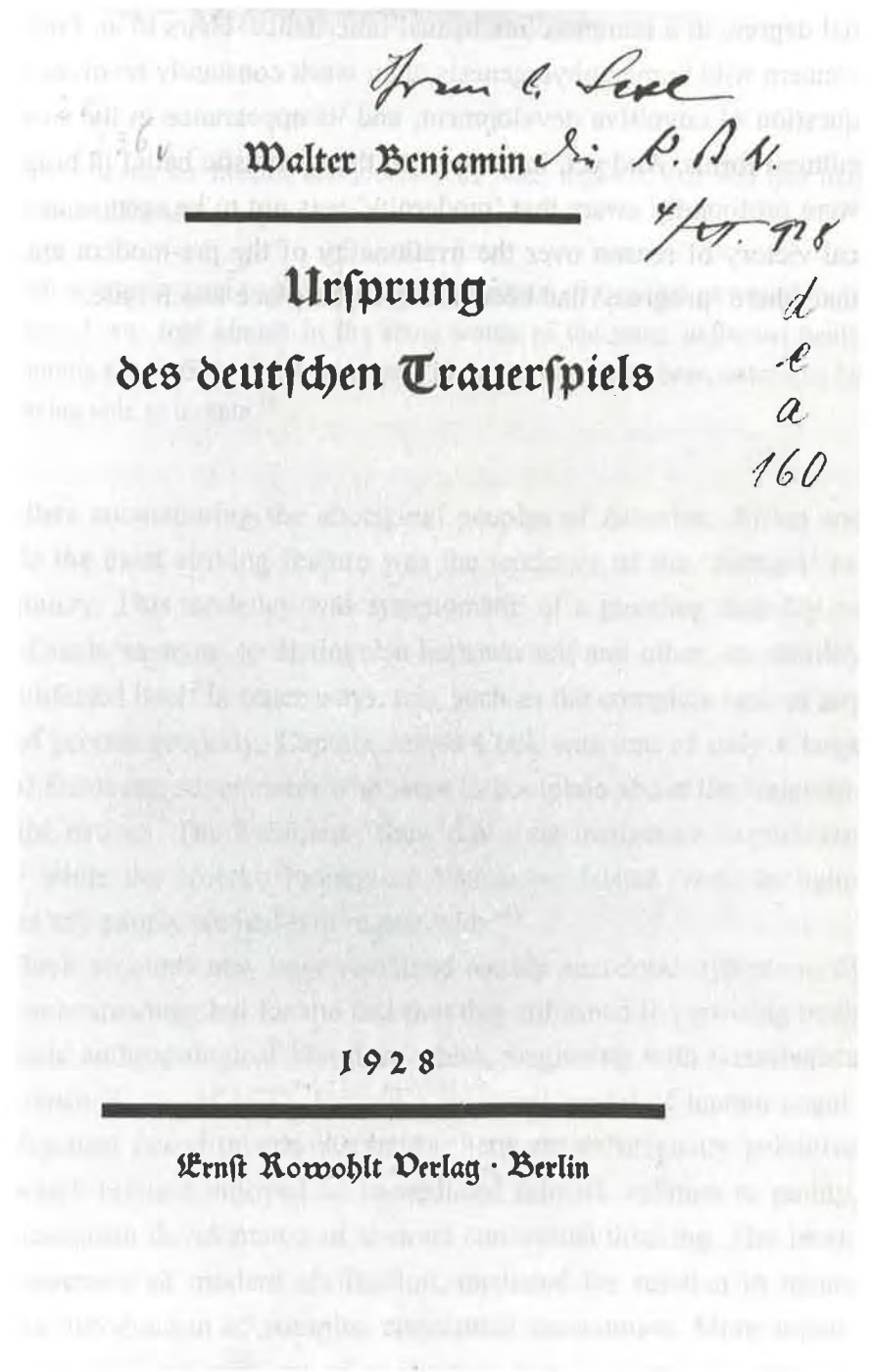
Figure 1 Frontespiece of the Warburg Institute copy of Walter Benjamin,
Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels (Photo: Warburg Institute)

tial degree, to a common intellectual inheritance. Heirs to an Enlightenment concern with human phylogenesis, their work constantly revolves around the question of cognitive development, and its appearance in the succession of cultural forms. And yet, in contrast to the optimistic belief in progress, both were profoundly aware that 'modernity' was not to be seen as an unequivocal victory of reason over the irrationality of the pre-modern era, and also that where 'progress' had been achieved, its place was fragile.

Mimesis and Experience

Ellos deven ser buenos servidores y de buen ingenio, que veo que muy presto dizen todo lo que les dezia.[9]

All savages appear to possess to an uncommon degree this power of mimicry. I was told almost in the same words of the same ludicrous habits among the Caffres: the Australians, likewise, have long been notorious for being able to imitate.[10]

For travellers encountering the aboriginal peoples of America, Africa and the Pacific the most striking feature was the tendency of the 'savages' towards mimicry. This tendency was symptomatic of a puzzling inability on the part of such 'savages' to distinguish between self and other, an inability which manifested itself in other ways, too, such as the complete lack of any concept of private property. Captain James Cook was one of only a large number of European adventurers who were to complain about the 'thievishness' of the natives. The Tahitians 'shew'd a great inclination to pick our pockets'[11] while the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island 'were as light-fingered as any people we had before met with.'[12]

Such accounts may have remained merely anecdotal, symptoms of a lack of understanding, but for the fact that they informed the growing body of systematic anthropological literature which, beginning with Giambatista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* of 1725, formed a recurrent model of human cognitive development based on the distinction between an originary primitive state, in which humans enjoyed an unmediated mimetic relation to reality, and the subsequent development of abstract conceptual thinking. The latter, as an achievement of modern civilisation, mediated the relation to nature through the introduction of complex conceptual taxonomies. More importantly, an essential achievement of civilisation was to create the space in

which the human subject reflected on its own identity and its difference from nature and from others. For Vico the earliest cognitive stage of humanity was dominated by a poetic logic. Such poetic wisdom had no place for reflective thought, for 'dovette incominciare da una metafisica, non ragionata ed astratta qual è questa or degli addrotinatti, ma sentita ed imagininata quale dovett' essere di tai primi uomini, siccome quelle ch' erano di niuno raziocinio e tutti robusti sensi e vigorosissime fantasie.'[13] Such early men acted on impulse lacking any critical distance towards themselves, their actions or the external environment. Such men were like children: 'vagliono potentamente nell' imitare.'[14] Unable to form 'generi intelligibili delle cose'[15] they created poetic characters, and since poetry, for Vico, was originally nothing but imitation, the primary human condition was one of mimeticism.[16]

This equation of the primitive with the mimetic, whose significance went beyond the mere observation of imitativeness to a general theory of primitive cognition, became an established topos of eighteenth and nineteenth-century philosophical and anthropological discourse. It is manifest, for example, in Herder's remarks on the imitative tendency of Russians - the primitives of Europe: 'Ich sehe in dieser Nachahmungsbegierde ... nichts als gute Anlage einer Nation, die sich bildet ... die überall lernt, nachahmt, sammelt.'[17] Similarly, in his *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*, Karl Otto Müller claims, regarding mythic consciousness, that 'es das Hauptgesetz dieser eigenthümlichen Geistesthätigkeit ist, daß sie das Gedachte gleich als wirklich nimmt, und über sich selbst durchaus nicht reflektirt'[18] A fundamental aspect of mythic thought is also the fact that 'menschlichen Verhältnisse auch auf alle nicht menschlichen Wesen übertragen werden;'[19] hence the tendency for impersonal natural phenomena to be personified in the form of mythic, anthropomorphic deities. In general, the mimetic, a oneness with nature, was characteristic of the earliest state of human being, a state of savagery and barbarism. As Hegel concluded, 'In Wahrheit

ist jene natürliche Einigkeit als Existenz ... ein Zustand ... der Roheit, der Begierde, der Wildheit überhaupt.'[20]

Although the precise definition of the mimetic varies from author to author, certain features recur, including: a lack of self-consciousness, imitativeness, a lack of conceptual abstraction, a tendency towards categorial confusion (e.g. the real with the imaginary, wakefulness with dreaming), an anthropomorphised view of nature. Common to all of these manifestations is what the anthropologist Karl von den Steinen referred to as belief in the truth of immediate sensate experience ('die unmittelbare Erfahrung der Sinne'), and this immediacy of experience provides the logic of many of the cultural practices characteristic of primitive societies.[21] Phenomena such as myth, magic or astrology could all be seen as manifestations of a primitive mimetic consciousness.[22] For Edward Tylor, whose *Primitive Culture* was widely read both in Britain and Germany, magic is sustained by the belief that 'association of thought must involve similar connexion in reality.'[23] For Tylor's great contemporary and rival Herbert Spencer, magic achieves its legitimacy from the belief in occult affinities. In particular he notes that even in his own time there are those for whom 'some intrinsic connexion exists between word and thing.'[24] This primitive belief is a projection of the notion of the proximity of self and other onto the world of objects. Hence a name is held to be more than an arbitrary linguistic sign. Instead it is a part of the person, and because it is inseparable from its owner great weight is frequently given to keeping it secret. Thus, spells that use the person's name function even in the physical absence of the persons, since they 'originate in the belief that a representation is physically connected with the thing connected.'[25] Evidence of this can be seen, too, in the frequent reliance of sorcerers and magicians on possession of a part of the victim's body (e.g. hair or nails) or of an object closely associated with them. In both such cases there is an inability to conceive of relations between objects and persons as anything but immediate, concrete and particular.[26]

The significance for Benjamin of such anthropological notions of the mimetic is well known. The concept of mimesis is central to his epistemology, as is most obvious, perhaps, in his early essay 'Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie'[27] or his later paper 'Über das Mimetische Vermögen.'[28] These essays are minor, however, when compared with early works such as his Habilitation or the essay on Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, or the later unfinished *Passagen Werk*, all of which explore the mimesis as a methodological procedure whereby traditional notions of historical analysis are replaced by the idea of an unmediated presentation. In the introduction to his essay on Goethe Benjamin draws a clear distinction between 'commentary' and 'criticism'; while the former is concerned with the material content of the work, criticism seeks its truth content ('Wahrheitsgehalt') which lives in the interstices of the text, requiring a complete immersion in the work.[29] Although not named as such, a mimetic conception of knowledge clearly underpins the method of *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, where Benjamin claims in the 'Erkenntnis-kritische Vorrede', 'Wie deutlich es die Mathematik belegt, daß die gänzliche Elimination des Darstellungsproblems … das Signum echter Erkenntnis ist.'[30] Not only a methodological objective, the mimetic becomes the basis of Benjamin's epistemology, in which truth is attained not through the grasp of concepts but by immersion into the spaces forming between them: 'Die Wahrheit ist ein aus Ideen gebildetes intentionsloses Sein. Das ihr gemässe Verhalten ist … ein in sie Eingehen und Verschwinden.'[31] Similarly, the mimetic organises the logic of *Passagen Werk*, Benjamin's montage of nineteenth-century Parisian culture and history. As Benjamin famously noted, 'Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen.'[32]

For Warburg, too, the mimetic plays a central role, although this time not as a methodological objective, but as a pole in his mapping of human experience. The earliest indications of Warburg's interest appear in his first significant published work, the doctoral study of Botticelli, in which, drawing partly on the aesthetic theory of Robert Vischer, but also influenced

by Nietzsche, Warburg's attention is drawn to the Dionysian undercurrents surfacing in the Florentine understanding of antiquity.[33] A major impetus was provided by his well-documented visit to America in 1895-6 where, spurred on by his contact with Franz Boas and scholars at the Smithsonian Institute such as Frank Cushing, James Mooney and others, Warburg became fully engaged with contemporary anthropological thought, culminating in his field trip to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico.[34] In his last work, the incomplete pictorial atlas *Mnemosyne*, mimesis again plays a crucial part, in that the atlas maps out the visual signs of a transformation in human experience, from magical-mimetic identification to the logical-dissociative objectivism of the modern scientific world view. As the much-cited opening line of the Introduction states, 'Bewusstes Distanzschaffen zwischen sich und der Aussenwelt darf man wohl als Grundakt menschlicher Zivilisation bezeichnen … '[35]

Warburg's emphasis on the question of distance and proximity highlights the affinity between his concerns and those of Benjamin. Two sections from a series of fragments written in 1922 or 1923, entitled 'Schemata des Psychophysischen Problems,' devote some attention to the question of nearness and distance. Informed by his reading of Ludwig Klages, Benjamin concludes, 'Je weniger in den Banden des Schicksals ein Mann befangen ist, desto weniger bestimmt ihn das Nächste.'[36] In contrast, the free man is no longer subject to the immediate, but instead maintains a distance towards nature and towards anything that might impinge on his existence. This fragment from the 1920's highlights a spatial metaphor that plays a crucial role in Benjamin and Warburg's concern with the mimetic. However, Benjamin's interest in the mimetic can be traced back to his essay of 1912, 'Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie.'[37] Criticising Kantian epistemology, in which knowledge is conceived in terms of a subject-object relation, Benjamin lists a number of cases which remain inexplicable within such a framework. Specifically,

Wir wissen von Naturvölkern der sogenannten präanimistischen Stufe welche sich mit heiligen Tieren und Pflanzen identifizieren, sich wie sie benennen; wir wissen von Wahnsinnigen die ebenfalls sich zum Teil mit den Objekten ihrer Wahrnehmung identifizieren, die ihnen also nicht mehr Objecta, gegenüberstehend sind; wir wissen von Kranken, die die Emp-findungen ihres Leibes nicht auf sich selbst sondern auf andere Wesen be-ziehen und von Hellsehern welche wenigstens behaupten, die Wahrnehmungen anderer als ihre eigenen empfangen zu können.[38]

Benjamin was well acquainted with Kantian thought, having studied Kant and the Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen in some depth. Never-theless this outline of Kant is problematic, because it overlooks the degree of reciprocity of subject and object in Kant's epistemology. At the same time, however, fundamental to Benjamin's critique is the extent to which the self-conscious subject, able to distinguish between its spontaneous intuition and its representations of the outer world, is seen by Kant as normative for all human subjects.[39] Benjamin's reliance on anthropological terminology, including his reference to 'Naturvölker' and the 'prä-animistisch,' indicates the direction of his criticism. The essay only uses examples from anthropo-logical accounts in order to lay out the deficiencies of Kantianism. In the thematically related essay 'Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen,' however, Benjamin makes use of anthropological theory in order to ground his own linguistic philosophy.[40]

This essay is usually interpreted in the light of its overtly theologi-cal language, most especially its notion of the 'fall' of language.[41] Benja-min's essay can also be regarded as an echo of the language crisis occupying late nineteenth and early twentieth-century authors such as Hugo von Hof-mannsthal or Fritz Mauthner, who focused on the disclosive inadequacies of language; his concern with Adamic language can also be seen as a late Ro-mantic reactivation of Renaissance theories of language.[42] Of equal impor-tance, however, is the application of anthropological theories of the primi-tive to the question of language.

Benjamin sums up the problem in the following way; 'Das Mediale, das ist die *Unmittel*barkeit aller geistigen Mitteilung, ist das Grundproblem der Sprachtheorie, und wenn man diese Unmittelbarkeit magisch nennen will, so ist das Urproblem der Sprache ihre Magie.'[43] At the heart of Benja-min's essay is thus the question of linguistic reference, and his answer to this is a reformulation of the very question of linguistic truth. Truth is not grounded on the correspondence between an object or state of affairs and a statement; rather, the object, and hence its truth, is disclosed *in* language. The key to this is the conception of the word as name, bound by an intimate and immediate bond to the object. Drawing on the Adamic myth, Benjamin regards naming as the most fundamental linguistic and cognitive act. Ac-cording to Benjamin, 'Gottes Schöpfung voll-endet sich, indem die Dinge ihren Namen vom Menschen erhalten, aus dem im Namen die Sprache allein spricht.'[44] and this myth is then used to underpin a general theory of lan-guage which explicitly criticises bourgeois linguistic theory. Specifically, he argues that 'Damit kann die Vorstellung nicht mehr aufkommen, die der bürgerlichen Ansicht der Sprache entspricht, daß das Wort sich zur Sache zufällig verhalte, daß es ein durch irgendwelche gesetztes Konvention Zeichen der Dinge (oder ihrer Erkenntnis) sie. Die Sprache gibt niemals *bloße* Zeichen.'[45] However while Benjamin is contradicting a tradition of linguistic thought which stretches from Aristotle to Saussure it would be mistaken to assume that he is proposing an alternative general theory of lan-guage. Rather, his comments have to be interpreted in the light of his pro-found concern with the historicity of experience, in which, at least in the early writings, language plays a central part. This becomes apparent in the final section of the essay, which outlines the transformation of language af-ter the Fall. The importance of the Fall in Benjamin's account is that the knowledge of good and evil requires the making of judgements, a series of abstract conceptual operations alien to the logic of the name. The name is displaced by the '*mere* sign,' which brings the fall of language into 'den Ab-grund des Geschwätzes.'[46] Benjamin's formulation in his early essays indi-

cates a bald opposition between the onomatopoeic and the semiotic forms of language. Later this position is modified. In 'Die Lehre vom Ähnlichen' Benjamin is clear that the onomatopoeic can never appear *as such*. He notes that

> Diese ... magische Seite der Sprache wie der Schrift läuft aber nicht beziehungslos neben der anderen, der semiotischen, einher. Alles Mimetische der Sprache ist vielmehr eine fundierte Intention, die überhaupt nur an etwas Fremdem, eben dem Semiotischen, Mitteilenden der Sprache als ihrem Fundus in Erscheinung treten kann.[47]

This sense that the mimetic is dependent on the semiotic will have a number of important consequences, most significant of which is the notion that it will always exist as a kind of residue / trace or distant memory.

Benjamin's employment of biblical myth in the earlier essay to construct an allegory of modernity has been read in a number of ways. The theological tone led some to view Benjamin primarily as a mystic: that Gershom Scholem expressed disapproval on that account when Benjamin embraced historical materialism is well documented. The essay can also be read as an engagement with existential thinking; Benjamin explicitly refers to Kierkegaard, and his use of the term 'Geschwätz' ('chatter') is striking given Kierkegaard's use of the concept of 'gossip' ('snak'), and also the importance of the notion of 'idle talk' ('das Gerede') to Heidegger's analysis of language in *Sein und Zeit* only a few years later.[48] Taking into account the anthropological orientation of the earlier essay on Kant, however, it is also possible to see a philosophical-anthropological perspective being worked out once again, especially given the similarity between Benjamin's comments on the name as inseparable from the object and the frequent observation made in nineteenth century anthropology of the primitive notion that words are intrinsically connected to things. And this perspective can be seen operating in other writings from the 1930's such as 'Lehre vom Ähnlichen' (and its revised version 'Über das mimetische Vermögen') or the review ar-

ticle on 'Probleme der Sprachsoziologie.'[49] Indeed, the preparatory notes for 'Über das mimetische Vermögen' contain a short study mapping the concepts of his early language essay onto the notions of the mimetic discussed in 'Lehre vom Ähnlichen.'[50] In 'Über das mimetische Vermögen' Benjamin interprets the prominence of imitative behaviour in children's play as the reflection of a much more general impulse not only to mimic, as children do, but to conceive the entire world as governed by a system of similarities and correspondences, of which astrology is an important residue. Language plays a central role in this primitive metaphysics, since the system of correspondences consists of non-sensuous similarities, which are rooted in the primal form of language: the name. Here Benjamin is reiterating his earlier onomatopoeic theory of language. As in the earlier essay, too, modernity brings about the disruption of this primitive world-picture, though Benjamin notes that this world of archaic correspondences and magical analogies has virtually vanished.[51] But at the same time, while the mimetic has *nearly* vanished, its residues have remained. Its traces can be found, for example, in the world of children and their toys, a subject to which Benjamin repeatedly returned.[52] It can also be seen in language and in script, both of which function as archives of the lost mimetic faculty. As Benjamin concluded, 'Die Schrift ist so, neben der Sprache, ein Archiv unsinnlicher Ähnlichkeiten, unsinnlicher Korrespondenzen geworden.'[53]

Two observations can be made of this account. First, it reinforces the idea, discussed above, that the mimetic *inhabits* the semiotic and thereby leaves its traces on language. Second, although the connection is not explicit, the metaphor of language as an archive invites comparison with Freud's equation of memory and writing.[54] As Sigrid Weigel suggests, the mimetic can be seen as a metaphor for the primitive repressed of language,[55] and the notion of the return of the repressed recalls not only Freud, who would be so influential for much of Benjamin's writing on modernity, but also Warburg who, in the notes for his lecture on pageantry noted that 'im

cultivierten Menschen wiederholen sich ontogenetisch die Conflicte primitiver Zeit.'[56]

In 'Lehre vom Ähnlichen' the anthropological perspective is more explicit, with a corresponding diminution of reference to the mystical language of his earliest language theory. Using the example of astrology Benjamin argues, 'In dieser Nachahmbarkeit durch den Menschen, bezw. den mimetischen Vermögen, das dieser hat, muß man wohl bis auf weiteres die einzige Instanz erblicken, welche der Astrologie ihren Erfahrungscharakter gegeben hat.'[57] The decline of astrology, its appearance as an outmoded superstition, is due to the fact that its experiential basis has been lost. 'Der Hinweis auf Astrologie ... besagt, daß wir in unserer Wahrnehmung dasjenige nicht mehr besitzen, was es einmal möglich machte, von einer Ähnlichkeit zu sprechen, die bestehe zwischen einer Sternkonstellation und einem Menschen.'[58]

In the Habilitation, the question of mimesis occurs in a twofold manner. First, as I suggested earlier, Benjamin clings to a mimetic notion of truth in his Prologue. This resurrection of the mimetic is not, however, an attempt merely to overturn modernity or to recapture the plenitude of full unmediated experience. Truth can no longer be achieved directly; rather, it has to be approached indirectly, dialectically, through the constellation of opposites. Benjamin's method of historical investigation is founded on the idea of an intentionless laying out of opposites alongside each other, for 'nicht an sich selbst, sondern einzig und allein in einer Zuordnung dinglicher Elemente im Begriffe stellen die Ideen sich dar. Und ... als deren Konfiguration.'[59] This idea is undoubtedly informed by Benjamin's reading of Romantic aesthetic theory – the subject of his doctoral thesis – and in particular of Friedrich Schlegel, for whom the Absolute could only be represented dialectically, ironically, through the aesthetic symbol.[60] Benjamin's insistence on lack of intention and on the motif of the constellation is central to his conception of the dialectical method, the goal of which is to maximise the number of possible configurations, and in contrast to Hegel's equation of

dialectic with history, it implies the lack of a governing movement of 'Geist' that would *sublate* all oppositions. Instead, Benjamin insists on the importance of allowing contradictions to remain unresolved, and a reason for this is his continued use of the idea of the *residue* or the trace of the mimetic in his essays on imitation and similarity. One can also see in embryonic form here an issue that he would later raise as a methodological objective in the *Passagen Werk*, namely, 'einen historischen Materialismus zu demonstrieren, der die Idee des Fortschrittes in sich annihiliert hat.'[61]

Benjamin's reference to Leibniz's concept of the monad also continues the interest in resemblance and correspondence as the basic principles of a primitive metaphysics. Ideas are described as monads:

> Das Sein, das da mit Vor- und Nachgeschichte in sie eingeht, gibt in der eigenen verborgen die verkürzte und verdunkelte Figur der übrigen Ideenwelt, so wie bei den Monaden der "Metaphysischen Abhandlungen" von 1686 in einer jeweils alle andern undeutlich mitgegeben sind.[62]

Contained within this reference to Leibniz, perhaps the most Baroque of philosophers, is an embryonic form of the concept of the 'correspondences' that will play a crucial part in his later writings on Baudelaire. Where Benjamin will later examine Baudelaire's fascination with the reciprocal relation of subject and object, the focus here is on the order of invisible affinities between ideas, and it is the task of the philosophy of history to lay those affinities and correspondences, bare. The idea is thus regarded as a compressed image of the rest of the world.[63]

Benjamin's formulation throws up an instructive parallel with Warburg, namely, their common emphasis on the significance of the detail as a compressed microcosm. Warburg's famous formulation that 'Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail' can be read not only as an attempt to highlight the importance of scholarly minutiae, but also as part of a deeper methodological concern. Indeed, as William Heckscher has suggested, Warburg's interest in the detail can also be traced back to Leibniz's notion of 'petites perceptions'

in the *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain*, where 'Ces petites perceptions sont donc de plus grande efface par leur suite qu'on ne pense … dans la moindre des substances, des yeux aussi perçans … toute la suite des choses de l'univers.'[64] Moreover the interest of Warburg and Benjamin in significant details throws up a wider parallels with, for example, Heinrich Wölfflin's famous assertion of the function of the Gothic shoe as the microcosm of the entire culture of the Gothic age, or indeed with Freud's symptomatological reading of individual and cultural behaviour.[65] It has also been suggested that Warburg's interest in details indicates an underlying conception that refuses to view the work of art (or a historical epoch) as a closed, unified totality, but would instead regard it as consisting of a series of fragments, a view that recalls Benjamin's dialectical method.[66] While it may be overly reductive to argue that Warburg viewed culture as consisting merely of fragments it is certainly true that his strategy of attending to details and their frequent incommensurability is linked to a wider view of culture as dialectical phenomenon – of which the Florentine Renaissance was a supreme example.

The emphasis on the detail also has to be interpreted alongside the criticism, expressed by both Warburg and Benjamin, of the way in which the excessive circulation of images devalued the specific, individual image, causing a kind of perceptual blindness. For Benjamin this takes place as a consequence of the process of commodification which reduced the individual to an instance of the general, while Warburg regards it as occurring through the presence of hyper-inflated symbols, whose form became increasingly disconnected from any meaning. For Warburg such hyper-inflation first occurred with the inception of Baroque allegory – he frequently refers to 'barocke Entartung'[67] Mention of Baroque allegory also recalls perhaps the best known aspect of Benjamin's Habilitationsschrift: its recognition of the specific logic of the allegorical form of the Trauerspiel and its repudiation of previous accounts, most notably that of Friedrich Creuzer, which judged allegory according to traditional notions of the sym-

bol.[68] Instead of regarding allegory as a debased form of symbolism, however, Benjamin stresses its specific logic grounded in alienation. His early philosophy of language is operative here, for central to allegory is the sense that language has lost the intimate bond with nature still present in the symbol and consequently that allegory is founded on a melancholic metaphysics of lack. Benjamin notes that in allegory;

> Jede Person, jedwedes Ding, jedes Verhältnis kann ein beliebiges anderes bedeuten. Diese Möglichkeit spricht der profanen Welt ein vernichtendes doch gerechtes Urteil: sie wird gekennzeichnet als eine Welt in der es aufs Detail so streng nicht ankommt.[69]

Again the question of details becomes prominent; allegory loses any sense for detail, substituting for the intrinsically meaningful symbol a logic of shifting forms. Although he makes no reference to Hegel, Benjamin's characterisation of Baroque allegory bears a striking resemblance to the older philosopher's account of Romantic art. Discussing the principle of inwardness that governs the Geist of Romantic art, Hegel notes that 'wenn die subjektive Innigkeit des Gemüts das wesentliche Moment für die Darstellung wird, ist es von gleicher Zufälligkeit, in welchen bestimmten Inhalt der äußeren Wirklichkeit und der geistigen Welt sich das Gemüt hineinlebt.'[70] Likewise Benjamin adds that amongst the authors of the Baroque Trauerspiel, 'In den Anagrammen, den onomatopoetischen Wendungen und vielen Sprachkunststücken anderer Art stolziert das Wort, die Silbe und der Laut, emanzipiert von jeder hergebrachten Sinnverbindung, als Ding, das allegorisch werden darf.'[71] Allegory thus brings to an extreme the recognition of the arbitrary nature of language and of linguistic reference, and linked to this arbitrariness is the predominance of the fragment;

> Das Bild im Feld der allegorischen Intuition ist Bruchstück, Rune. Seine symbolische Schönheit verflüchtigt sich, da das Licht der Gottesgelahrtheit

darauf trifft. Der falsche Schein der Totalität geht aus. Denn das Eidos verlischt, das Gleichnis geht ein. [72]

Benjamin's mention of the loss of similitude, 'Gleichnis,' is significant. In its reference to affinity loss it highlights the organic relation between the Habilitation and the more speculative early essays on language. Implicit in his discussion of both the question of historical methodology and of the meaning of the Baroque Trauerspiel is the issue of the loss of mimetic affinity. In the Prologue his primary concern is with developing a methodology that will accomplish a mimetic immersion into its object, amplifying the lost significance of details through the juxtaposition of opposites.[73] The account of Baroque allegory examines the first concrete historical registering of the loss of the mimetic, a registering that recurs, and perhaps comes to an end in Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. Benjamin's notion of the trace or residue is important here, for the force of Baudelaire's work, as the last allegorical poet, derives from the tension between the distant memory of mimetic experience, *Erfahrung*, and the degraded *Erlebnis* of modernity. This also underlies the parallel between allegory and commodity fetishism, for as Marx had recognised, it is on its secret magic that the success of the commodity form depends.

The intimate connection for Benjamin between Baudelaire and the Baroque Trauerspiel is indicated by a range of comments from 'Zentralpark.' As Benjamin argues, Melanchthon's notion of '*Melencholia illa heroica*' offers the perfect summation of the impulse driving Baudelaire, and it is also intimately linked with his use of shock as a poetic principle. [74] This latter notion echoes his recognition of the central role of shock in the Baroque allegory. At the same time, however, Benjamin also indicates the important *differences* between the melancholy of the Trauerspiel and the heroic melancholy of Baudelaire: 'Die Schlüsselfigur der frühen Allegorie ist die Leiche. Die Schlüsselfigur der späten Allegorie ist das "Andenken".'[75] This reference to 'Andenken' alludes to Baudelaire's notion of the 'corre-

spondances.' As Benjamin notes 'wesentlich ist, daß die 'correspondances' einen Begriff der Erfahrung festhalten, der kultische Elemente in sich schließt.'[76] Hence they have a memorial function, and also preserve the mimetic character of early cultic experience. Of particular interest is Baudelaire's well known poem 'Correspondances,' in which the poet describes the reciprocal relation between nature and the poetic subject.[77] In this perception of nature as more than a mute object of scientific curiosity there is a residue of the doctrine of occult sympathies and hidden affinities. Hence 'Die correspondances sind die Data des Eingedenkens. Sie sind keine historischen, sondern Data der Vorgeschichte.'[78] Moreover the term becomes absorbed into Benjamin's own critical vocabulary. He notes in the *Passagen Werk* 'Daß zwischen der Welt der modernen Technik und der archaischen Symbolwelt der Mythologie Korrespondenzen spielen … '[79] The term 'Korrespondenzen,' with its suggestion of the affinities between modern technology and ancient ritual also introduces Benjamin's mimetic view of history, to which I shall return later.

I have already mentioned Benjamin's distinction between 'Erfahrung' and 'Erlebnis.' His account of the decline of the one into the other draws on three principle intellectual sources, Marx, Freud and Bergson. Rather than investigating in any depth Benjamin's appropriation of these three in turn, I wish to examine the *terms of the difference* between 'Erfahrung' and 'Erlebnis.' Following Freud, Benjamin sees consciousness as a defence formation against the shock of outer stimuli. All perception is thus mediated, but Benjamin argues that the shock of modern life, in particular the experience of the metropolitan crowd, has intensified this process of screening.

> Je grösser der Anteil des Chockmoments an den einzelnen Eindrücken ist, je unablässiger das Bewußtsein im Interesse des Reizschutzes auf dem Plan sein muß, je größer der Erfolg ist, mit dem es operiert, desto weniger gehen sie in die Erfahrung ein; desto eher erfüllen sie den Begriff des Erlebnisses.[80]

While Benjamin follows Freud in his *general* characterisation of perception, their accounts diverge in a number of ways. Most importantly, Freud sees the mediation of sense-stimuli as a structural, permanent and thus ahistorical component of the perceptual mechanism, whereas Benjamin historicises the process. What for Freud could only ever stand at the threshold of consciousness signified for Benjamin an earlier historical stage of human experience. Fundamental to his account is the view that at some earlier stage of human history 'Erfahrung' had not yet been transformed into 'Erlebnis,' a view that is confirmed elsewhere – particularly in the *Passagen Werk* – in the frequent equation of the primitive past as a state of dreaming. This assumption underpins his reading of Baudelaire, since he argues that Baudelaire's primary goal is to give the lived experience of modernity 'das Gewicht einer Erfahrung.'[81] From a Freudian perspective this is incoherent, since Benjamin's notion of 'Erfahrung,' or what Freud would regard as completely unmediated experience, is never possible as such. Even though traumatic shocks occasionally break through the defence mechanism of consciousness, they are never meaningful in themselves; as Freud noted, the retelling of such shock experiences always follows the dictates of consciousness. It is also important to observe that there is a contradiction within Benjamin's own position, for in 'Lehre vom Ähnlichen,' he argues that the mimetic basis of language can only ever appear in the interstices of its semiotic, communicative dimension. Here, in contrast, Benjamin appears to regard mimetic 'Erfahrung' as having once been fully present.

Benjamin at no point defines 'Erfahrung' itself, but it is clear that by virtue of its opposition to 'Erlebnis' it represents the latest incarnation of mimetic experience: an intentionless, passive receptivity, an immersion in the objective world. The Freudian account would regard such a passivity as laying the subject open to a dangerous perceptual excess, but for Benjamin it is only the conditions of modern life that have brought about a blockage of perception and the growth of 'Erlebnis.' This much is apparent from other texts, such as his much-cited essay on Leskow, which opens with the obser-

vation that in recent history 'nie sind Erfahrungen gründlicher Lügen gestraft worden als die strategischen durch den Stellungskrieg, die wirtschaftlichen durch die Inflation, die körperlichen durch die Materialschlacht, die sittlichen durch die Machthaber.'[82] Thus, 'die Erfahrung ist im Kurse gefallen. Und es sieht aus als fiele sie weiter ins Bodenlose.'[83]

Benjamin's use of Freudian terminology is in one way misleading, because his distinction between 'Erfahrung' and 'Erlebnis,' though perhaps informed by a superficial engagement with Freud, represents a continuation of the anthropological accounts of cognition underpinning the other texts I have examined. Hence, 'Erfahrung' is structured around a logic of mimetic assimilation, whereas 'Erlebnis' arises when such assimilation is obstructed and mediated. Benjamin's use of Freud's notion of the 'Reizschutz' or perceptual shield is illuminating here, for it reinforces the spatial metaphors of proximity and distance that have been integral to the earlier analyses of allegory and of language. Similarly, his use of Freudian ideas of memory, rather than indicating a new set of interests, reinforce the continuity with the theme of time and history in those earlier works. In particular, Benjamin focuses on Freud's comments on the mutual exclusivity of consciousness and memory; 'Dauerspuren als Grundlage des Gedächtnisses an Erregungsvorgänge zu thesaurieren, ist nach Freud, "anderen Systemen" vorbehalten, die vom Bewußtsein verschieden zu denken sind.'[84] Permanent memory traces only occur in the *absence* of 'Erlebnis,' in other words, when the perceptual stimulus has not been censored by consciousness. Inevitably this encourages an equation between 'Erfahrung' and the unconscious, in which the former remains as a memory trace in a modernity where it has been otherwise displaced in everyday experience by the more combative energies of 'Erlebnis.' Although the terminology is Freudian, there are important parallels with Benjamin's treatment of Baroque allegory, where the memory of the lost totality of the symbol haunts the allegorist, thus giving the Trauerspiel its specifically melancholic, rather than merely tragic, quality.

Benjamin's work employs the anthropological concept of primitive mimetic perception in a number of ways. Across his writing the same general ontogenetic theory recurs, tracing the emergence of modern experience from mimetic semi-consciousness, a shift repeatedly characterised in terms of loss. It informs his theory of language, in which the name is supplanted by the abstract concept. This notion of a linguistic Fall is carried over into his study of Baroque allegory, which can in many ways be seen as the first moment of a mimetic crisis, where language (and Man) has become alienated from nature, and the Trauerspiel is an important aesthetic expression. This alienation, first intimated in the seventeenth century, becomes the defining character of modernity, as explored through the lens of Baudelaire's poetry. And yet though the mimetic represents a primitive state of perception, a central strand in Benjamin's writing stresses its continued presence as a trace in modernity, and much of his intellectual enterprise maps out the tensions between the inherited traces of the mimetic and the material and cultural circumstances of modernity. This conflict then informs Benjamin's conception of history itself which, rather than consisting merely of a series of unrelated and discrete 'events' is constructed according to various correspondences between present and past. The primitive metaphysics is thereby given a historical axis normally absent in anthropological accounts; correspondences and affinities exist not only between spatially, but also temporally distant objects.

Benjamin's description of the shift from the mimetic to the semiotic, from the symbolic to the allegorical, as an experiential 'loss' underpins his dialectical method, from *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* onwards. If the mimetic cannot appear as such, a mimetic sensitivity can nevertheless be produced through the juxtaposition of opposites, the configuration of extremes. The most obvious example is the *Passagen Werk* itself, but this methodological approach also underlies the form of other works such as *Einbahnstrasse* or *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*, both of which constructed an image, either of the present or of childhood experience, composed of a mosaic of impressions, memories and observations.[85] Although thoroughly acquainted with Dada, Surrealism and Constructivism, it was by quite independent means that Benjamin developed a theory of historiographical montage echoing the avant-garde proclamation of the 'new vision.' And yet whereas the avant-garde use of, for example, photomontage, was undertaken in the name of a cognition appropriate to modern times, Benjamin's own impetus was the desire to recapture, indirectly, the memory of an experience that had become lost. While Benjamin shared the revolutionary aims of the avant-garde, this was to be achieved through a turn to the past, a recovery of 'die revolutionären Energien, die im "Veralteten" erscheinen,' rather than through the espousal of a revolutionary modernity.[86] In this regard Benjamin's dialectical procedure has far more in common with Aby M. Warburg's experiments in pictorial montage for the *Mnemosyne* project which, through the juxtaposition of images maps out the visual memory of European culture, its origins and its transformations.

From Serpent Ritual to Cosmic Allegory

The oeuvre of Warburg presents the interpreter with a curious paradox. Although ground-breaking in moving beyond the restricted formalism of contemporary art historical scholarship – for as Warburg noted , 'Die formale Betrachtung des Bildes ... schien mir ein steriles Wortgeschäft hervorzurufen'[87] – his *published* writing contains little more than allusions to the fundamental anthropological and philosophical questions that drove his research. In contrast, his voluminous unpublished notes and lectures, including the lecture on serpent ritual and the drafts for the *Mnemosyne* atlas, are full of speculative accounts of the ontogenesis of art in general and Renaissance art in particular. And yet while the question of the mimetic, indeed anthropological theory in general does not feature *explicitly* in his published work, it still informs and shapes its logic. Most immediately, while his focus on the meaning of the Italian Renaissance can be seen as an engagement with Renaissance scholarship from Burckhardt onwards, the manner in which he frames that focus, namely, in terms of the 'afterlife' or 'Nachleben' of antiquity, though originally derived from Anton Springer, invites comparison with the notion of primitive survivals explored by Tylor, Spencer, Frazer and others.[88] Indeed, one might even suggest that although the central focus of Warburg's scholarly work was the Italian Renaissance, this was motivated less by an interest in the Renaissance *per se* than by an interest in the meaning of cultural memory and so-called primitive 'survivals,' of which the Renaissance presented the foremost historical example. Hence, while Warburg regarded the Renaissance as constituting the threshold of modern society – in keeping with traditional scholarship – he also viewed it as the site of the resurgence of primitive impulses and memories, which accounted for its deeply ambiguous nature. This reading is supported by comments in Warburg's correspondence, such as the letter to James Mooney, written some 12 years after his visit to America, in which he notes that 'I feel myself

very much indebted to Your Indians. Without the study of their primitive civilisation I would never have been able to find a larger access to the psychology of the Renaissance.'[89] Of central importance in this regard is the fact that Warburg also maintained a keen interest in European anti-semitism, which presented a parallel example of the resurgence of the primitive.[90]

Warburg's most extended and explicit reflections on mimesis are to be found in three primary texts: the lecture on the serpent ritual, the notes and aphorisms of the 'Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer (monistischen) Kunstpsychologie,' and the supporting materials for the *Mnemosyne* atlas.[91] Of these his lecture on the serpent ritual is undoubtedly the best known. Although the ostensible cause of Warburg's trip to New Mexico was his disaffection with the culture of East Coast America, it has to be placed in the context of a growing and widespread interest in the indigenous peoples of the New World, amongst not only North American scholars such as Boas, Mooney and Fewkes but also German scholars such as Karl von den Steinen or Karl Theodor Preuß.[92] Warburg's interest focused on their status as 'eine Enklave primitiven heidnischen Menschentums' in the midst of the technically advanced culture of the United States.[93] The specific object of enquiry is the principal marker of this primitive state, namely, the Indians' religious rituals. Typifying the motivation of nineteenth-century anthropology, Warburg's interest in an apparently exotic culture derives from the desire to answer the question, 'Inwieweit gibt diese heidnische Weltanschauung … einen Maßstab für die Entwicklung vom primitiven Heiden über den klassisch-heidnischen Menschen zum modernen Menschen ?'[94]

Two specific features attract Warburg's attention. First, the masked animal dance, which he regards as the most extreme expression of animistic religion, and, second, the cosmology underlying the dance. Warburg was not the only figure to express interest in the masked dance. In his study of the origins of art and religion Preuß viewed masked dance as an important mediating link between magic and art. In particular, he argued;

daß zwecklose Handlungen, denen nur ein Lustwert innewohnt, aus zweckerfüllter, auf dem Zauberglauben beruhender Tätigkeit entstehen. Denn wenn, z.B. von einem Maskentanz der Zweck des Zauberns geschwunden ist, so tanzt man ihn doch aus reinem Vergnügen weiter. Wo aber profane Maskentänze existieren, kann man mit Sicherheit sagen, daß der nähere oder fernere Ursprung auf einem Zauber zurückgeht.[95]

There is a remarkable parallelism with Warburg, inasmuch as for Warburg art stands between religion and science, and the serpent ritual itself already represents a cultural advance over mimetic immersion in the natural world. The Indians themselves no longer exist in the state of absolute savagery, but stand in a hybrid condition between magic and logic; while certain primitive impulses have been sublimated into symbolic representations, others, particularly the urge to imitate, continue unabated. This is evident from Warburg's interpretation of the animal dances, in which the dancers don masks and imitate the appearance of the object the dance is intended to procure, such as antelopes or corn. The meaning of this is quite clear;

Indem der Jäger oder Ackerbauer sich maskiert, d.h. nachahmend in die Jagdbeute – sie sei nun Tier oder Korn – hineinschlüpft, glaubt er, durch geheimnisvolle mimische Verwandlung vorgreifend zu erzwingen, was er gleichzeitig durch nüchterne, tagwache Arbeit als Jäger und Bauer ebenfalls zu erreichen trachtet. Die soziale Nahrungsmittelfürsorger ist also schizoid: Magie und Technik stoßen hier zusammen.[96]

This interpretation clearly draws on anthropological interpretations of magic, and in particular, the widespread accounts of sympathetic magic. Underlying this mimetic practice, argues Warburg, is the fact that the Pueblo Indian is 'der symbolisch verknüpfende Mensch.''[97] Objects are connected through intrinsic affinities which are awakened by imitative ritual. The use of masks is also noteworthy in this regard, for it signifies the erasure of the dancer's subjectivity, and invites comparison with Benjamin's insistence, in

Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels, on the *intentionless* basis of mimetic truth. Warburg makes the necessity of this explicit when he notes that 'der Indianer in seinem nachahmenden Maskenkostümtanz … will durch Verwandlung seiner Persönlichkeit etwas von der Natur magisch erzwingen, was er seiner unerweiterten und unveränderten menschlichen Persönlichkeit zu leisten nicht zutraut.'[98] Another dance that Warburg witnesses, the humiskachina dance (Fig. 2), is a weather magic dance, intended to bring the rains and thus ensure the corn harvest. Again the mask is of central importance; notably, there is a taboo on seeing the dancers who, while resting, may have taken off their mask. The focus of this dance is a temple, actually a tree, which serves as the symbolic mediator between the Indians and nature.

The greater part of Warburg's interest is directed towards the snake dance, and here we come to the second feature of the Indian cultures that the lecture focuses on: their symbolic cosmology and its means of expression. Early in the lecture Warburg observes the prevalence of the serpent motif as a symbol of lightning, an indication that their cosmology remains tied to mythic forms of expression, rather than conceptual abstraction. Hence, meteorological phenomena such as lightning are still expressed in the form of concrete symbols. This reading of the significance of myth is informed by the anthropological tradition and, more specifically, by Warburg's teacher Hermann Usener, who, influenced by Vico's stress on the priority of poetic concretion, views mythic deities as the symbolic expressions of unknown external phenomena.[99] In the mythology of the Walpi, one of the Pueblo tribes, the rattle-snake is regarded as a weather deity, and the function of the snake dance, argues Warburg, is to force the snake to invoke lightning and to induce rain. Again the snake dance initially involves imitation; the dancers wear rattles and stone-filled shells on their knees; however, at the end of the dance it is despatched into the desert so that its soul will return in the form of lightning. Although the Pueblo Indians are seen as the 'primitives' of America, it is apparent that they have passed beyond mere

Figure 2 Humiskachina Dancers, New Mexico, 1895/6 (Photo: Warburg Institute)

imitation, hitherto regarded as the sign of the most primitive stage of human development. As Warburg argues, 'Die Schlangenzeremonie in Walpi steht also zwischen nachahmender mimischer Einfühlung und blutigem Opfer, da in ihm die Tiere nun nicht nachgeahmt werden, sondern … als Mitspieler im Kult eintreten.'[100] The Indians no longer seek merely to assimilate themselves to the serpent. For Warburg they have progressed to seeing in the snake a fellow participant. I would like to suggest that he has actually unknowingly observed a more important shift, the fact that the Indians make use of the serpent. This introduces an instrumental relation closer to the technological reason of modern man about which Warburg comes to express such reservations at the end of the lecture, and although Warburg does not ever develop a proper theory of instrumental reason he lists tool use as one factor in answer to the question: 'Wodurch verliert der primitive Mensch das Gefühl der Einheit (Identität zwischen seinem lebendigen Ich und seinem jeweiligen thatsächlichen räumlichen körperlichen Umfang).'[101]

One of the most significant aspects of the serpent ritual is the prevalence of the serpent motif in other cultures, including the Greek myth of Laocoon, the cult of Dionysus or the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Such parallels are misleading, however, if one overlooks the various transformations in meaning that signify a functional shift. It is the disguise of Satan in the Genesis story, or the figure of idolatry in the Old Testament story of the brazen serpent set up by Moses (Fig. 3). However, when used as the emblem of Asclepius it is a hieroglyph to be interpreted allegorically. As Warburg states;

> Wenn Religion Verknüpfung heißt, so ist das Symptom der Entwicklung aus diesem Urzustand heraus, daß die Verknüpfung zwischen Mensch und fremder Wesenheit auf Vergeistigung dadurch hindrängt, daß der Mensch sich mit dem Masken-Symbol nicht mehr zusammenzieht, sondern die Verursachung rein gedanklich vollzieht, d.h. zu einer systematischen Mythologie fortschreitet … das Wesen … wird schließlich zum geistigen, unsichtbaren Symbol. [102]

Figure 3 Virgil Solis, *Moses and the Brazen Serpent* (Photo: Warburg Institute)

With this a tripartite schema of cultural development is being mapped out, which can be described in the following terms: empathic identification - symbolic mediation - allegorical representation. That Warburg himself was concerned with constructing an appropriate typological map of human cognitive and cultural evolution is all too evident in the *Bruchstücke*, which contain numerous attempts to schematise the process.[103] One short fragment entitled simply 'Stufen des Denkens' lists this evolution in terms of 'Benennung – Umschreibung – Bezeichnung,'[104] a schema that invites comparison with Benjamin's early theory of the name.

As with Benjamin, Warburg relies centrally on spatial metaphors of proximity and distance. In one early fragment from 1891 Warburg writes that 'Die Urteilskraft ist das Produkt der Thatsache der Distanz zwischen Subjekt und Objekt, sobald diese sich als Gefühl der Entfernung im Subjekt geltend macht.'[105] Notably, judgement is dependent on the subjective *perception* of distance, a view repeated in Warburg's well-known assertion: 'Der Erwerb des Distanzgefühls zwischen Subj[ekt] und Obj[ekt] die Aufgabe der sogenannten Bildung und das Kriterium des Menschengeschlechts.'[106] The importance of this metaphorical construction is indicated by the central role it played even at the end of his career, when, in the introduction to *Mnemosyne* he refers to the central role of 'Distanzbewußtsein' as a barometer of cognitive progress or regression. And this is also manifest in the shifts in the relation between representations and their viewers. As he states in the notes on grisaille of 1929, 'Der Verlust der metaphorischen Distanz = Ersatz durch magisch monströse Verwechslung von Bildgestalt und Betrachter.'[107]

Warburg's reliance on such a bald set of spatial metaphors is clearly mobilising a well established set of philosophemes from late nineteenth century anthropology and philosophy. His use of the metaphors of 'incorporation' within this equation also invite comparison with a slightly older contemporary more usually considered his antithesis: Alois Riegl. Central to Riegl's theory of the *Kunstwollen*, the *a priori* of artistic produc-

tion, is the notion of a shift in perceptual orientation, from primarily haptic to primarily optic.[108] This is not to deny the role of vision in the arts, but for Riegl the eye adopts the point of view of the hand; it only attends to the means used by tactile perception. This is encapsulated in Riegl's distinction between the different types of vision ('Nahsicht,' 'Normalsicht' and 'Fernsicht') operative at any particular stage in the development of perception. In addition to the obvious similarity between Warburg's concern with distance and Riegl's proximity – distance opposition, there is a further parallel between Riegl's exploration of the shift from corporeal to visual perception and Warburg's view of incorporation as a primitive impulse, in contrast to the objectifying eye of modernity.[109] Moreover, in the context of the relation between Benjamin and Warburg, these parallels with Riegl are of more than passing significance; in his review essay, 'Strenge Kunstwissenschaft,' Benjamin explicitly singles out both Riegl and the Bibliothek Warburg as exemplars of the new kind of scholarship supplanting the exhausted and inadequate Art History of the nineteenth century.[110] Such an engagement would eventually bear fruit in his essay on 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,' in which Benjamin employed Riegl's distinction as a means of analysing the perceptual basis of cinema.[111] In addition, Benjamin employs Riegl's distinction between haptic and optic as a means of analysing the difference between the collector and the flâneur,[112] in his account of contemporary historiography ('Wir haben kein taktisches Verhältnis zu [dem 19ten Jahrhundert]. Das heißt, wir sind auf romantische Fernsicht in das historische Bereich erzogen'[113]) and in his exploration of the perspective space of the Paris arcades.[114]

It has been assumed that Warburg subscribed unquestioningly to an Enlightenment – even Darwinist – view of history, in which the process towards ever greater rationality was welcomed as an unambiguous progression.[115] This view has to be tempered by the recognition that Warburg expressed reservations about the extent to which the process of modernisation could be regarded as 'progress.' It is notable that in the lecture on serpent

ritual Warburg, against the current of the times, frequently detaches himself from judgements regarding the primitive status of the Indians. It is always said to be the judgement of others, to be the general consensus, an indication that Warburg himself only partially subscribes to such views. In particular, he notes that 'Ob … diese Befreiung von der mythologischen Anschauung [dem primitiven Menschen] auch wirklich hilft, die Rätsel des Daseins ausreichend zu beantworten, das wollen wir nicht ohne weiteres behaupten.'[116]

More striking than this, however, are Warburg's explicit comments on cultural progress, where he argues, for example, that 'Die Kultur-Entwicklung zum vernünftigen Zeitalter besteht im selben Maß darin, wie sich eben die greifbare derbe Lebensfülle zum mathematischen Zeichen entfärbt.'[117] In this passage there is none of the triumphalist belief in progress one might expect; instead the achievements of Enlightenment are accompanied by a sense of loss. In a similar manner, the lecture concludes with an unremittingly pessimistic account of modernity. While civilisation is based on the creation of a space between the self and the world, Warburg foresees that modern technologies such as the aeroplane, the telephone and electricity threaten to reintroduce barbarism by the destruction of the sense of space.

> Der moderne Prometheus und der moderne Ikarus, Franklin und die Gebrüder Wright, die das lenkbare Luftschiff erfunden haben, sind eben jene verhängnisvollen Ferngefühl-Zerstörer, die den Erdball wieder ins Chaos zurückzuführen drohen.

> Telegramm und Telephon zerstören den Kosmos. Das mythische und das symbolische Denken schaffen … Andachtsraum oder Denkraum, den die elektrische Augenblicksverknüpfung mordet. [118]

Warburg's comments on the loss of the sense of space reflect a view of modernity widespread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which, though sometimes greeting technological advancement with exhilaration, more usually regarded them with suspicion. This is all the more sig-

nificant within Warburg's oeuvre, and should qualify the received reading that in general he regarded the overcoming of superstition and the achievement of mental detachment as *progressive* events. The parallel with Benjamin is the most obvious one to make, but one can compare Warburg's position with the young Georg Lukács's critique of modernity in his *Theorie des Romans* of 1914. As Lukács famously opens his study, 'Selig sind die Zeiten, für die der Sternenhimmel die Landkarte der gangbaren und zu gehenden Wege ist und deren Wege das Licht der Sterne erhellt. Alles ist neu für sie und dennoch vertraut, abenteuerlich und dennoch Besitz.'[119] This nostalgia for a non-specific pre-lapsarian time of unity of subject and world contrasts with the state of modernity, 'wo der Mensch einsam wird und nur in seiner nirgends beheimateten Seele den Sinn und die Substanz zu finden vermag,'[120] the most important aesthetic expression of which is Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Drawing on Hegel, but in a manner similar to Warburg, Lukács sees history as marked by the loss of subjective affinity with nature – a transcendental homelessness – in response to which the subject retreats into an ever deepening space of inner reflection. Of course, Warburg regarded this creation of an inner space as a positive achievement, but nevertheless there is a kind of ambivalence about this achievement. The process of rationalisation which led to the creation of 'Denkraum' ultimately leads to the invention of the dirigible and the telephone, following which Warburg articulates the same nostalgia for early mythic and symbolic forms that Lukács expresses for the consciousness of pre-modern humanity. As Lukács says, quoting Novalis, 'Philosophie ist eigentlich Heimweh, der Trieb, überall zu Hause zu sein.'[121] Warburg did not have any direct contact with the work of Lukács, but held the work of Lukács's teacher Georg Simmel in high regard (even if he found him unsympathetic as a person), and felt a special affinity with Max Weber, with whom he had a brief correspondence.[122] The latter's regrets over the consequences of the progressive 'disenchantment of the world' echo both Lukács' analysis of the retreat into the self and Warburg's

critique of the destruction of experience by modern technology.[123] Further-more, Warburg's interpretation of the inflation of expressive values in Ba-roque art throws up suggestive parallels with Simmel's articulation of the role of money and the function of monetary value as a determinant of mod-ernity, an issue which will be explored later.

In addition to its profound affinities with Benjamin, therefore, the work of Warburg belongs to a broader context of contemporary social the-ory in Germany. At the same time, however, it is important not to lose sight of the specificity of his work, which consists of an investigation into the forms of visual expression produced by the emerging modern era. In this Warburg made use of nineteenth-century empathy theory in order to sup-plement anthropological theories of the mimetic. The most immediate source was Robert Vischer's essay *Über das Optische Formgefühl*, which informed Warburg's Botticelli dissertation.[124] However there is also a wider milieu to be taken into account, in that empathy theory in particular, and psychology in general, informed the thought of much Art History in the late nineteenth century. Perhaps the most obvious example is Wölfflin's doctoral dissertation on the psychology of architecture mentioned earlier, which traces the manner whereby various modes of corporal experience are pro-jected onto architectural form.[125]

The significance of empathy theory for the notion of mimesis in Warburg is that it takes into account the effect of mimetic cognition on cor-poreal expression, and this constitutes an important extension of the interest in mimesis in Warburg's lecture on the Indians or in Benjamin's accounts, which were primarily oriented towards language and the question of mean-ing. In this regard one can argue that the originality of Warburg's thinking lies in his combining two related fields of thinking, anthropology and psy-chology, then applying them to the study of visual representations. Warburg was not the first to have shown in an interest in corporeal expression. It is well known that Charles Darwin was an important precursor; Warburg read his study of *The Expression of the Emotions in Animals and Men* at an early

stage of his career, and it was partly the impact of this book that led War-burg to the original decision to attend both to the history of corporeal ges-ture and to its representation.[126] Thus, whereas Benjamin was interested in the bases of linguistic representation and symbolism, Warburg was con-cerned primarily with *visual* representation, his focus being representation of the human body, and it was empathy theory that led to his particular in-terest in the representation of movement, in that the mimetic impulse was held to make itself felt above all in the urge to follow, to imitate the bodily movement of another. In the *Bruchstücke* he notes

> Prinzip der Gleichsetzung (Identität) zeigt sich im socialen Leben folgen-dermassen:
> Vergleich mit der dynamischen Richtung eines anderen: folgen, gehorchen
> Vergleich mit der Reflexbewegung durch Richtung u. Stellung reflexive Wiederholung: Nachahmung (Mimik)
> Vergleich mit dem Umfang eines anderen: Besitz [127]

In an earlier entry he simply writes 'Mimik ist Körperbewegung ohne Platz-wechsel,'[128] while in a fragment dated in 1890 he offers a two-stage history of spectatorship:

> 1 Stufe: Annahme des Kunstwerkes als etwas feindlich bewegtes: ornamental
> 2 Stufe: Annahme des Kunstwerkes als etwas Ruhendes: naturalistisch [129]

The question of bodily movement again plays a significant role, and in contrast to the prevailing view of the time Warburg appears to regard the aesthetic sense as a *secondary* phenomenon. Undoubtedly an important element in Warburg's focus on the question of movement is Tito Vignoli's *Mito e Scienza*, which posits a psychological state, shared by animals and primitives, in which the world is conceived as consisting of nothing but

animated agents, and in which there is a hyper-attention to all movement as the action of a potentially hostile force. However, Warburg adapts Vignoli's ideas to the specific issue of visual representation, and in the *Bruchstücke* he views ornament as the paradigmatic form of primitive visual expression, due to its repetitive rhythm. He notes that 'Bei einer Theorie der b[ildenden] K[unst] müsste man zwischen rhythmischer Kunst (verbunden mit Bew[egung] d[es] Zuschauers) u[nd] spiegelnder Kunst (verbunden m. vergleichender Betrachtung d[es] Zuschauers) scheiden. Das Ornament ist d[as] Bindeglied zwischen beiden Kunstarten.'[130]

This identification of ornament as a primitive artistic form draws on a well established topos in art historical writing of the time. In *Stilfragen*, for example, Riegl appears to regard the aesthetic drive as motivated by a fundamental and primitive *horror vacui*, as evident in the universal prevalence of geometric ornament.[131] Such a view can be seen repeated in Franz Boas's *Primitive Art*, perhaps one of the most popular and widely read books on its subject.[132] Warburg also employs this equation as a means of interpreting the significance of the conflict, in the Quattrocento, between the lingering medievalism of Burgundian taste and the reawakened heroic Roman style of artists such as Pollaiuolo and Donatello. This is described as 'ein Kampf der zwei stilistischen Prinzipien, des ornamentalen Dehnungstriebes und der monumentalen Vereinfachung.'[133] The former is evident in the applied arts: 'Gerätkunst und Bekleidungskunst verlangt Füllung der Oberflache … um jeden Preis; die Raumtiefe … ist für jede angewandte Kunst Leere.'[134] Warburg also sees this operative in the medieval 'Ideal des überreich-geschmückten Höflings,' which lived on in the Florentine taste for sumptuous clothing.[135] While the prevalence of primitive *horror vacui* is to be observed most immediately in fashion – Warburg rather frivolously refers to it as 'eine Schneiderfrage'[136] - it is also evident in the 'positivistic' attention to detail characteristic of Flemish realism. Warburg interprets the increasingly abstracted forms of Michelangelo, for example, as a reaction against this Flemish fascination with details. That Warburg had reflected on

this issue at length is also apparent from the fact that these ideas first appear in the *Bruchstücke* of more than a decade earlier. One fragment from 1891 states: 'Formen des sich Verlierens in d[as] Bild. I - Verharren bei dem Gefühl des Überbewältigtwerdens durch die Vielheit der Dinge … '[137] Here there is a clear equation of the empathic / mimetic impulse with a quasi-positivistic attention to details, a view that echoes the frequent observation in contemporary anthropological writing of the extraordinarily well-developed perceptual capacities of 'primitives.' For Franz Boas, for example, this was matched by a concomitant inability to form general logical judgements about the manifold of perception.[138]

Positivism is more usually regarded as a product of modernity – a consequence of the birth of the dispassionate objective eye of empirical seeing. Warburg, in contrast, sees the amassing of details as a primitive drive displaced by the idealising style of Florentine painting. It is notable, for example, that he falls back on to the vocabulary of Riegl in his distinction between Flemish realism and Florentine classicism; the taste for ornamentation is referred to as an 'abtastende Aneignung,'[139] while elsewhere he distinguishes between the 'vergleichendes Sehen' of classicising idealism and the 'tastendes Sehen' of the absorption in material detail.[140] Attention to the meaning, for Warburg, of ornament and the detailed 'realism' of Flemish art is of wider significance for an understanding of his thought and its relation to Benjamin. While it is probable that Warburg's famous interest in details was partly informed by Hermann Usener's emphasis on the insignificant – encapsulated in the phrase 'im kleinsten Punkte die höchste Kraft'[141] – the meaning of the detail is also embedded in a larger theory of the history of perception and representation. I have already drawn the parallels between Warburg, Benjamin, Wölfflin and Freud, and the character of this engagement with the insignificant can be supplemented through consideration of Benjamin's comments on the nature of collecting. As noted earlier, Benjamin makes use of Riegl's distinction between the haptic / tactile and the optic; specifically, collectors 'sind Menschen mit taktischem Instinkt.'[142] This

affinity between collecting and a pre-modern haptic mode of perception is reinforced by further entries in the *Passagen-Werk*, where the collector's relation to things is termed 'archaisch,'[143] and the collector placed in opposition to the allegorist. Where the latter robs things of their intrinsic meaning, the collector adopts a mimetic approach to objects, for, as Benjamin notes, 'Das ursprüngliche Interesse an der Allegorie ist … optisch.'[144] Of particular significance, too, is Benjamin's equation of collecting with re-collecting: 'Sammeln ist eine Form des praktischen Erinnerns.'[145] This equation brings together the themes of collecting, mimesis and remembrance, and highlights a further set of affinities between Warburg and Benjamin's procedural methods and the manner in which they conceived their object of enquiry.

The Meaning of the Renaissance

The question of the meaning of ornament and details for Warburg presents an exemplary case of the intersection of his concern with anthropological theories of the primitive and his attempt to reinterpret the meaning of the Renaissance. His approach to the Renaissance is framed by two central issues. The first is the notion of the Renaissance as the locus of the return of the (mimetic) repressed and the various forms of sublimation used to deflect the memories of primal experience. As Warburg states, 'Der moderne Mensch entdeckte sich (erstand) während gleichsam […] die erdgeborenen Titanen im Kampf gegen den klassischen Olymp noch siegreich waren.'[146] The Renaissance is thus held in tension between processes of progressive sublimation and regressive desublimation. The second concerns the consequences of the hypertrophe of progressive sublimation: Baroque inflation. The lecture on the serpent ritual indicates the extent of Warburg's reservations about the effects of the process of modernisation – reservations shared with Weber, Benjamin and the young Lukács – and these imprint themselves on his interpretation of the Renaissance. It is in this sense that one can speak of a dialectic of the Renaissance in Warburg; not the struggle between the forces or progression and regression, as is more usually understood by the term, but the process whereby sublimation collapses in on itself. Warburg's work is thus oriented around the questions of the genesis and destruction of the Renaissance. Critical writing has tended to attend to the former and much less to the latter.

Warburg's account of the Renaissance is incomprehensible, however, without a simultaneous understanding of his vision of classical antiquity, which offers a reference point against which the Renaissance dialectics of mimetic and symbolic, symbolic and allegorical can be measured. As Warburg famously states in the seminar on Jakob Burckhardt of 1927/28, 'Wir suchen den Geist der Zeiten in seiner stilbildenden Funktion dadurch

persönlich zu erfassen, daß wir den gleichen Gegenstand zu verschiedenen Zeiten und in verschiedenen Ländern vergleichend betrachten.'[147] Antiquity thus serves as a kind of cultural barometer. This conception was already evident in his dissertation on Botticelli, which is concerned with the 'Vorstellungen von der Antike in der italienischen Renaissance.'[148] Although challenged by Friedrich Nietzsche some 20 years earlier, the dominant notion of ancient Greece in 1893 was still largely informed by Winckelmann's famous description of its 'edle Einfalt und eine stille Grösse.'[149] Influenced by Nietzsche, Warburg detects Botticelli's works an empathic interest in movement, agitation and dynamism (Fig. 4), elements alien to the idea of tranquillity fostered by Winckelmann.[150] Although Botticelli was deeply immersed in the humanistic learning of his time – and Warburg traces some of the many sources that informed his paintings – this represents a fragile cultural superstructure placed over a more primitive layer of human emotive behaviour manifest in the dynamism of the incidental details ('Beiwerk'). Thus, the representation of intense bodily movement constitutes, for Warburg, a primitive impulse where the painter (and the spectator) are empathetically drawn into the narrative event. Although the argument of the Botticelli dissertation remains considerably understated, it is clear from his contemporary notes, and from his subsequent oeuvre, that Botticelli's introduction of 'bewegtes Beiwerk' is not simply a mid-Quattrocento interpretation of antiquity (informed by contemporary poetic representations). It consists of a *reactivation* of the primitive content of antiquity. The cult of Dionysus was of particular interest. As Warburg wrote considerably later;

> Die ungehemmte Entfesselung körperlicher Ausdrucksbewegung wie sie besonders in Klein-Asien im Gefolge der Rauschgötter sich vollzog, umfängt die ganze Skala kinetischer Lebensäusserung phobisch-erschütterten Menschentums von hilfloser Versunkenheit bis zum mörderischen Taumel, und alle mimischen Aktionen [liegen] dazwischen … [151]
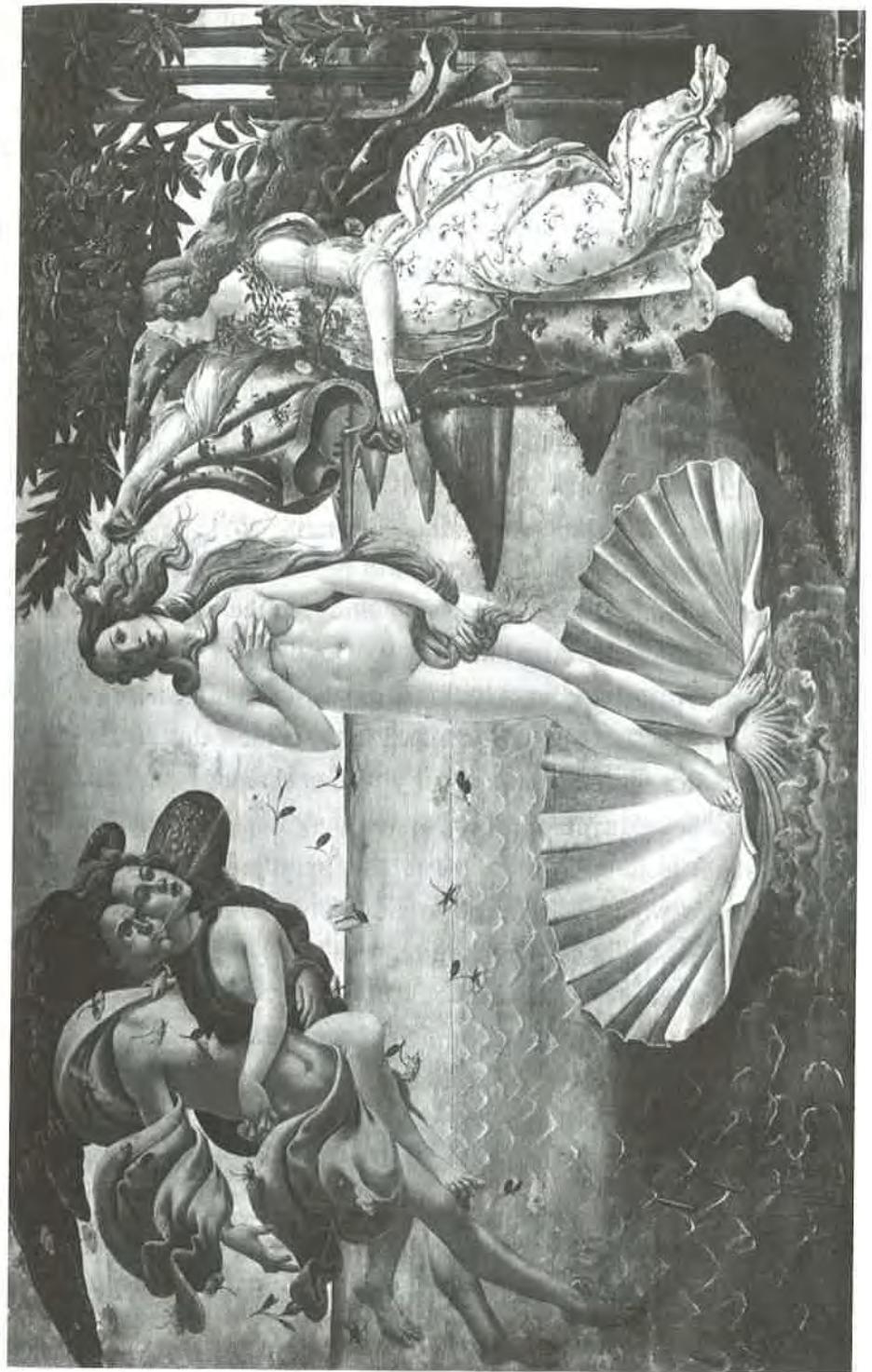

Figure 4 Sandro Botticelli, *The Birth of Venus* (Photo: Alinari)

The recovery of classical antiquity does not signify uninterrupted cultural progress, therefore, but rather a conflict, in which residues of more primitive behavioural experience constantly reassert themselves. Like most of his contemporaries, Warburg considers classical antiquity as normative for Western civilisation, but in a totally different way from the usual conception of Greece and Rome. It was normative in the sense that it constituted a kind of zero point or constant of culture against which cultural progression could be measured, and into which any culture might always relapse. In this regard there is a significant tension in Warburg's work. On the one hand he repeatedly returns to the question of the *reception* and function of antiquity in post-classical European culture. As he concludes in his lecture of 1926 on Rembrandt, 'Es hängt eben vom subjektiven Charakter der Nachlebenden, nicht vom objektiven Bestand der antiken Erbmasse ab … '[152] At the same time, however, classical antiquity appears to possess a determinate content that serves as the foundation of European culture. In the same lecture he asserts that 'Das heidnische Altertum … bot und bietet der europäischen Kultur seit dem Ausgange des Altertums die Grundlage seiner weltlichen Zivilisation' [153] On would not necessarily want to contest this statement, but it is difficult to imagine how an antiquity whose character and meaning is dependent on its subsequent reception, as Warburg implies in the conclusion of the Rembrandt lecture, could be the foundation of anything. Its symbols, myths and images would be reduced to an empty currency of freely circulating signs – precisely what Warburg regarded as lying at the root of the Baroque devaluation of visual meaning. This picture is further complicated by the fact that while Warburg was initially concerned to address the exclusion of Dionysian antiquity from traditional images of classical culture, he came increasingly to regard the Dionysian as definitive of classical antiquity. He argued, for example, that 'Die klassisch-veredelte antike Götterwelt ist uns seit Winckelmann freilich so sehr als Symbol der Antike überhaupt eingeprägt, daß wir ganz vergessen, daß sie eine Neuschöpfung der gelehrten humanistischen Kultur ist; diese "olympische" Seite der Antike mußte

ja erst der althergebrachten "dämonischen" abgerungen werden.' [154] Here is an unequivocal statement that Olympian antiquity is a post-hoc construction, with the implication that the *original* character of antiquity was demonic and that the Olympian culture admired by Winckelmann and others already represented an overcoming of the authentic origin of antiquity.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the *equi*-primordiality of the Apollinian and the Dionysian impulses Greek culture, so often regarded as a crucially formative influence on Warburg's image of ancient culture, is reduced to a Dionysian barbarism of primal origins. Cultural progress is measured according to the extent to which the barbaric memories preserved in classical myth and legend are deflected, sublimated into reflective allegories. In this regard it is significant that Warburg attends specifically to myths such as those of the death of Orpheus (Fig. 5) or of Laocoon and his sons, or to historical events, such as Trajan's conquest of the Dacians, that highlight the violence endemic in classical culture, rather than to other legends that might give the legacy of antiquity a very different character. It hardly needs stating that this contradicts Warburg's own thinking elsewhere. He recognised, for example, that the Pueblo Indians had already progressed beyond the stage of a pure mimesis; the serpent ritual was already the sublimation of a more primitive relation to nature. To view classical myths (and their symbolic representation in works of art) as a point of origin contradicts Warburg's own reading of Pueblo Indian culture. It also neglects the possibility that the mere act of re-presenting primitive myth may constitute a sublimation of the primal mimetic impulse at its origin. In this context it is instructive to compare Warburg's understanding of the origins of classical myth with that of Nietzsche, for whom, as Peter Sloterdijk has pointed out, even the most barbaric mythic narratives – Uranus devouring his children, Zeus committing parricide – represent a victory of the Apollinian over the Dionysian, a sublimation of demonic origins.[155]

For all the internal inconsistencies and difficulties in his various formulations, Warburg still raises important questions about the nature of

Figure 5 *The Death of Orpheus*, from Ovid, *Metamorphosis* (Leipzig, 1582) (Photo: Warburg Institute)

the classical inheritance. In much of his work Warburg's critical thinking is frequently lost amidst the mass of historical, philological, and art historical information. A more explicit formulation of his position occurs in his lecture on 'Der Eintritt des antikisierenden Idealstils in die Malerei der Frührenaissance.'[156] Of the various examples discussed in the lecture, one in particular merits attention. It concerns the discovery in 1488 of a small copy of the Laocoon group in Rome, eighteen years before the discovery of the original.

The choice of this example is highly significant, for Winckelmann had based his famous formulation of the classical aesthetic on a reading of the Laocoön. Drawing on the account of Luigi Lotti who actually dug up the copy, Warburg points towards a completely different understanding of the meaning of the group in the Renaissance.

> Dass aber eine Auffassung der Antike, die eben der Winckelmanns diametral gegenübersteht, dem Geiste des Quattrocento tatsächlich entspringt, dafür lassen Sie mich die Worte des Luigi Lotti als Zeignis anführen, der mit unserem Giovanni Tornabuoni zusammen in Rom für die Medici Antiken aufspürte und so glücklich war, bei nächtlichen Ausgrabungen in einer Vigna des Kardinals della Rovere 1488 eine kleine Replik der Laokoon-Gruppe aufzufinden; der mythische Inhalt war ihm nicht klar und für ihn gleichgültig. Seine enthusiastische Bewunderung galt ausschlesslich dem Pathos der Form:

> "Wir fanden, bei nächtlichen Nachgraben, drei schöne kleine Faune auf einer Marmorbasis, alle drei von einer grossen Schlange umwunden. Meiner Meinung nach sind sie ganz wunderschön. Nur die Stimme fehlt ihnen; sie scheinen zu atmen, zu schrein und sich mit gewissen wunderbaren Gebärden zu verteidigen und den in der Mitte sieht man förmlich zusammenbrechen und verenden."

> Wir hören von dieser Gruppe, deren Export nach Florenz wahrscheinlich verhindert worden ist, nichts mehr; die offizielle Wiederentdeckung der grossen Laokoöngruppe selbst, die ja ganz Rom in Aufregung versetzte, erfolgte erst im Jahr 1506. Trotzdem sollte man den Einfluss des Laokoön

nicht erst von der Tatsache seines sinnfälligen Wiedereintritts abhängig machen. Ich fürchte nicht mehr misverstanden zu werden, wenn ich sage: Die Renaissance hätte sich die Leidensgruppe des Laokoön - eben um ihrer erschütternden pathetischen Beredsamkeit willen - erfunden, wenn sie sie nicht entdeckt hätte.[157]

The aim of this discussion is not to correct Winckelmann's reading of the Laocoon group, one-sided as that may be, but rather to point out that the Renaissance responded in a completely different way, and to investigate the meaning of that difference. As I have suggested, the response of Lotti signified for Warburg the enduring presence of primitive, mimetic empathic engagement with the work, and this view recurs elsewhere in Warburg's thought. In his essay on 'Dürer und die italienische Antike' of 1905, Warburg argues 'daß schon in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts die italienischen Künstler in dem wiederentdeckten Formenschatz der Antike ebenso eifrig nach Vorbildern für pathetisch gesteigerte Mimik wie für klassisch idealisierende Ruhe suchten,'[158] and the specific example he chooses is the reappearance of the classical motif of the violent death of Orpheus torn to pieces by Thracian maenads.

I referred earlier to the dialectic of the Renaissance. In terms of Warburg's writing this denotes not only the conflict between the progressive sublimation of inherited primitive residues and its regressive desublimation, but also the way in which that process of sublimation leads to a series of disconnected abstractions. In an early draft for the *Mnemosyne* introduction Warburg speaks of his project as an 'Ikonologie des Zwischenraumes. Kunsthistorisches Material zu einer Entwicklungsphysiologie des Pendelganges zwischen bildhafter und zeichenmässiger Ursachensetzung.'[159] In Warburg's analysis of this cognitive oscillation, astrology becomes an important object of inquiry. Its pivotal role in his thought is indicated by the fact that despite the numerous variations in his draft version, the cosmological and astrological orientation of classical and pre-classical culture form the

topic of the first three plates of the *Mnemosyne*. As he notes in the same draft notes;

> Ich fange mit der Astrologie an, weil sich das Problem des Kreislaufes von der phantastischen Konkretion zur mathematischen Abstraktion nirgends überzeugender … zeigen lässt, als im Himmelkörpergleichnis, dass sowohl die ganz unbesonnene Verwandlung von der sich aufopfernden Persönlichkeit mit dem monströsen Gerät bewirken, wie deren beruhigte auf die Zukunft bezogene Standesfestigkeit, die mit Auf- und Untergang der erscheinenden Himmelskörper zahlenmässig aus der Entfernung rechnet.[160]

Astrology is thus a dialectical phenomenon. On the one hand it is the persistent representative of a primitive consciousness, but at the same time it is the essential component of an emerging instrumental rationality - cultural enlightenment. Warburg sees both mimeticism and its opposite, scientific objectivism, at work. The doctrine of astrological sympathies, of the direct influence of the heavenly bodies on mundane events, on subjective character and even on parts of the body, perpetuates the primitive metaphysics of occult affinity. At the same time, the transformation of astrology into astronomy, the mathematical observation of the skies, presents an important example of the loss of mimeticism that occurred during the Renaissance. There are affinities here with Benjamin's view of astrology as one of the few remaining survivals of primitive human cognitive attitudes, a view which one can assume was influenced in part by Warburg.

Warburg's interest in astrology focuses on two central themes: its persistence into the Renaissance and the transformation of astrological symbols into allegorical figures. These figure prominently in his study of Luther, Dürer and astrology during the German reformation. In particular, unusual phenomena – the sow of Landser, the hideous monster ('scheuselige Chimäre') – were interpreted as omens, and astrological charts, tables and predictions were created (and also falsified) as part of the ideological struggle central to the Reformation. The willingness of both Luther's supporters

and his opponents to resort to astrological explanations is evidence of the emotive power such methods still enjoyed in the mid-sixteenth century. Against this stands Dürer's famous *Melencolia I* engraving. It is hardly necessary to retell the details of Warburg's interpretation, but its overall significance is worth dwelling on, and in particular the manner in which he contrasts Dürer's engraving with Johann Lichtenberger's woodcut of Saturn and Jupiter. In the latter they are portrayed as two actual figures in conflict, whereas *Melencolia I* has transformed the struggle between two astrological deities into an abstract allegory.

Dürer's engraving is still replete with astrological symbols, including a purse and keys, traditionally indicative of the wealth and power of the melancholic character, the head resting on the clinched fist and the magic square used in iatromathematics. Their weight is countered, however, by the equal presence of a series of geometric symbols, including a set-square, a polyhedron and a pair of compasses. The engraving thus presents the conflict between astrology and modern science, in the guise of geometry, and the figure, which hitherto would have symbolised melancholy, now symbolises the intellectual struggle of the mathematical, scientific geometer, whose meaning is guaranteed by the presence of various external and conventional symbols. As Warburg concludes, 'Aus dem kinderfressenden, finsteren Planetendämon … wird bei Dürer durch humanisierende Metamorphose die plastische Verkörperung des denkenden Arbeitsmenschen.'[161] Moreover, in addition to its significance as a marker of the sublimation of astrological terror and depression, Dürer's engraving, in its use of often enigmatic and ambiguous symbolic forms, introduces a self-consciousness about the vocabulary of astrological symbolism that would be later developed by Benjamin in his theory of allegory: namely, the dispelling of affinities by foregrounding the conventional bases of representational meaning.

A similar process of allegorical sublimation occurs in the wall paintings in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, and indeed is made visible by the fact that Francesco Cossa had included in the same fresco cycle two

competing mythologies. The first, the realm of the Olympian deities, contrasts with the world of astral demons, or decans, whose nature has been informed by their passage through Hellenistic, Indian, Arabic, then finally European medieval astrology. The fresco therefore presents the contradiction between two appropriations of antiquity. The historical detail of Warburg's interpretation of the frescoes is open to question, but this is less important than the basic concern underpinning his investigation: the loss of mimeticism in astrological imagery. In the earlier part of his essay he states; 'Astrologie ist im Grunde eben nichts anderes als auf die Zukunft projizierter Namenfetischismus.'[162] Indeed, astrology only came into existence as the consequence of a process of cultural regression.[163] This idea is repeated in his lecture of the following year (1913) on the 'Wanderungen der antiken Götterwelt vor ihrem Eintritt in die italienische Frührenaissance,' where he argues that 'Mensch und Gestirnsymbol trocknen in dem spätantiken Mittelalter zu einem öden Sympathie-Zaubermittel zusammen.'[164] The transformation of astral deities into the Olympian figures of the upper register of the Schifanoia frescoes is more than a merely stylistic matter, however, for the primitive fetishism of astrological wisdom is converted into a play of humanistic scholarship. Nowhere is this more evident, perhaps, than in Botticelli's *Primavera*, which Warburg saw as an important example of the sublimation of astrological representation. In his dissertation Warburg had already stressed the multi-layered nature of the references to classical learning and hence the semantic richness of the painting itself. In many respects it remains an enigmatic painting – still generating huge quantities of scholarly interpretation and commentary.[165] And this is crucial to understanding the nature of the sublimation of such inherited mythological figures: the primary attitude of the spectator is no longer a kind of primitive awe, but rather a process of scholarly deciphering. Magic has given way to scholarship.

This allegorisation occurs elsewhere, too, for Warburg: one particular example is offered by the Intermedii performed to celebrate the arri-

val in Florence of Grand Duke Ferdinand's wife Christine of Lorraine in 1589. A number of issues occupy Warburg in his study of the Intermedii,[166] but principal among them was the overdetermination of allegorical reference. It was such as to leave the spectators at a loss to understand the meaning of the intermedii. This much was evident from the contemporary accounts of Simone Cavallino and Giuseppe Pavoni who, though informed observers, missed the complex web of allegorical meanings that would have ensured the programmatic unity of the intermedio. The attempt at rendering meaning clear through the use of well-established visual attributes was equally unsuccessful – the resulting combinations of attributes were often arbitrary and counter-intuitive, and further frustrated successful interpretation.[167] The visual symbolism had thus become so saturated with allusive classical references that it had become disconnected from the semantic context from which it had originally emerged; the intermedii had become a purely visual Baroque spectacle. Moreover, such allegorical spectacles were not restricted to Italy. In his lecture on Rembrandt Warburg noted the spectacular nature of the 'ars officialis' in Holland, as indicated in the pageant of 1609 staged to celebrate the independence of the United Provinces from Spain. Here the truce was celebrated with tableaux drawn from Livy while the stage was decorated as an allegory of Neptune and the tritons.[168] A similar excess was to be detected in the stage set of Struys' opera *De Ontschaking van Proserpina* of 1634. Of particular interest for Warburg is the influence of the Italian Antonio Tempesta, a prolific and highly popular engraver, whose illustrations of Ovid's story of the abduction of Persephone, were used as models for Struys' stage set, using the same overblown visual rhetoric.

Although Warburg did not formulate a fully developed account of the Baroque, his many scattered notes and jottings indicate a consistent picture that builds on the account of the Intermedii. Amongst the notes for *Mnemosyne* are numerous references to the Baroque, of which the most succinct is perhaps the statement: 'Wesen des Barockstyls; Hantieren mit ab-

geschnürten Dynamogrammen.'[169] Two recurrent motifs dominate Warburg's references to the Baroque. The first is that of the disconnected nature of Baroque representations referred to earlier. This has a twofold sense. They have lost their grounding in the emotive states at their origin; the 'Pathosformeln' ('emotive formulae') have become empty formulae. In addition, as the example of the Intermedii indicates, the established system of references has become unmoored; Warburg refers to 'den barocken Schwulst'[170] and with this one sees an anticipation of the more fully worked out theory of Baroque allegory of Benjamin, in which a central element is the disconnected arbitrary nature of meaning. The other motif dominating Warburg's references to the Baroque is that of inflation. With this economic metaphor Warburg gives expression to the consequence of the degeneration of symbols into empty formulae, namely, the use of a heightened rhetoric to compensate for the fact that the actual image is no longer connected to its original expressive 'mint' ('Prägewerk').

The very process of enlightenment whereby the inherited mimetic significance of classical symbols was transformed into an instrument of cultural advancement and learning led, when unchecked, to an empty formal rhetoric; with the entry into the Baroque, cultural enlightenment had undermined itself. The vehemence of Warburg's reaction to the Baroque was undoubtedly partly due to his recognition of the political significance of this process; the official art of pageants such as the Intermedii of 1589 represented a 'Demonstration für den beschränkten analphabetischen Unterthanenverstand. Herr und Sklave.'[171] Evident in the pageant of 1589 was the emerging use of spectacle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a means of underpinning the absolute monarchies of Europe, in which there was a supervenience of visibility and power.[172] This stood in opposition to his own communal politics, in which he saw the mercantile republic of Hamburg as the ideal form of polity.[173]

The notion of a self-undermining enlightenment is apparent, too, in a further aspect to the history of astrological symbolism. Drawing on a well-

established Victorian idea, Warburg regarded astrology as a primitive form of science, dominated by a fallacious kind of pseudo-mathematical thinking ('pseudomathematische Trugschlüsigkeit').[174] In his lecture 'Über Astrologische Druckwerke aus Alter und Neuer Zeit' Warburg had seen the zodiacal configurations of the heavens as 'ein echtes Product griechischer Kultur, hervorgegangen aus der doppelten Begabung der alten Griechen zu poetisch konkreter Anschauung und zu mathematischer abstracter Vorstellungskraft.'[175] As noted earlier, for Warburg post-classical astrology degenerated from this careful equilibrium into a medieval hypertrophy of the purely concrete – a magical fetishism of the name. Contrariwise, the Renaissance retrieval of classical astrology consisted, in part, of a restoration of the mathematical basis of astrology, a process that laid the path for the transformation of astrology into modern astronomy. Central to the development of modern astronomy was the substitution of mathematical quantities for the mytho-poetic qualities of the zodiacal deities.

> Die mathematisch abstrakte Vorstellungsfähigkeit ermöglichte … diese Gliederung durch Bilder zu einem berechenbaren Punktsystem zu erweitern, indem sie dem Raume eine regelmässig gestaltete sphaerische Form unterlegte, die es ermöglicht, Ort und Ortsveränderung durch ein ideelles Liniensystem festzulegen und so deren Laufbahn der Sterne zu berechnen. Für die fortschrittsbewusste heutige Astronomie hat das poetische Element der Sternbilder keinen anderen Sinn mehr, als den, als Hilfsmittel der Ortsbezeichnung zu dienen.[176]

The mention of mathematical abstraction – an element central to Warburg's interpretation of astrology in the *Mnemosyne* notes – recalls Warburg's critical comments on the subject in his lecture on serpent ritual. In that lecture he had emphasised the gradual fading of life into a mathematical sign. Here there is a clear parallel with Warburg's comments on the Baroque, in which the inflation of visual representations into a series of empty formulae led to a comparable loss of expressive grounding.

Warburg's various comments on the dissolution of Renaissance culture reveal significant parallels with Benjamin's account of allegory. A less obvious, though no less pertinent, comparison can be also be made with Georg Simmel. Specifically, Warburg's repeated use of economic metaphors to describe Baroque representation reveals similarities with Simmel's preoccupation with the impact of money on social, economic and mental life. Such preoccupations culminated in his *Philosophie des Geldes* of 1900, but the central ideas of the work had already crystallised in an essay published four years earlier, 'Das Geld in der modernen Cultur.'[177] In particular, Simmel argues that the growth of the monetary economy had replaced direct personal social and economic relations with abstracted, mediated relations of which money serves as the universal medium. A palpable example of this shift can be seen in the difference between modern mercantile associations, formed purely on the basis of mutual financial and economic interests, and the old medieval guilds and corporations, which encompassed a whole range of direct personal concerns of their members.[178] In addition, the function of money as a universal medium of exchange leads to a loss of sensitivity to the specific qualities of individual objects – a perceptual blindness to their differences.[179] As Simmel notes, 'Indem die Dinge ihr Aequivalent an einem völlig farblosen, jenseits aller spezifischen Bestimmtheit stehenden Tauschmittel finden, indem sie sich in jedem Augenblicke gegen ein solches umsetzen, werden sie gewissermaßen abgeschliffen und geglättet, ihre Reibungsflächen mindern sich, fortwährende Ausgleichungsprozesse vollziehen sich zwischen ihnen … '[180]

Not only indicating the broader context in which Warburg's thoughts developed, Simmel's comments on the impact of money also throw light on the relation between Warburg's account of Baroque culture and its place in the process of cultural development. First, Simmel's comments on the growth of abstract, impersonal relations echo Warburg's criticism of the abstracted and disconnected nature of the inflated allegorical imagery of the Baroque. Second, the idea of a gradual loss of differences, and a blunting of

the senses towards individual qualities – Simmel writes of the loss of perceptual sensitivity[181] - reminds us of the opposition staged by Warburg between the primitive absorption in details and the act of classicising simplification that first emerged in the art of the Renaissance. It also brings into consideration both Benjamin's comments on allegory as introducing 'eine Welt in der es aufs Detail so streng nicht ankommt,'[182] and his equation of allegory and consumption.

This constellation of ideas is less marked in Warburg than in either Simmel or Benjamin, but it is still apparent – albeit in fragmentary form – and it also informs his general understanding of the meaning of the Renaissance, which is of the Renaissance as a lost moment. What I mean by this is the sense that while the Renaissance constituted a crucial epoch in the enlightenment of European culture, it was also eventually eclipsed by the processes central to its emergence: allegorisation, rationalisation, mathematisation. It offered a model for what an enlightened culture might be – sublimating primitive mimetic impulses while still preserving their memory. And this picture also underlay how Warburg viewed his own scholarly enterprise; he is well known for his criticisms of the 'border police' ('grenzpolizeiliche Befangenheit') of contemporary scholarship, and his development of a new, cross-disciplinary system of scholarly knowledge achieved concrete form in his library, whose ordering often baffled scholars visiting it for the first time.[183]

Kurt Forster has suggested that one can make an analogy between Warburg's library (Fig. 6) and the *Kunst-* or *Wunderkammer* of the Renaissance.[184] While such an analogy may rely too much on a superficial comparison of the two, there is an aspect worth pursuing, namely the role and meaning of curiosity. As Krzysztof Pomian and, more recently, Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have indicated, the appearance of the *Wunderkammer* or 'cabinet of curiosities' represents the most concrete form of the rehabilitation of curiosity and wonder in the Renaissance.[185] It is well known that St. Paul's injunction 'noli altum sapere sed time,' originally a plea for

Figure 6 Front Façade of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg
(Photo: Warburg Institute)

moral wisdom and humility came to be interpreted as involving a ban on a certain type of intellectual curiosity.[186] Intellectual curiosity came to be regarded as problematic because it was motivated by a desire to know what God had purposefully hidden from man. Perhaps the most notorious example of such a view was to be found in Tertullian, according to whom 'Nobis curiositate opus non est, post Christum, nec inquisitione, post Euangelium,'[187] but it became a widespread topos amongst the Church Fathers, hence St. Augustine's condemnation of curiosity as a 'libido sciendi non necessaria' ('a passion for knowing unnecessary things') and as a 'concupiscientia oculorum' ('lust of the eyes'), which reappeared in Bernard of Clairvaux's polemics against Pierre Abelard, or as late as Erasmus' comment that 'nihil inanius quam multa scire.'[188] In its place Augustine promoted pious wonder ('admiratio'), which consisted of an awe-inspired appreciation of creation. As Daston and Park have shown, between the twelfth and the mid-fifteenth centuries natural philosophers were faced with a fundamental dilemma in attempting to reconcile continuing commitment to an Augustinian religious admiration of marvels, prodigies and the mysteries of creation with an increasing scepticism towards wonder, which, while recognised as motivating enquiry, was also seen as perpetuating a fundamental ignorance of the natural causes of things.[189] Aquinas' solution was to distinguish between the illicit and aimless knowledge of *curiositas* and the pious, diligent focused intellectual knowledge produced by *studiositas*. Although the aim of this was to uphold the Augustinian distinction between *admiratio* and *curiositas* by distinguishing between licit and illicit intellectual curiosity, the actual effect was to elide the distinction between *admiratio* and *curiositas*, redefined as an overly credulous (and ignorant) fascination with marvels, in opposition to the philosophical concern with identifying natural causes.

While during the period in question natural philosophers came to disdain the credulity of wonder, it nevertheless remained a potent cultural phenomenon; mirabilia became potent commodities that developed into exlarge scale courtly and ecclesiastical collections of marvellous objects,

which functioned as important symbols of spiritual, economic and political power. And the role of curious wonder was augmented when from the late fifteenth century onwards it became harnessed to the project of philosophical inquiry, an innovation that achieved concrete form in the growth of the cabinets of curiosities (Fig. 7). Thus, whereas medieval collections of wonders remained unsystematised treasuries of valuable natural and artificial marvels designed to provoke wonder, the cabinets of curiosities functioned as instruments of scientific knowledge. Horst Bredekamp has outlined the ways in which the cabinet of curiosities embodied a logic of natural history and philosophy based on the categories of *nature – antique sculpture – artwork – machine*, and moreover, as Daston and Park have pointed out, the inherited opposition of *naturalia* and *artificialia*, between nature and culture, was frequently blurred by the function of wonder that cut across such categorial distinctions, and created others.[190] Such an alliance of curious wonder and scientific enquiry led to often striking and contradictory phenomena and forms of categorising. The catalogue of John Tradescant's *Musaeum Tradescantianum* comprised not only categories such as 'Mineralls,' 'Medalls,' 'Numismata' and 'Garments, Habits, Vests, Ornaments,' but also 'Outlandish Fruits' and 'Rarities,' which included Indian musical instruments, a canow (= canoe), a bundle of tobacco, a circumcision knife of stone, cassava bread, and 'blood that rained in the Isle of Wight.'[191]

Such a seemingly paradoxical combination reflected closely the reform of knowledge introduced by Francis Bacon who, in *Of the Advancement of Learning* declared that 'the use of this book … is nothing less than to give contentment to the appetite of curious and vain wits … for two reasons, both of great weight; the one to correct the partiality of axioms and opinions, which are commonly framed only upon common and familiar examples; the other because from the wonders of nature is the nearest intelligence and passage towards the wonders of art.'[192] Here is a clear statement of the value of studying marvels and wonders which, by virtue of their exceptional and anomalous character, indicate the limitations of explanations
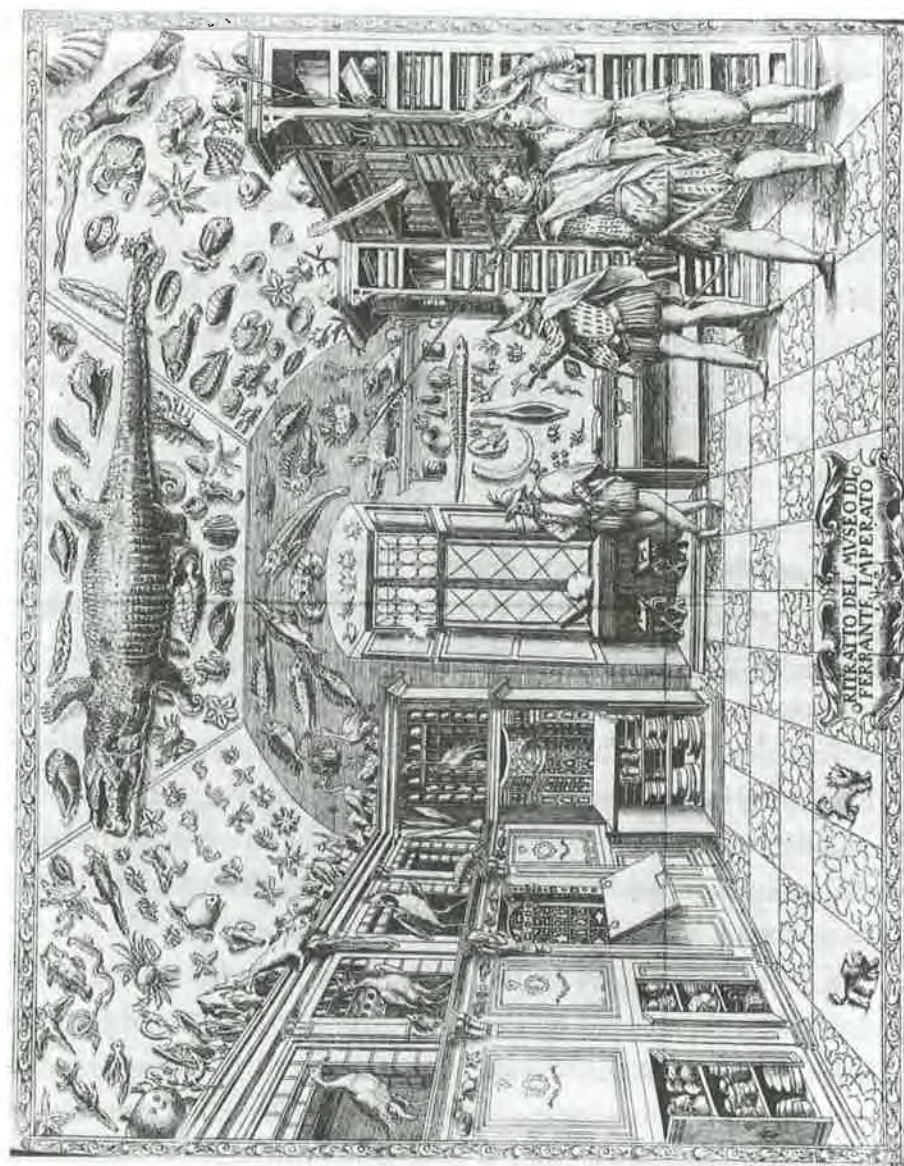
Figure 7 The Museum of Ferrante Imperato, from Imperato, *Historia Naturale* (Venice, 1672) (Photo: Warburg Institute)

that draw only on regular natural phenomena.[193] While Bacon represents the most articulate advocate of such a conjunction of wonder at natural marvels and the concern with natural explanations, its origins can be traced back to late-fifteenth and sixteenth century writers such as Marcello Ficino, Pietro Pomponazzi or Girolamo Cardano, who initiated a tradition that enjoyed scientific respectability until the early 1700's.

Criticism was already being levelled at the culture of curiosity by philosophers such as Descartes who, concerned with the proper systematisation of knowledge, was scathing about the eclecticism of curiosity. More generally, the culture of curious wonder disappeared in the eighteenth century because of an increasing philosophical disdain towards the supposed vulgarity of the fascination with natural anomalies and marvels, and because of an important metaphysical shift whereby 'Nature was governed by immutable laws *and* those laws insured that natural phenomena were always regular and uniform.'[194] In this metaphysical picture there was little space for the concern with curious anomalies and wonders that had characterised Renaissance knowledge.

In this context it is possible to view Warburg's project as an example of 'wistful counter-enlightenment.'[195] What I mean is that in certain respects Warburg's work was motivated by a concern with the historical retrieval of the culture of curiosity. It has already been noted that he regarded the 'achievements' of Enlightenment with a degree of ambivalence; although, on the one hand, the process of rationalisation represented a progressive creation of the 'Denkraum' necessary to the establishment of civilisation *per se*, Warburg's comments at the conclusion of the lecture on the Pueblo Indians and elsewhere indicate his dismay at the alienation caused by the excessive mathematisation of nature associated with modernity. His concern with the Renaissance stems from a recognition its liminal status, in which the mediation of scientific and philosophical inquiry by the continuing belief in marvels and wonders prevented the establishment of what Weber referred to as the 'iron cage' of modernity. The genealogy of 'facts' plays an impor-

tant role, here, too. Usually regarded as such an integral part of the positivism of modern culture, facts were originally those anomalous marvels that resisted assimilation to established canons of knowledge; for Bacon it was the assortment of strange facts that revealed the 'partiality of axioms and opinions.'[196] Warburg's critique of the rigid ordering of knowledge in academic scholarship also casts light on this issue, for it again recalls a form of inquiry prior to the Enlightenment systematisation of knowledge. In the very method of his enterprise, therefore, Warburg was mobilising the memory of a past culture, establishing correspondences between contemporary cultural science and the origins of modern secular inquiry. And this tactic opens out onto the general question of the meaning of cultural memory and its relation to mimetic correspondence for both Warburg and Benjamin.

Aura and Memory

The understanding of Benjamin's concept of mimesis is almost inseparable from his notion of aura. A central part of his account of aura and mimetic experience is formed by his exploration of recollection; I have already outlined the ways in which the mimetic persists as a kind of residue or trace in modern experience, and it is through the concept of aura that this notion of a mimetic memory-trace is developed. In his essay on the history of photography, aura is famously described as 'ein sonderbares Gespinst von Raum und Zeit: einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag.'[197] This definition occurs in his discussion of Eugene Atget, whom Benjamin credits for having released objects from the embrace of aura. Considerable attention is devoted to the relation of photography and aura, and in particular to the role of the medium of photography per se in dispelling aura.[198] This idea is developed at greater length in his essay on reproduction, but Benjamin attributes the loss of aura to other circumstances too, including the shock effect of modernity. Writing of Baudelaire's short prose poem 'Perte d'Auréole' he notes that '[Baudelaire] hat den Preis bezeichnet, um welchen die Sensation der Moderne zu haben ist: die Zertrümmerung der Aura im Chockerlebnis.'[199] And rather than attempting to reinstate aura, Baudelaire's poetry registers the loss of aura primarily through allegory, in which the commodity form occupies a prominent place as its content.[200] Elsewhere, in the *Passagen Werk*, Benjamin argues that aura becomes displaced through the process of commodification and the general rise of mass society: 'Die Massenproduktion ist die ökonomische, der Klassenkampf die gesellschaftliche Hauptursache für den Verfall der Aura.'[201]

A clear strand in Benjamin's account thus focuses on the ways in which the social, economic and technological innovations of modernity have brought about the decline of aura. This aspect of Benjamin's theory is rela-

tively unproblematic; it consists of a straightforward adoption of a fairly orthodox historical materialist reading of Parisian modernity. However, the comparison of his essays on photography and mechanical reproduction with his writing on Baudelaire reveals differences that raise awkward questions about Benjamin's account. In the 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie' Benjamin defines aura as the appearance of distance. This notion is continued in his essay on mechanical reproduction, which traces the aura of the image back to its cultic origins;

> Eine antike Venusstatue z. B. stand in einem anderen Traditionszusammenhange bei den Griechen, die sie zum Gegenstand des Kultus machten, als bei den mittelalterlichen Klerikern, die einen unheilvollen Abgott in ihr erblickten. Was aber beiden in gleicher Weise entgegentrat war ihre Einzigkeit, mit einem anderen Wort: ihre Aura.[202]

Benjamin's reference to tradition is somewhat misleading, for it is the role of the work of art as an object of religious awe that is of greater significance. Moreover, Benjamin's distinction between pagan and medieval Christian attitudes towards the statue of Venus also requires qualifying, for while the specifically pagan significance of the figure may well have been the source of disapproval, its cultic function persisted into the Middle Ages. As Hans Belting has emphasised, from late Antiquity onwards, the venerated icon was the primary type of image in Christian Europe, to the extent that no true distinction existed between image and relic. 'Relics and images were closely related and sometimes were even dependent on each other in their ritual function and veneration. Images assumed the appearance of relics and in turn gained power from their co-existence with relics. In the medieval imagination, images and relics were never two distinct realities.'[203]

The aura of the work of art originates in the work's cultic value, and this notion of aura can be extended to encompass experience in general: the stress on the veneration of the icon alludes to the wider accounts of premodern experience in both Benjamin and Warburg, for whom the world of

the primitive is not a neutral object of disinterested inquiry, but instead an arena of correspondences, personalised affinities and symbolic meanings. The grounding of aura in cult ritual, however, throws up the first contradiction in Benjamin's own account – and also an important difference with Warburg. On the one hand there is clearly a strong parallel between the two in their joint emphasis on the cultic origin of the image. Their account of the reason for the decline of the cultic aura is admittedly slightly different; for Benjamin it stems from the gradual development of reproductive technologies that displace the image from its original ritual context, while for Warburg the cause is the exercise of 'Besonnenheit' and its creation of 'Denkraum.' At the same time these different explanations are united by a common theme, namely, the impact of the rise of modern scientific-technical rationality. Yet this apparent similarity also masks an important distinction between the two which is also reflected in Benjamin's own apparent ambivalence towards the concept. Warburg conceives of the cultic image as functioning through the *lack* of critical distance, in other words through the predominance of the empathic-mimetic urge. For Benjamin, conversely, the cultic image gains its aura precisely *because* of the distance between the object and the spectator; following Louis Aragon, Benjamin states: 'Mythologie … rückt die Dinge wieder fern.'[204] The decline of aura coincides with a decline of the distance marking the object as something apart. The authoritarian relation of the pious spectator to the venerated relic or image, which persists in the cult of aesthetic beauty, is gradually replaced with a universal rationality. Benjamin notes;

> Tagtäglich macht sich unabweisbarer das Bedürfnis geltend, des Gegenstandes aus nächster Nähe im Bild, vielmehr im Abbild, in der Reproduktion, habhaft zu werden … Die Entschälung des Gegenstandes aus seiner Hülle, die Zertrümmerung der Aura, ist die Signatur einer Wahrnehmung, deren Sinn für das Gleichartige in der Welt so gewachsen ist, daß sie es mittels der Reproduktion auch dem Einmaligen abgewinnt. So bekundet

sich im anschaulichen Bereich was sich im Bereich der Theorie als die zunehmende Bedeutung der Statistik bemerkbar macht.'[205]

The decline of aura is linked to the rise of a technical *mimeticism*, and while, on the one hand, Benjamin's essay claims that reproduction brings about the loss of aura, it also proposes that reproductive technology allows a mimetic-empathic desire to re-assert itself, a process that would entail a collapsing of auratic distance. This is clear from Benjamin's use of the analogy of the magician and the surgeon to describe the relation between the painter and the film-maker, where 'Der Maler beobachtet in seiner Arbeit eine natürliche Distanz zum Gegebenen, der Kameramann dagegen dringt tief ins Gewebe der Gegebenheit.'[206] The opposition between allegorical distance and mimetic proximity has now been inverted; the auratic presence of primitive-cult objects now produces a distance which the social and economic developments of modernity, such as the commodity form, photographic reproduction, or the democracy of the mass, now overcome. The difficulty of trying to reconcile such conflicts is compounded in his discussion of aura in the *Passagen-Werk* and the essays on Baudelaire, in which aura appears in the form of the 'correspondances,' and its decline is registered through the motif of loss. Baudelaire contrasts the 'regards familiers' of nature with the urban experience of the flâneur, such as in the poem 'A une passante' which describes the fugitive disconnected encounter with a young woman. The experience of the 'correspondance,' is possible 'nur im Bereich des Kultischen.'[207] This reciprocal basis of aura is made explicit when Benjamin states that 'Die Erfahrung der Aura beruht also auf der Übertragung einer in der menschlichen Gesellschaft geläufigen Reaktionsform auf das Verhältnis des Unbelebten oder der Natur zum Menschen … Die Aura einer Erscheinung erfahren heißt, sie mit dem Vermögen belehnen, den Blick aufzuschlagen.'[208] Baudelaire's allegorical vision articulates the loss of that reciprocity intrinsic to mimetic experience; 'Der allegorischen Intention ist *jede* Inti-

mität mit den Dingen fremd. Sie berühren heißt ihr: sie vergewaltigen. Sie erkennen heißt ihr: sie durchschauen.'[209]

In the account constructed here Benjamin seems to be moving in a different direction from that laid out in the essays on photography. Now, mimetic ritual experience is inextricably bound up with auratic experience, implying an intimacy with things which is lost with the decline of aura. Whereas aura had signified a certain distance from the objects of perception, it now involves a proximity to them. This sense of confusion in Benjamin's definitions of aura is compounded by his approving reference in his essay on mechanical reproduction to Riegl. For as noted earlier, Riegl's thought was based on the notion of a transition from a haptic to optical experience, with the spatial metaphor of proximity giving way to distance.

One explanation for Benjamin's uncertainty about the spatial metaphors used in his description of aura is that it reflects the ambiguous status of aura itself. His narrative of modernity does not read the loss of aura as a straightforward historical progression; indeed, at the point where it would seem most inimical to ritual experience, aura resurfaces. Hence, while the experience of the shock of cinema dispels the auratic residue of the work of art aura is preserved in the cult of the movie star; the loss of cultic aura is compensated for by the aura of aesthetic authenticity in the museum. This construction of a 'false' aura is the symptom of a much larger process, namely the growth of commodity fetishism, where the mass-produced good, which Benjamin had seen as antithetical to auratic experience, reinstates aura in the magic of the reified commodity. It was the promotion of commodity fetishism to which the arcades themselves were originally devoted. The arcade was a 'geile Straße des Handels, nur angetan, die Begierden zu wecken.'[210] Central to fetishism's awakening of desire is the reawakening of primal impulses; the arcades are the primal landscape of consumption ('Ur-landschaft der Konsumption'),[211] offering an endless spectacle of the kind only usually encountered in fairy tales.[212] This same process of re-enchantment is central to advertising, too, which Benjamin sets against alle-

gory For while the commodity undergoes the same logic as allegory, namely the surrender of intrinsic or use value and its replacement by an infinite exchangeability of meaning and value, advertising and commodity fetishism grant to the commodity an illusory aura of uniqueness.

Benjamin's account of auratic space is thus complex and full of ambiguities and contradictions, and these ultimately relate to his own ambivalence regarding modernity itself. In Warburg the idea of the auratic and the cultic, though displaying important parallels with Benjamin, is in this sense less problematic. Much of his interest focuses on the meaning of realism, and here it has to be noted that for Warburg 'realism' is not simply a matter of representational verisimilitude. Rather, it is a central manifestation of mimetic experience, based on an immersion in minutiae – a primitive positivism – predicated on a lack of cognitive distance. Of particular interest was the continued popularity in Quattrocento Florence of Flemish 'realism' which in so many respects seems the antithesis of the emergent classicism of Florentine painters. And yet for all its differences from the classicism of, for example, Botticelli, Flemish realism constitutes an alternative form in which the mimetic and empathic impulses were given expression. The key to understanding both styles is recognition of the lack of distance; in the case of the classicising of Botticelli this lay in the mobility of forms, which encouraged the corporeal empathic urges of the viewer; with Flemish realism, the fact that classical myth was narrated in contemporary guise again signified a lack of distance, manifest this time in the lack of historical reflection. This lack of historical distance was not restricted, however, to Flemish painting. Florentine devotional images also embody the same lack of critical distance. In his study 'Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum'[213] Warburg remarks on the curious habit, in devotional pictures, of allowing the donor to become part of the picture. Though already current in the Middle Ages, this practice became far more prominent during the Renaissance. Referring specifically to Ghirlandaio's *Pope Honorius III founding the Order of St. Francis* in Santa Trinità (Fig. 8), Warburg notes, 'Das bescheidene Privilegium
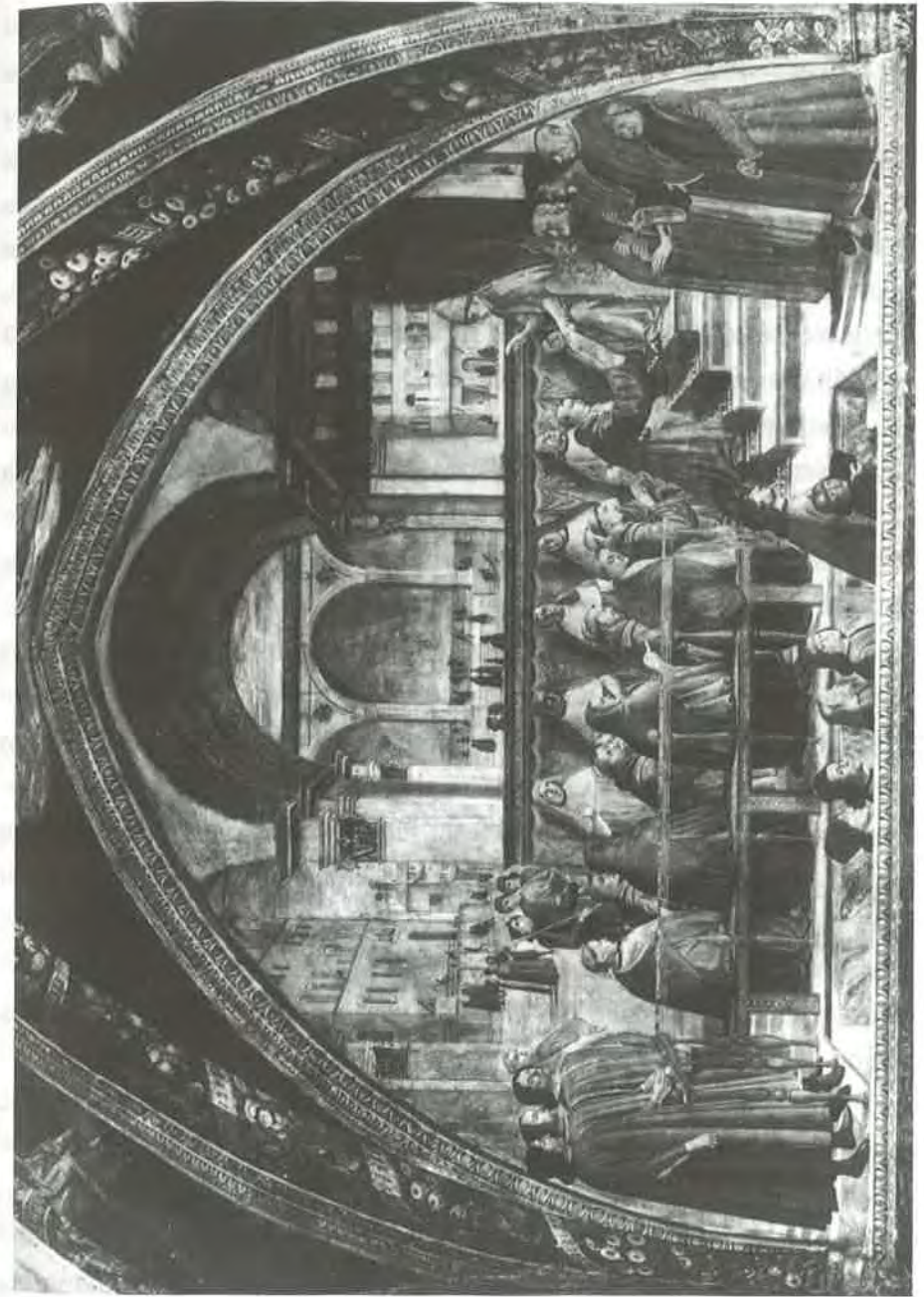

Figure 8 Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Founding of the Franciscan by Pope Honorius III* (Photo: Witt Library)

des Stifters, sich devot in der Ecke des Bildes aufzuhalten, erweitern Ghirlandaio und sein Auftraggeber unbedenklich zu einem Recht auf freien Eintritt ihres leibhaftigen Abbildes in die heilige Erzählung selbst als Zuschauer oder gar als handelnde Personen der Legende.'[214] Although the narrative was drawn from the history of the Christian church, its 'realism' stems from an older pagan mimetic urge, in which image and physical actuality occupy the same continuum. Warburg sees this realism paralleled in the growing use in the Quattrocento of *boti* - wax votive figures - a practice so popular that as early as 1401 the Signoria was compelled to limit the eligibility to the upper classes. The number of votive figures was such that by this time they had to be hung from the entablatures by rope, and the walls strengthened with chains. Eventually, because of the frequency with which they fell down, the *boti* were then exiled to the small cloister. The mimetic origin of this practice is quite clear for Warburg, and was already indicated by contemporary authors such as Francesco Sacchetti, who dismissed it as pagan idolatry. It revealed the persistence of an experience of the image which Benjamin would later refer to as 'auratic.' As Warburg himself argues, 'In dem Weihgeschenke an heilige Bilder hatte die katholische Kirche ... den bekehrten Heiden eine legitime Entladungsform für den unausrottbaren religiösen Urtrieb belassen, dem Göttlichen in der fassbaren Form des menschlichen Abbildes sich in eigener Person oder im Abbilde annähern zu können.'[215] For obvious reasons the notion of aura is absent in this account, but it is clear that with the reference to 'pictorial magic' ('Bildzauber') a similar conception of the cultic origin of images is envisaged.

Benjamin argues that commodification was one of the causes of the decline of aura, even though commodity fetishism would then reinstate it. His account of the relation between aura, mimeticism and commerce is prefigured in Warburg, whose study of 'Flandrische Kunst und florentinische Frührenaissance' links the loss of medieval piety to the rise of commerce, manifest in the rise of the painting as commodity. Commenting specifically on the popularity of the work of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden

in Italy, Warburg writes, 'damit war für den besitzenden Kunstliebhaber, der nicht mehr von kirchlicher Fernkunst in Distanz gehalten sein wollte, das eigentliche Sammelobjekt geschaffen; denn das aus dem kirchlichen Zusammenhange gelöste Tafelbild beförderte ... den bescheiden knieenden Stifter zum verfügenden Herrn ... '[216] The development of the portrait, in which the image of the patron was dissociated from the connotation of the position of donor, was indicative of a significant shift in the meaning of the image. While Warburg admits that in the Quattrocento one sees only the very beginnings of a turn away from the ritual basis of the image, the process was clearly discernible, particularly amongst the Netherlandish portrait painters so much in vogue. Of course Warburg stressed that the process of disengagement from a predominantly religious disposition was not as unequivocal as his contemporaries assumed. His paper on Francesco Sassetti's Last Will and Testament explores precisely this phenomenon; Sassetti, the mercantile patron of Ghirlandaio (alongside contemporaries such as Giovanni Rucellai or even the Medici) still entertained profoundly pious, even superstitious beliefs. His will speaks of 'Fortuna' as if of a pagan demon; Rucellai's *impresa* consists of the figure of 'Fortuna,' while the Medici prefaced many of their business contracts with the phrase 'Col nome di Dio e di Buonaventura.' For Warburg these references were more than mere rhetoric. Indeed, Warburg's paper was an important reminder of what has since become a commonplace, namely, the persistence of magic and superstition in Italy into the sixteenth century and beyond.

In a manner similar to Benjamin, Warburg views the impact of commerce on visual representation with some degree of ambivalence. Florentine mercantilism relies on a worldly outlook that reflects the rise of self-reflective 'Denkraum.' Integral to this is the progressive disenchantment of the world, in which, for example, the cultic aura of the image is dispelled as it becomes a portable commodity. One focus of Warburg's interest is the surprising co-existence of these two types of orientation toward the world. At the same time, the increase in circulation of the classical symbol, facili-

tated by the printing press, devalues it, leading to the hyperinflation of gestural expression. In Baroque allegory the symbolic contents of the image become disconnected from the reality in which they were grounded, a motif which is continued in Benjamin's much more developed study of allegory. And yet while the cultic, mimetic, aura of the image seemed to be dispelled in its reproduction, it was reinstated in a different form. The visual representations of the official pageants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries become more and more a form of spectacle projecting the aura of the social elite on to the 'slaves' of the uneducated underlings. Here one sees a further important connection with Benjamin who, in his essay on reproduction, argues that the cult value of the work of art becomes replaced by its exhibitionary value ('Ausstellungswert').[217] As Wolfgang Kemp has pointed out, Benjamin's judgement has to be tempered by recognition of the importance of display in liturgical practice from the tenth century onwards.[218] While Benjamin's crude opposition between cultic and exhibitionary value offers an insufficient theoretical-historical framework, Kemp's critique ironically reinstates a central point of Benjamin's (and Warburg's) argument, namely the *continuity* of the auratic quality of the work of art and the role of both tactile and visual elements in the service of cult. And while display played a prominent role long before the invention of photographic reproduction, one could argue that during that time works of art did not derive their aura *primarily* from their appeal to an optical-aesthetic sense. In the *Passagen Werk* Benjamin speaks of crisis: 'die Vermutung liegt nahe, daß Zeitalter, die zu allegorischem Ausdruck neigen, eine Krisis der Aura erfahren haben.'[219] Such talk extends the range of possibilities – reorientation of auratic address, metamorphosis of aura – beyond the simple reference to the *loss* of aura posited by the essay on reproduction.

Despite important differences, therefore, Benjamin and Warburg are united in the view that while the Middle Ages recede ever more into the distance, the auratic experience has not vanished with them. The central means by which 'aura' is preserved is memory, and here we come to both

the most suggestive aspect of their thinking, and also its most problematic. In his essay on photography Benjamin mentions the spatial *and* temporal axes of aura. The question of its temporal axis is developed at greater length in the essay on mechanical reproduction. In that essay, Benjamin makes a number of claims, the best-known of which, in the present context, is the equation of aura and authenticity. An object's aura derives from its authenticity, the unique history that has left its (physical) traces. These qualities of the work of art cannot be detected by the reproduction (or at least could not in Benjamin's time), and since the photograph is the primary means whereby we first become familiar with most works of visual art, the aura of the work is lost. Although reproduction leads to a vanishing of aura (in its inherited form, at least) aura persists even after the invention of photography, and not only in the secularised cult of beauty. For while photographs cannot capture the history of the work of art, they have their own historicity; they freeze a moment in time, which becomes most evident in personal portraits. As Benjamin notes, 'Im Kult der Erinnerung an die Fernen oder die abgestorbenen Lieben hat der Kultwert des Bildes die letzte Zuflucht.'[220]

Aura underpins the cult of remembrance, and this configuration of aura, time and memory can be added to in a number of ways. For while Benjamin argues that the aura of the photographic image represents a primitive cultic residue, it can equally be argued that this aura has little to do with the cultic origin of images, and even less to do specifically with the image of the human face. Rather, it could be said to stem from the fact that the photograph, as *memento mori*, constitutes a permanent index of the vanished moment. Furthermore, the historicity of photography (i.e. the fact that one can write histories of photography, attending to the introduction of successive technologies, styles and vocabularies of photographic representation) ensures that examples from the early history of photography seem as temporally distant as the patinised bronze statue, even in reproduction. And this has nothing to do with the cult of aesthetic authenticity – the uniqueness of the image – which Benjamin had seen as key to the aura of the work of art.

An important question remains to be posed, namely, as to why Benjamin even raises the notion of the temporal axis of aura. Perhaps the appropriate answer is to formulate the issue in another way, and to explore Benjamin's 'auratisation' of the concepts of time and history.

In his work on Baudelaire Benjamin alludes to the development of amnesia in modernity. Modern consciousness, 'Erlebnis,' develops as a means of combating the traumatic stimuli of modernity, leading to the loss of pre-modern 'Erfahrung.' However, following Freud, it is unconscious 'Erfahrung' that serves as the locus of memory, to which 'Erlebnis' is inimical, and hence modernity seems to be afflicted with an inability to recall the past through an effort of will. Hence the pertinence of Proust's comment: 'Il en est ainsi de notre passé. C'est peine perdue que nous cherchions à l' évoquer, tous les efforts de notre intelligence sont inutiles,' which Benjamin cites.[221] Such amnesia parallels the loss of 'correspondances' mourned by Baudelaire, and it completes the notion of the destruction of spatio-temporal experience. Consequently the mimetic affinity with Nature that underlies the 'correspondances' and that recalls early anthropological theories of the primitive, can be extended to encompass the sense of the past.

Much anthropological writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries noted the prominence of ancestor-worship. Spencer, for example, connects the belief in the dead with the rise of religious belief *per se*, inasmuch as the primal form of religion appears to be ancestor worship, i.e. propitiation of the ancestors' shades to prevent them from injuring the living. Indeed, all other religious practices, such as the worship of plants, animals or natural phenomena are, for Spencer, derived from this primal ancestor worship.[222] Of particular interest for Spencer was the fact that the dead were still felt to be present. Within art historical scholarship this idea was explored by Schlosser, for example, who interpreted the Roman practice of maintaining busts of family ancestors in the house as the residue of the same primitive consciousness.[223] This notion also informed, albeit indirectly, Benjamin's own understanding of time, underlying which is a dis-

tinction between modern and pre-modern history. Parallel to 'Erlebnis,' modern historiography is marked by amnesia. No longer a matrix of experiences to be remembered, the past consists of neutral facts to be recorded. Benjamin sees a similar process at work in the rise of the novel and the decline of storytelling. The latter 'senkt die Sache in das Leben des berichtenden ein … So haftet an der Erzählung die Spur des Erzählenden wie die Spur der Töpferhand an der Tonschale.'[224] The story is thus inextricably linked with the life history of the storyteller, in contrast to the novel, product of a society in which people are 'Trockenwohner der Ewigkeit.'[225] Quoting Lukács' *Theorie des Romans*, Benjamin argues that the novel records the increasing disjunction of time and meaning. Benjamin contrasts the timelessness of modernity, in which death, the ultimate marker of human temporality, is relegated to the margins of perception, with the oral society of the story-teller, where narrative tradition is maintained above all by the reminiscences of the narrator. Time and history become abstract disconnected phenomena, in contrast to the pre-modern understanding of history as governed by an overarching symbolic order. Hence the chroniclers of the Middle Ages, for example, operate with a mode of historical interpretation, 'die es nicht mit einer genauen Verkettung von bestimmten Ereignissen, sondern mit der Art ihrer Einbettung in die großen unerforschlichen Weltlauf zu tun hat.'[226] Benjamin's outline of the character of modern time is prefigured in his Habilitationsschrift, which analyses the allegorical vision of history. Noting the predominance of images of mortality, such as ruins, limbless torsos, Benjamin foregrounds the lack of transcendence in the Baroque. Instead the events of the Baroque Trauerspiel are caught in the immanence of history, bound to the transience of natural time. The *Trauerspiel* is marked by a rejection of eschatology ('Abkehr von der Eschatologie'),[227] and consequently theology is replaced by natural history; as Benjamin notes, while in medieval literature the meaning of worldly events and human lives, no matter how apparently short-lived and futile they may have been, is guaranteed by the promise of salvation, the *Trauerspiel* is completely absorbed in the

'Trostlosigkeit der irdischen Verfassung.'[228] Allegorical vision is thus inextricably linked with the vanishing of the temporal axis of aura, and it thereby inaugurates the supplanting of pre-modern myth by modern history.

Although modernity is afflicted by amnesia, the key to Benjamin's thought is the idea that the remembrance of pre-modern myth can still be triggered. Again the model of Proust is operative here - in particular the famous episode with the *madeleines*: '[Le passé] est caché hors de son domaine at de sa portée, en quelque objet matériel (en la sensation que nous donnerait cet objet matériel) que nous ne soupçonnons pas.'[229] Benjamin explores the role of the arcades and commodity fetishism in providing the mechanism for triggering the repressed.

A predominant trope is that of the dream which reinforces the connection between modern Paris and an unspecified primal twilight of consciousness. Benjamin famously refers to the nineteenth-century as a 'Zeitraum (Zeit-traum)' in which a drama occurs between the individual and the collective: 'in dem das Individualbewußtsein sich reflektierend immer mehr erhält, wogegen das Kollektivbewußtsein in immer tieferem Schlafe versinkt.'[230] With this conflict between the individual and the social collective which echoes a similar opposition in Warburg, Benjamin also highlights the equation of knowledge with awakening: 'Das Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit ist der Augenblick des Erwachens.'[231] In contrast to the weight of contemporary social theory that viewed the growth of industrial capitalism as heralding the increasing alienation of man from nature, he regards it as 'eine Naturerscheinung, mit der ein neuer Traumschlaf über Europa kam und in ihm eine Reaktivierung der mythischen Kräfte.'[232]

Although it pushes allegorical amnesia to an extreme degree, commodity fetishism, an essential motor of capitalism, consists of the reactivation of primal memories and fantasies. This idea is already prefigured in an early fragment entitled 'Kapitalismus als Religion' in which Benjamin, through a reading of Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, notes the numerous parallels between capitalism and religion, concluding with the re-

mark, 'Methodisch wäre zunächst zu untersuchen, welche Verbindungen mit dem Mythos je im Laufe der Geschichte das Geld eingegangen ist, bis es aus dem Christentum soviel mythische Elemente an sich ziehen konnte, um den eignen Mythos zu konstruieren.'[233] Of course, to draw a link between capitalism and religion was hardly original; Weber had already analysed the emergence of capitalism from Protestant belief. However, where Weber traced the secularisation of Lutheran ideas, Benjamin indicates that through the development of its own mythology, capitalism takes on the character of primitive religion. Capitalism is thus marked by regression back into myth, rather than a continuation of the process of rationalisation. Indeed even the amnesia of the Baroque is only relative, since the present is *always* marked by the traces of the past. In contrast to the amnesiac historiography of modernity, mimetic history, according to Benjamin, 'ist Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit sondern die von Jetztzeit erfüllte bildet. So war für Robespierre das antike Rom eine mit Jetztzeit geladene Vergangenheit ... '[234] This view is repeated by his imagistic conception of historiography as montage, 'Dialektik im Stillstand,' in which the past and the present are brought together in a constellation.[235] The dialectical notion of history can be related to the topos of correspondences between the two; Benjamin writes of the dialectical presentation of an historical content as a field of force ('Kraftfeld') in which is played out 'die Auseinandersetzung zwischen seiner Vorgeschichte und Nachgeschichte.'[236] It also informs his use of the figure of the historical monad. I mentioned earlier the relation between the mimetic and the monadological, and so here too Benjamin's assertion that 'Der historische Materialist geht an einen geschichtlichen Gegenstand einzig und allein da heran, wo er ihm als Monade entgegentritt' continues his auratic mimetological treatment of time and of history. [237]

Benjamin's notion of history as recollection, indeed his picture of capitalism as a vast reactivation of auratic experience echoes Warburg's account of historical memory. In addition his 'auratisation' of history with its

stresses on the correspondences between past and present mirrors Warburg's conception of history as remembrance. At the heart of Warburg's ideas of memory stands Richard Semon's book on *Die Mneme*, with its metaphor of memory as inscription.[238] Warburg's specific adaptations of Semon are, first, to see in the visual symbol a potent archive of memory and, second, to coin the notion of the 'dynamogram,' a marriage of Semon's mnemic 'engram' with his continuing interest in empathy theory and bodily movement. A dynamogram is thus the visual inscription of primal empathic bodily experiences which Warburg, in keeping with the anthropological tradition on which he drew, regarded as essentially traumatic and laden with fear.

As the visual imprint of such traumas, the visual symbol preserves their primary content, which as Dorothée Bauerle has emphasised, Warburg regards as an essentially collective experience.[239] This is stated most clearly in the *Mnemosyne* Introduction, where Warburg states, 'In der Region der orgiastischen Massenergriffenheit ist das Prägewerk zu suchen, das dem Gedächtnis die Ausdrucksformen des maximalen inneren Ergriffenseins … in solcher Intensität einhämmert, daß diese Engramme leidschaftlicher Erfahrung als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut überleben … '[240] The question of collective memory occurs in many places in Warburg's writing of the late 1920's. At times it is noted as an issue to be worked through,[241] at others it is presented more fully, as in a central fragment of the 'Grundbegriffe' in which he clearly bases the ability of primitive memories to survive on the intensity with which they imprint themselves on collective experience.[242] This emphasis is again repeated shortly after when Warburg writes that 'Das Substrat wird durch Collektiverinnerung geformt aus zeitlich zurückliegenden oder präsenten Engrammen.'[243]

The equation of memory with collective experience is a perfectly consistent consequence of Warburg's general view of cognitive development. Although his emphasis tends towards the importance of the creation of an interval ('Zwischenraum') between subject and the objective world, implicit in his account is also the assumption of an internalisation of this

'Denkraum' leading to the construction of an interior reflective space. The ability of the subject to extricate itself from the Other is intimately bound up with the ability of the subject to view itself as an Other.[244] This also throws up an important parallel with Benjamin, who likewise contrasts the collective basis of primal intoxication with the isolation of the modern subject.[245] While it is concordant with Warburg's (and Benjamin's) *general* position to contrast collective mimetic experience with the birth of the modern individual, far more is invested in the difference to be accounted for by a concern for conceptual consistency. For Warburg it is individual artists, such as Ghirlandaio, Rembrandt, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli or Manet who carry out the task of cultural advancement, and who sublimate the primitive memories of antiquity into the 'heliotropic' visual representations of the Renaissance (or Impressionism). 'Der Zwang zur Auseinandersetzung mit der Formenwelt vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte … bedeutet für jeden Künstler, der seine Eigenart durchsetzen will, die entscheidende Krisis … '[246] Warburg's political beliefs are influential here. He made no secret of his suspicion of the 'pressure of the masses' ('Massendruck') of contemporary democracy,[247] and one can also link this suspicion to Warburg's continuing interest in anti-semitism and the mass pogroms conducted against the Jews. Moreover he was also aware of the ways in which contemporary political issues impacted on historical scholarship. As he noted towards the end of his 'Festwesen' lecture, 'das Kunstinteresse der Gebildeten ist nicht frei von [unausgesprochenen und deshalb umso stärker wirkenden] Unterströmungen politischer, sozialer und praktischer Tendenzen, die sich der historischen Betrachtungsweise … instinktiv widersetzen.'[248] One can draw a comparison with Benjamin, who, equating mimetic experience with a communal pre-subjective mode of existence, became critical of modern individualism - in the same measure that Warburg was critical of the role of mass society. In his essay on reproduction Benjamin distinguishes between the solitary bourgeois viewer of the work of art and the collective reception of film. On this point the political differences between the two writers is at its most transpar-

ent; Warburg's social conservatism against Benjamin's naïve faith in the revolutionary possibilities of mass viewing. And yet despite such apparent differences, common to both is the aim of resisting the return of auratic experience. For Benjamin its latest aesthetic incarnation is to be found in the absorbed art lover: 'Der vor dem Kunstwerk sich Sammelnde versenkt sich darein.'[249] The means to unravelling such immersion lies in a re-energising of cognition – 'distraction' ('Zerstreuung') – through the shock effect of the communal experience of the cinema, in which the cinema spectators. For Warburg it is the critical self-reflection – *sophrosyne* – of the individual that resists the call of mass intoxication. Furthermore interpretation of Benjamin's opposition between individual and mass, which seems the inverse of Warburg's own evaluation, has to be mediated by his registering of the possibility of cinematic aura and, ultimately, of the mass appeal of the aura of fascism.

Warburg's view of the Renaissance as a process of cultural remembrance rather than simply as the revival of a lost tradition constitutes his most original contribution to cultural historiography. In recasting the Renaissance in this way Warburg opens it up to an entirely novel set of questions; the classical tradition is no longer a monolithic entity whose presence was either acknowledged or neglected. Instead, everything hangs on its transformation through successive interpretative acts of remembering, and on what such remembering might consist of and how it might occur. Previous scholarship had left this process largely unanalysed. At the same time, however, it is probably the most problematic aspect of his thought, replete with contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies. At stake is the question of what is even meant by the notion of cultural memory, and an entry into this tangled web is provided by Warburg's reference to 'Der Entdämonisierungsprozess der phobisch geprägten Eindruckserbmasse.'[250] As noted earlier, Warburg viewed primitive experience as essentially fearful, and the content of collective memory is thus composed of inherited fears and anxieties. Alongside this account is another version of collective memory, how-

ever, in which it is the values projected onto the legacy of the distant past that determines its character. In this version Warburg refers to the memories of the past as an 'unpolarisiertes Contiguum' and states, further, that 'Das Erbbewußtsein von maximalen seelischen Eindrucksstempeln (Engramm) führt diese ohne Ansehung der Richtung der Gefühlsbetontheit qua energetisches Spannungserlebnis weiter.'[251] According to this latter version 'demonic' antiquity is just as much a construction as the Olympian allegories of the Renaissance. Warburg's comments regarding the rediscovery of the *Laocoon* statue, namely, that the Renaissance would have invented one had it not actually been found, offers an exemplary case of this position.

There is clearly a tension between these two versions. One possible explanation for this apparent contradiction might be that Warburg is concerned with the dialectic of the two, in other words, the confrontation between the recollection of the auratic values of the classical legacy and the projection of contemporary values onto that same legacy. The Renaissance would thus be held in the tension between these two forces. Unfortunately there is little indication in his writing that his field of inquiry is envisaged in precisely those terms. Moreover, even if this problem can perhaps be partly answered in this way, there is another question which Warburg's theory of memory raises, and it revolves around the question of symbolic meaning.

In his study of the 'internationale Massenvölkerwanderung der vorgeprägten Dynamogramme,'[252] Warburg seems to regard the multiple mediations of classical symbols after antiquity as *detours*. The Renaissance recollection of classical engrams consists of a process of stepping beyond them and reaching back toward the original coinage of antiquity. This is most evident in his study of the Palazzo Schifanoia in which the frescoes are part of a process of going past the degeneracy of the Middle Ages to the original classical sources of the mythic figures, and in which 'Botticellis Venusbilder … der vom Mittelalter zweifach, mythographisch und astrologisch gefesselten Göttin die olympische Freiheit wieder[er]ringen wollen.'[253] Warburg is therefore operating with a notion of originary meanings which

are deflected in various ways. This is also confirmed by his frequent reference to notions of imprinting, stamping and minting. Such vocabulary allows easy translation into the topos of memory as inscription.

Two significant difficulties are raised by this motif. The first concerns the mechanism of such historical recollection. In particular, Warburg does not account for how the original meaning of a primitive-classical engram is recalled, or how the various detours of its subsequent transformations by-passed. The Florentine Renaissance grew out of a medieval tradition, whose understanding of antiquity was, on Warburg's own admission, quite different from the recalled antiquity of Botticelli or Ghirlandaio. And yet rather than the recent medieval past being passed on, it is the far more distant past of antiquity itself that is being remembered. Warburg does not explain how that original antiquity was recalled, what the trigger or mechanism might have been. One explanation is to suggest that the Renaissance arose out of a renewed direct acquaintance with the monuments of antiquity – and Warburg's interest in the role of, for example, classical sarcophagi, the sculpture of the Arch of Constantine or the rediscovery of the *Laocoon* indicates that this would be concordant with his general account. Warburg writes of the importance for social memory of the 'stets erneute Berührung mit den Denkmälern der Vergangenheit.'[254] However, this is problematic inasmuch as it contradicts the notion of the Renaissance as a retrospective *reconstruction* of antiquity. In any case many of the monuments of Roman culture remained visible throughout the historical epoch – the Middle Ages – that seemed most insensitive to the mnemic content of such representations. Warburg creates further difficulties for himself inasmuch as he regards the circulation of classical symbols and images – astrology being a key example – as involving the degeneration of originary meaning, rather than as providing a vehicle of social memory. Here one can recall Wolfgang Kemp's comparison with the theory of collective memory of Maurice Halbwachs, at the core of whose thought is an emphasis on the socially mediated nature of memory.[255] A student of Durkheim and Bergson,

Halbwachs's view of social memory accords with Warburg inasmuch as he places it at the level of collective experience, and this involves more than the mere aggregate of individual memories. At the same time, cultural memories are structured through social institutions and practices, and are prompted by encounters with objects, spaces, and ideas associated with the memory in question. As Halbwachs argues,

> Quand nous évoquons un souvenir … nous le rattachons à ceux qui l'entourent: en réalité, c'est parce que d'autres souvenirs en rapport avec celui-ci subsistent autour de nous, dans les objets, dans les êtres au milieu desquels nous vivons, ou en nous-mêmes: points de repère dans l'espace et le temps … [256]

Hence for Halbwachs, a memory is triggered indirectly – a position that recalls Proust's treatment of memory. Warburg undoubtedly recognised the importance of the various means whereby classical dynamograms were socially disseminated; the Plates of *Mnemosyne* include illustrations of woodcuts and engravings, photographs, stamps, posters, gem engravings, printed maps, and a variety of other visual resources. But these serve as examples of the detour of symbolic meaning, rather than of the material basis of the social memory of antiquity. In contrast to Benjamin, who saw such reproductive media as spelling an end to the oppressive aura of the cult object, Warburg saw them as heralding the degradation of meaning, the 'cutting off of expressive values from the mint of life.' And with this we come to the second major difficulty: the notion of originary meaning.

Fundamental to Warburg's account of social memory is the idea that unmediated exposure to a dynamogram leads to a release of the original mnemic energies that went into its making. Such emphasis on the immediacy and directness of the impact of the symbol supports the reliance on empathy theory as a means of carrying over his interest in mimetic experience on to the understanding of visual imagery. There is a series of unchallenged assumptions in this view, however, which need to be unpacked. First, Warburg

confuses here a specific kind of experience – the mimetic – with an objective characteristic of its visual symbolisation. The claim that an early stage of human perception was primarily mimetic is quite distinct from the notion that the meaning of mimetic symbols was also equally direct and unmediated. Furthermore, this is doubly untenable given that a central argument of Warburg is that modern European and American culture has lost the pre-logical, mimetic, experience that would be the pre-requisite of such unmediated receptivity to the mnemic content of the monuments of antiquity. Underlying Warburg's theory of the mnemic function of the dynamogram is his stress on the determining role of the representation of human gesture – the pathos formula. In this he sees gesture as framed by a set of extremes, the meaning of which is historically invariable. The influence of Darwin's study of *The Expression of Emotions in Animals and Men* is evident here, for while gestures can serve as a vehicle of memory, Warburg draws on Darwin's biological theory of gesture, in which all human gestures and expressions can be traced back to distant animal origins, with parallels in the more advanced of the primates.[257]

Paradoxically, much of Warburg's own work contradicts this view, in particular, his distinction between the mannered and rather restricted gestures of medieval courtly society and the much more dynamic gestural language of classical antiquity. To this could be added the question of the meaning of the *Laocoon* group, for Warburg's criticism of Winckelmann's idea of antiquity focuses on the latter's 'mis-reading' of the gestures of the Laocoon group. Such a mis-reading should, following Warburg, not be possible. Finally, the format of the *Mnemosyne* Atlas (Fig. 9), with its often noted parallels with contemporary avant-garde montage practices, also undercuts Warburg's own theory of memory. As Kurt Forster has suggested, the format of the atlas suggests the construction of meanings rather than the transmission of one originary meaning, and the interplay of the different images on each of the boards of the atlas mirrored Benjamin's interest in the

Figure 9 Aby M. Warburg, *Mnemosyne* Atlas, Plate 79 (Photo: Warburg Institute)

productive function of the constellation of opposites and the mutability of meaning.[258]

Had Warburg been less dismissive of his Viennese contemporary Sigmund Freud, his theory of social memory might have avoided the criticisms that can be levelled against it, many of which focus on problems arising from his continued attachment to the notion of an originary memory. In *Die Traumdeutung* Freud analyses the multiple mediations and detours necessary to the construction of the dream; the analysis of dreams is thus based on the assumption of a distinction between the manifest and latent content of dreams.[259] The specific mechanisms outlined by Freud whereby such latent thoughts ('Traumgedanken') become manifest as the content of the dream ('Trauminhalt') are well known: condensation ('Verdichtung') and displacement ('Verschiebung'). The process of displacement is twofold. First, 'Der Traum ist gleichsam *anders zentriert*, sein Inhalt um andere Elemente als Mittelpunkt geordnet als die Traumgedanken.'[260] Second, the original thoughts are converted into a content that is capable of representation in the dream – they are rendered 'darstellungsfähig,' and for Freud the primary example of this is the conversion of abstract thoughts into concrete figures.[261] The dream is thus an enigmatic hieroglyph, and its semantic density is further added to by the fact that the symbolic vocabulary of the dream often draws on the stock of inherited cultural symbols from folklore, myths and legends. Freud's account anticipates Benjamin's notion of allegory, and the parallel is strengthened by Freud's recognition that the choice of cultural symbols can often appear random and inexplicable: 'die Wahl des Symbols erscheint dann rätselhaft,'[262] a comment that echoes Benjamin's stress on the arbitrariness of allegorical figures.

Although Freud continues to write of the latent dream thoughts, it becomes clear that they can never appear *as such*, but only through multiple processes of mediation, and this model is repeated in his paper of 1915 on the unconscious.[263] Thus a repeated anxiety attack, resulting from the cathexis of an unconscious love-impulse, is mastered through a process of dis-

placement, through 'eine Ersatzvorstellung … die einerseits assoziativ mit der abgewiesenen Vorstellung zusammenhing, anderseits durch die Entfernung von ihr der Verdrängung entzogen war ('Verschiebungsersatz') und eine Rationalisierung der noch unhemmbaren Angstentwicklung gestattete.'[264] The experience of anxiety, which is itself already a mediated representation of the original unconscious idea, is only allowed into the preconscious through a second detour via an associated idea.

In contrast to Freud, Warburg, influenced by Semon, assumes that the original dynamogram is an unmediated reflection of the primal emotive energies that went into its making. Although Freud shares with Warburg an interest in the origins of social and symbolic practices – and this is evident in his works on, for example, totemism or monotheism – the origins are always absent. In contrast Warburg, although he recognises the semantic detours integral to the life of symbols, always imagines it possible to return to their point of origin, which, for Freud, never stands outside the economy of symbols. Perhaps the most concrete way in which this difference can be expressed is by reference to two metaphors of memory, the archive and the palimpsest. Warburg conceives of memory in terms of the archive, in which both the earliest and the latest documents are preserved in equal measure. While Freud was himself fascinated with the notion of the archive – the wax tablet of the 'Wunderblock' serving as a well-known model – his writing on dreams and the unconscious is far more amenable to the idea of the palimpsest as a model for the operations of social memory.[265] The palimpsest presents the interpreter with successive layers of writing, the original of which is masked by subsequent inscriptions; its traces are occasionally visible, but it is never visible in its entirety. And the question of the appropriate metaphor for memory also involves Benjamin. In the introduction to his essay on Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* Benjamin compares the critic to the palaeographer: 'Man darf [den Kritiker] mit dem Paläographen vor einem Pergamente vergleichen, dessen verblichener Text überdeckt wird von den Zügen einer kräftigeren Schrift, die auf ihn sich bezieht. Wie der Paläograph

mit dem Lesen der letzteren beginnen müßte, so der Kritiker mit dem Kommentieren.'[266] Important to this metaphor is the sense that access to the original is only possible through the mediations of subsequent inscription and commentary. Bringing this model to bear on to Warburg's preoccupations with the detour of the symbol through its successive transformations, one can state that it is only ever possible to approach the original work *through* such 'detours.'

Despite its many difficulties, however, Warburg's theory of social memory can be remodelled so as to retain many of his most pressing concerns, and in such a way as to throw up again affinities between his thought and that of Benjamin. At the heart of Warburg's concern with social memory is the question of how Europe's cultural inheritance was appropriated, and this appropriation is held in tension between two extremes. The one is an essentially conservative retention of the past – one might think in terms of a mimetic absorption in history - that preserves through repetition. The other is a transformative engagement with the past. Again we can perhaps turn to Freud to think through the significance of this difference. In his paper on mourning and melancholy Freud draws a fundamental distinction between the two reactions to loss.[267] The work of mourning enables the subject to transfer their libidinal investment in the lost object to another. Melancholy is also motivated by loss, but this sense of loss manifests itself through excessive identification with the object: 'Die Objektbesetzung … wurde aufgehoben, aber die freie Libido nicht auf ein anderes Objekt verschoben, sondern ins Ich zurückgezogen. Dort fand sie aber nicht eine beliebige Verwendung, sondern diente dazu, eine Identifizierung des Ichs mit dem aufgehobenen Objekt herzustellen.'[268] There follows a loss of self ('Ichverlust'). This sense of an identification of the subject with the object recalls both Warburg and Benjamin's notions of mimetic experience, but here it is regarded by Freud as a clinical condition, and the inability to turn to another object condemns the patient to a cycle of regressive repetition – a phenome-

non that elsewhere Freud equated with the most primitive impulse of all – the death drive.[269]

Warburg clearly valued those artists that rose above the simple repetition of history. The significance of artists such as Donatello, Botticelli and others lay in their turn to a model of classical culture (it would be misplaced to term it an 'originary remembering') which challenged the existing medieval one. The fact that it was not an unmediated response to the mnemic content of the monuments of antiquity is evident from the fact that this 'other' antiquity of the Renaissance was based on a vast body of humanist scholarship. At the same time Warburg was persistent in his belief that the ability to rise above the repetitive loss of self was fragile, its achievement tenuous. And here we see the parallel with Benjamin for whom capitalism, through the growth of commodity fetishism, was engaged in the process of reverting to a kind of primitive repetition. This is also clear from Benjamin's use of Nietzsche's notion of eternal recurrence as a description of the logic of capitalism. And yet while the consumerism of the nineteenth century attempted to produce a kind of timelessness through resorting to classical associations and symbolism, such symbols are never tied to suprahistorical meanings. Indeed, a continuing theme in the *Passagen-Werk* concerns the dissonance between the environment of Parisian modernity and the inadequacy of the inherited cultural images of mid-nineteenth century France, including neo-classicism, itself not such a distant memory. In place of the constancy of meaning, Benjamin talks of disjunction, fragmentation. Indeed this is the very heart of his vision, and what places him apart from Warburg. Both are agreed on the necessity of an intervention into history as a means of resisting a regression into the primitive mimetic past, or its dialectical opposite, the hypertrophy of technical-mathematical abstraction. Yet whereas Warburg believes this can be achieved by the community of reason, Benjamin argues for something far more revolutionary. Less concerned with maintaining the sovereignty of bourgeois reason, Benjamin regards the rescuing of culture possible only through a *dialectical* reawakening of primitive

memory, a revolutionary and subversive re-appropriation of history - 'das Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen'[270] – that relies on the redemptive function of intoxication ('Rausch'). [271] Such an idea would have been anathema to Warburg the bourgeois who, in his confession that he was 'amburghese di cuore,' perhaps revealed more about his intellectual identity than he might have anticipated.

Conclusion

The work of Warburg and Benjamin has come to be recognised as important examples of a range of preoccupations that were dominate intellectual life in Germany from the late nineteenth century until the end of the Weimar republic. Chief among these were a concern with the impact of modernity, the role of tradition and cultural memory, and the nature of cultural history and theory. However, what marked both out as being worthy of particular attention is the extent to which they *differed* from their contemporaries. This study has aimed to construct the historical and philosophical context within which to read their *oeuvre*, but it has also aimed to outline the original way in which they approached the pressing questions of the time. Dissatisfied with contemporary accounts of Renaissance culture, on the one hand, and with the increasing reduction of art history to a system of mere formal categorisation, on the other, Warburg attempted to reconstruct the basis of the understanding of the production and reception of works of art, a re-orientation that also required a rethinking of the meaning of the *history* of art. Drawing on a range of philosophical, psychological and anthropological theories, his work highlighted the extent to which the history of art reflected crucial cognitive attitudes and shifts in the history of cultural development. Of course, he was not the only such figure to do so. His great contemporaries Heinrich Wölfflin, Alois Riegl, Julius von Schlosser or August Schmarsow all recognised the philosophical concerns underpinning the history art. However, Aby M. Warburg was the only one to explore the full implications of this insight, a process which involved violation of many of the established boundaries of academic discourse. It is in this that the figure of Warburg comes closest to that of Benjamin. Despite the various attempts to categorise him as Marxist, mystic or even quasi-Platonist, Benjamin has defied restriction to any one category; his work varied from scholarly arcana to

Marxist cultural criticism to psychoanalysis to anthropology. Current interest in both thinkers is undoubtedly a reflection of the erosion of traditional subject boundaries in contemporary academic discourse. Yet there is perhaps one other reason why they have become the object of such fascination, and it comes from their joint emphasis on the dynamic nature of the relation of past and present. Common to both was a profound scepticism with regard to the triumphalism of modern culture and the linear model of history sustaining it. And yet, rather than subscribe to a weary fatalism such as that of Oswald Spengler, both emphasised the notion that the past constantly reinscribes itself in the present, and that this re-inscription could be the source of a regressive mimesis of history or a progressive and creative reworking of cultural tradition. At a time when the decline of modernist optimism about history has become a generalised condition, Warburg and Benjamin articulate how this might effect the relation to the past and moreover how historical scholarship may become enmeshed in this process.

Notes

1 'Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels,' in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften (GS)* ed. R. Tiedemann & H, Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M., 1997) I, pp. 203-430.

2 Aby Warburg, 'Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten [1920] in Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften. Die Erneuerung der Heidnischen Antike (WGS)*, ed. G. Bing (Berlin and Leipzig, 1932) pp. 487-558; Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, 'Dürers "Melencolia I." Eine quellen- und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung,' *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*, 2 (1923).

3 'Perhaps, in addition to the involvement of [Walter] Brecht, I can later also hope for the interest of the Hamburg circle around Warburg. I would, in any case, expect to find academically trained and sympathetic reviewers of my work amongst its members, with whom I personally have no relations.' Benjamin, *Briefe*, eds., G. Scholem and T. Adorno (Frankfurt a. M., 1978) I, p. 438.

4 A brief account of this episode, together with the text of Hofmannsthal's letter (though not Panofsky's response) can be found in Momme Brodersen, 'Wenn Ihnen die Arbeit des Interesses wert erscheint … Walter Benjamin und das Warburg-Institut: einige Dokumente,' in Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass, eds., *Aby Warburg. Akten des internationalen Symposions in Hamburg 1990* (Weinheim, 1991) pp. 87-94.

5 ' … the most important scholarly publications for our approach to things are becoming associated more and more with the Warburg circle, and for that reason I was all the more pleased when I recently heard, indirectly, that Saxl is apparently intensely interested in my book.' Cited in Benjamin, *GS*, I p. 910.

6 A more complete account of the episode is offered in Wolfgang Kemp, 'Walter Benjamin und die Kunstgeschichte. II: Benjamin und Aby Warburg,' in *Kritische Berichte*, Vol. 3.1, (1975) pp. 5-25.

7 Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider* (London, 1969) p. 32.

8 See Wolfgang Kemp (1975) and Kemp, 'Fernbilder. Benjamin und die Kunstwissenschaft,' in Burckhardt Lindner, ed., *Walter Benjamin im Kontext* (Frankfurt a. M., 1978) pp. 224-56. See too my 'Archives of Memory: Walter

Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*,' in Alex Coles, ed., *The Optic of Walter Benjamin* (London, 1999) pp. 94-117.

9 'They should be good slaves and sharp of intellect, for I notice that they are quick to repeat whatever is said to them.' Christopher Columbus, *Journal of the First Voyage*, ed., B. Ife (Warminster, 1990). Entry of 12/10/92.

10 Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle* (Harmondsworth, [1839] 1989) p. 173.

11 James Cook, *The Journals of James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery* (Cambridge, 1955-67) I, p. 78.

12 Ibid., III, p. 297.

13 'it must have begun with a metaphysic not rational and abstract like that of men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been who, without the power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination.' Giambattista Vico, *Opere*, ed. P. Rossi (Milan, 1959) pp. 411-12.

14 ' ... who excel in imitation ... ' Ibid., p. 349.

15 ' ... intelligible classes of things ... ' ibid., p. 347.

16 ' ... the world in its infancy was composed of poetic nations, for poetry is nothing but imitation.' Ibid., p. 347. Vico is of all the greater significance in this context, for as Kany has emphasised, his speculations on the poetic origins of man were influential on the work of Warburg's teacher Hermann Usener. See Roland Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm. Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Andacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin* (Tübingen, 1987) pp. 81-3.

17 'In this desire for imitation ... I see nothing but the good state of a nation in the process of formation ... which everywhere learns, mimics and collects.' Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Journal meiner Reise 1769,' in *Werke* (München, 1984) I, pp. 366-7.

18 ' ... the principal rule of this particular kind of thinking is that it immediately takes the object of thought as a real thing, and does not engage in any acts of reflection on itself.' Karl Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftliche Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1825) p. 268.

19 ' ... relations between men are also projected on to all other non-human beings.' Ibid., p. 270.

20 'In truth that first this initial natural oneness ... is a state ... of rawness, of desire, of savagery in general.' Georg Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (Frankfurt a. M., 1969) pp. 264-65.

21 Karl von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Brasiliens* (Berlin, 1897) p. 295.

22 As Otto Gruppe notes, 'Es springt sofort in die Augen, daß der eine von den Bestandteilen der ältesten Religionen, der Mythos, ganz und gar dem Gebiet des mimetisch Schönen angehört: die Erträumung einer besseren Welt ist ... wie das Spielen der Kinder oder das Dichten' ('It strikes one immediately that myth, one of the components of the oldest religions, belongs entirely in the realm of the mimetic and the beautiful: to dream of a better world is ... like a children's game or poetry'). Gruppe, *Die Griechischen Culte und Mythen* (Berlin, 1887) I, p. 151.

23 Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871) I, p. 116.

24 Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology* (London, [1876] 1904) I, p. 242.

25 Ibid., I, 243

26 In addition to anthropological accounts of primitive mimesis, it is also important to emphasise the centrality of mimesis in Western theories of language from Plato's *Cratylus* through to the twentieth century. For an outline account see Gérard Genette, *Mimologics*, trans. T. Morgan (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1995). As Genette observes (p. xxv), 'even Saussure, the founder of structural linguistics, who introduced the notion of the "arbitrariness" of the sign or its relative freedom from ties to the phenomenal world, engaged in mimologics. Intrigued by what he called "anagrams" and "paragrams," Saussure filled many notebooks with eponymic analyses of Vedic and Homeric verses and inscriptions, discovering the names of ancient gods and heroes mysteriously concealed in letters and sounds. Saussure the conventionalist was therefore at heart a ... mimologist.'

27 Benjamin, *GS*, II, pp. 157-71.

28 Benjamin, *GS*, II, pp. 210-13.

29 Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 125.

30 'How clearly mathematics demonstrates that the total elimination of the problem of representation ... is the sign of genuine knowledge.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 207.

31 'The proper approach to [truth] is ... a total immersion and disappearance in it.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 216.

32 'I have nothing to say. Only to show.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 574.

33 Aby Warburg, *Sandro Botticelli's 'Geburt der Venus' und 'Frühling'*, [1893] in *WGS*, pp. 1-57.

34   A succinct account of Warburg's trip is offered by Ulrich Raulff in his 'Nach-
      wort' to Aby Warburg, *Schlangenritual. Ein Reisebericht* (Berlin, 1996) pp.
      61-95. See too B. Guidi and N. Mann, eds., *Photographs at the Frontier. Aby
      Warburg in America 1895-1896* (London, 1998).

35   'One may consider the conscious creation of distance between oneself and the
      external world as the basic act of human civilisation … ' Aby Warburg,
      'Mnemosyne - Einführung' in Warburg Archive, Warburg Institute, No.
      102.1.1, p. 2.

36   'The less a man is imprisoned in the bonds of fate, the less he is determined by
      what lies nearest at hand.' Benjamin, *GS*, VI, p. 85.

37   Benjamin, *GS*, II, pp. 157-71.

38   'We know of primitive peoples of the so-called pre-animistic stage who iden-
      tify themselves with sacred animals and plants, and name themselves after
      them. We know of insane people, who likewise identify in part with objects of
      perception, which are therefore no longer *objecta* "placed before" them; we
      know of sick people, who relate the sensations of their bodies not to them-
      selves but rather to other creatures, and of clairvoyants who at least claim to be
      able to feel the sensations of others as their own.' Ibid., pp. 161-62.

39   The work of Ernst Cassirer, with its proximity to Warburg, indicates the pos-
      sibility of a historicised Neo-Kantian philosophy that would be free of the
      criticisms levelled by Benjamin. As John McCole has confirmed, commenta-
      tors on Benjamin have tended to accept his critique at face value rather than
      take account of the developments within Neo-Kantian thought that rendered
      such criticisms redundant. See McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies
      of Tradition* (Ithaca, 1993) p. 76.

40   'On Language as Such and on the Language of Man.' Benjamin, *GS*, II, pp.
      140-157.

41   This interpretation has been given support by Susan Handelman's recent study
      of Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, which emphasises that it was partly the
      result of Benjamin's first intellectual exchange with Scholem. Susan Handel-
      man, *Fragments of Redemption. Jewish Thought and Literary Theory in Ben-
      jamin, Scholem, and Levinas* (Bloomington, 1991) p. 62.

42   See Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images. Walter Benjamin's Theory of Lit-
      erary Criticism* (Ithaca, 1987) pp. 104-5. Jennings also regards Hamann as an
      important influence. On the notion of Adamic language see James Bono, *The
      Word of God and the Languages of Man* (Madison, 1995).

43   'Mediation, that is the *im*mediacy of all mental communication, is the funda-
      mental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy
      magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic.' Benjamin, *GS*, II,
      pp. 142-3.

44   'God's creation is completed when things receive their names from man, from
      whom language speaks alone through the name.' Ibid., p. 144.

45   'With this one can no longer entertain the notion, such as that of the bourgeois
      view of language, that the word has an accidental relation to its object, that it
      is a sign for things (or knowledge of them) agreed by some convention. Lan-
      guage never produces *mere* signs.' Ibid., p. 150.

46   ' … the abyss of chatter.' Ibid., p. 154.

47   'This … magical side of language or of writing does not exist devoid of any
      relation to the other side of language, the semiotic. The entire mimetic side of
      language is rather an intention that can only appear when grounded in some-
      thing foreign, namely, that semiotic, communicative aspect of language.'
      Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 208 ff.

48   As Heidegger notes, 'Gerede' is a form of 'des Weiter- und Nachredens …
      Die Sache ist so weil man es sagt. In solchem Nach- und Weiterreden, dadurch
      sich das schon anfängliche Fehlen der Bodenständigkeit zur völligen Bodenlo-
      sigkeit steigert, konsituiert sich das Gerede' ('gossiping and passing the word
      along … Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just
      such gossiping and passing the word along – a process whereby its initial lack
      of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness').
      Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, 1986) p. 168. At the same time it should
      be noted that in his 1933 review of Adorno's *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des
      Ästhetischen* Benjamin praises Adorno's critical attack on Kierkegaard. See
      GS, III, pp. 380-83.

49   Benjamin, *GS*, III, p. 452-80.

50   See Benjamin, *GS*, VII, pp. 795-6.

51   'Denn offenbar enthält die Merkwelt des modernen Menschen von jenen
      magischen Korrespondenzen und Analogien, welche den alten Völkern
      geläufig waren, nur noch geringe Rückstände.' *GS*, II, p. 211.

52   See, for example, 'Alte vergessene Kinderbücher,' in Benjamin, *GS* III, pp.
      14-22; 'Kulturgeschichte des Spielzeugs,' in *GS*, III, 113-17; 'Spielzeug und
      Spielen' in *GS*, III, pp. 127-32; 'Altes Spielzeug' in *GS*, IV, pp. 511-15; 'Aus-
      sicht ins Kinderbuch' in *GS*, IV, pp. 609-15.

53 'Writing, together with language, has become an archive of invisible similarities, invisible correspondences.' Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 213.

54 See Aleida Assmann's discussion of the various metaphors of memory in 'Zur Metaphorik der Erinnerung,' in Assman and Dietrich Harth, eds., *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1993) pp. 13-35.

55 Sigrid Weigel, *Entstellte Ähnlichkeit. Walter Benjamins theoretische Schreibweise* (Frankfurt a. M., 1997), p. 90 ff.

56 Warburg, 'Das Festwesen als vermittelnder Ausbildner der gesteigerten Form,' Warburg Archive, No. 63.4, p. 80.

57 'The possibility of human imitation, that is, the mimetic faculty which human beings possess, may have to be regarded, for the time being, as the sole basis for astrology's experiential character.' Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 206.

58 'The reference to astrology ... testifies to the fact that there is no longer anything in our experience that would permit us to speak of a similarity between a constellation of stars and a human being.' Ibid., p. 207.

59 'Ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements in te concept ... as the configuration of these elements.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 214.

60 See 'Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der Deutschen Romantik' in *GS*, I, pp. 7-122.

61 Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 574.

62 'The being that enters into it, with its past and subsequent history, brings – concealed in its own form – the abbreviated and obscure outline of the rest of the world of ideas, just as, in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* of 1686, every single monad contains, in an indistinct way, all the others.' *GS*, I, p. 228.

63 ' ... jede Idee enthält das Bild der Welt.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 228.

64 'These minute perceptions are therefore of much greater influence than one might be led to believe ... the eyes perceive the entire chain of things of the universe ... in the smallest of things.' Quoted in Heckscher, '*Petites Perceptions*; an account of *sortes Warburgianae*,' in Heckscher, *Art and Literature. Studies in Relationship* (Baden-Baden, 1985) p. 128.

65 See Heinrich Wölfflin, *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (Munich, 1886).

66 Michaud writes, 'le *motto* de Warburg est d'abord une prescription de méthode qui signifie que l'oeuvre n'est pas une totalité close, mais une juxtaposition d'éléments en tension que l'interprétation ne doit pas estomper, peut même prétendre révéler.' Michaud, *Aby Warburg et l'Image en Mouvement* (Paris, 1998) p. 77.

67 Warburg, 'Das Festwesen,' p. 109 and passim.

68 The work in question was Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (Leipzig, 1819).

69 'Every person, every thing, every relation can signify any other. This possibility pronounces a devastating and yet correct judgement on the profane world: it is characterised as a world in which the detail is of no great importance.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 350.

70 ' ... when subjective inwardness becomes the essential moment of the representation, the specific content it adopts, whether from external reality or from the world of the spirit, becomes a matter of pure chance.' Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt a. M., 1970) p. 221.

71 In the anagrams, the onomatopoeic phrases and many other kinds of linguistic virtuosity, word, syllable and sound are emancipated from all traditional semantic contexts and are flaunted as objects that can be exploited for allegorical purposes.' Benjamin, *GS*, I p. 381.

72 ' ... the image is a fragment, a rune. It beauty as a symbol evaporates when the light of divine learning falls upon it. The false appearance of totality is extinguished. For the *eidos* disappears, the simile ceases to exist ...' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 352.

73 This looks forward, of course, to Benjamin's interest in Surrealist dialectics. See 'Der Sürrealismus' in *GS*, II, pp. 295-310.

74 See *GS*, I, p. 689; I, p. 671.

75 'The key motif in the earlier form of allegory was the corpse. The key figure of the later form is "memory".' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 689.

76 ' ... the essential thing is that the correspondances preserve a concept of experience that includes cultic elements.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 638.

77 Charles Baudelaire, 'Les Correspondances,' in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris, 1972) p. 38.

78 'The *correspondances* are data of remembrance - not historical data, but data of prehistory.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 639.

79 ' ... there are correspondences at play between the world of modern technology and the archaic symbolic world of mythology.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 576

80   'The greater the share of the shock factor, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it functions, the less do these impressions enter Erfahrung, remaining rather in the sphere of Erlebnis.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 615.

81   Benjamin, *GS*, I p. 653.

82   ' … never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power.' Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 439.

83   ' … experience has lost its market value. And it looks as if it is going to keep falling into the abyss.' Ibid.

84   'According to Freud, the attribution of "permanent traces as the basis of memory" to processes of stimulation is reserved for "other systems" which must be thought of as different from consciousness.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 612.

85   'Einbahnstrasse' in Benjamin, *GS*, IV, pp. 83-148; 'Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert' in *GS*, IV, pp. 235-304.

86   ' … the revolutionary energies that appear in the "outmoded".' Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 299.

87   'The formal approach to the image … seemed to me to lead to sterile word-mongering.' Cited in Raulff, op. cit., p. 64.

88   See Anton Springer, 'Das Nachleben der Antike im Mittelalter,' in *Bilder aus der neueren Kunstgeschichte* (Bonn, 1886) I, pp. 1-40. Springer was concerned with the specific nature of the medieval absorption of classical culture, concluding thus (p. 37): 'Denn die Antike besaß noch kein volles Leben [im Mittelalter]. Nur ein halb träumerisches, halb phantastisches Nachleben derselben konnte nachgewiesen werden. An dieser Schranke brach sich die Kunst des Mittelalters. Erst die Renaissanceperiode hat sie nach längeren Kämpfen siegreich durchbrochen' ('For [in the Middle Ages] antiquity did not yet possess a complete life. All one can detect is an afterlife, half in a dream state, half in one of fantasy. This was a barrier that defeated the art of the Middle Ages. Only in the period of the Renaissance was it able to break through victoriously, after a lengthy struggle').

89   Cited in Christiane Brosius, *Kunst als Denkraum. Zum Bildungsbegriff von Aby Warburg* (Pfaffenweiler, 1997) p. 165.

90   This aspect of Warburg has been explored in depth in Charlotte Schoell-Glass, *Aby Warburg und der Antisemitismus* (Frankfurt a. M., 1998). Warburg's in-

terest was obviously also informed by his concern with his own background, the catalyst being, perhaps, his encounter with anti-semitism as a student in Straßburg university. See Bernd Roeck, *Der Junge Aby Warburg* (Munich, 1997) p. 71 ff.

91   Warburg, *Schlangenritual*; the 'Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer (monistischen) Kunstpsychologie' ('Basic Fragments of a [monistic] Psychology of Art') also bore the title 'Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer pragmatischen Ausdruckskunde' ('Basic Fragments of a Pragmatic Science of Expression'). The collection consists of two volumes, numbered 43.1 and 43.2 in the Warburg Archive. The most complete text of the *Mnemosyne* consists of the Introduction (Warburg Archive 102.1.1), but also includes earlier drafts of the Introduction (102.1.2), the so-called 'Grundbegriffe' ('Basic Concepts') (Warburg Archive 102.3.1 and 102.4) and the essay 'Manets *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. Die vorprägende Funktion heidnischer Elementargottheiten für die Entwicklung modernen Naturgefühls*' in Dieter Wuttke, *Cosmopolis der Wissenschaft. E. R. Curtius und das Warburg Institute* (Baden-Baden, 1989) pp. 262-72.

92   The latter in particular bases his long essay 'Der Ursprung der Religion und Kunst' on material drawn predominantly from Central America and Mexico. See 'Der Ursprung der Religion und Kunst,' in *Globus*, LXXXVI (1904) pp. 323-7, 355-63, 375-9, 388-92, and LXXXVII (1905) pp. 333-7, 347-50, 380-4, 393-400, 413-19.

93   ' … an enclave of primitive pagan humanity … ' Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, p. 10.

94   'To what extent does this world view … give us a yardstick for the development from primitive paganism through the paganism of classical antiquity to modern man ?' Ibid., p. 11.

95   ' … behaviour devoid of any end, undertaken simply for enjoyment, derives from purposeful activities based on belief in magic. For example, if the magical purpose of a masked dance has disappeared, it will continue to be danced for pure pleasure. And yet wherever there are profane masked dances, one can say with certainty that their more or less distant origin goes back to some kind of magic.' Preuß, op. cit., LXXXVI, p. 393.

96   'When the hunter or farmer masks himself, transforms himself into an imitation of his booty - be that animal or corn - he believes that through secret mimic transformation he will be able to procure in advance what he at the same time strives to achieve through his sober vigilant work as hunter and

farmer. The social provision of food is thus schizoid. Magic and technology come here into collision.' Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, pp. 23-4.

97　'the man of symbolic connection,' *Schlangenritual*, p. 24.

98　' … the Indian in his mimetic costumed dance … uses magic to wrest something from nature by means of the transformation of his person, something he cannot attain by means of his unextended and unchanged personality.' Ibid., p. 25.

99　*Götternamen*, Usener's *magnum opus*, was published in the same year as Warburg's visit to New Mexico. As Usener states in *Götternamen*, 'Es sind die kindheitsstufen der völker, auf denen sich volksthümlicher glaube bildet und zu mythischen formen gestaltet … jedes neue und unbekannte tritt zunächst als ein göttliches wesen an jene menschen heran' ('Popular belief and its development into mythic forms is based on the earliest stages of human culture … for to those men everything new and unknown had the appearance of a divine being'). *Götternamen* (Bonn, 1896) p. i.

100　'The serpent ceremony at Walpi thus stands between simulated, mimic empathy and bloody sacrifice. It involves not the imitation of the animal - but … engagement with it as a ritual participant.' Warburg, *Schlangenritual*, p. 39.

101　'What are the means whereby the primitive human loses the feeling of unity (identity) of his own living ego and his actual spatial, corporeal environment.' *Bruchstücke*, § 328.

102　'If religion signifies bonding, then the symptom of evolution away from this primal state is the spiritualization of the bond between humans and alien beings, so that man no longer identifies directly with the masked symbol but, rather, generates that bond through thought alone … the being … becomes, in the end, a spiritualized, invisible symbol.' *Schlangenritual*, p. 52.

103　See, for example, *Bruchstücke* §§ 69, 128, 299, 313, 344.

104　'Stages of Thought. Naming – Describing – Designating.' *Bruchstücke*, § 193.

105　'The power of judgement is the product of the actual distance between subject and object, once the sense of distance has been accepted by the subject.' *Bruchstücke*, § 189.

106　'The acquisition of a sense of distance between subject and object the task of so-called cultivation and the criterion of the development of the human species.' *Bruchstücke*, § 328 / 388.

107　'The loss of metaphorical distance = replacement by the magical monstrous confusion of image and viewer.' *Grisaille – Mantegna*, Warburg Institute 102.5, § 12.

108　Riegl notes, 'Die Auffassung von den Dingen, die dieses erstes Stadium des Kunstwollens kennzeichnet, ist … eine taktische' ('The conception of things characteristic of this first stage of the art drive is … a tactile one'). Riegl, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (Vienna [1901], 1927) p. 32.

109　One might think of Willhelm Worringer as a mediating link between Riegl and Warburg, inasmuch as he employed Riegl's account of perception as a tool of anthropological analysis. See Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (Munich, 1908).

110　Benjamin, *GS*, III pp. 369-74.

111　See Benjamin, *GS*, I, pp. 471-508.

112　Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 274.

113　'We have no tactile relation to the nineteenth century. That means, we are brought up to regard the past with the distancing vision of the Romantic.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 998.

114　Ibid., p. 1049.

115　The most obvious advocate of this reading is Gombrich. See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1986) pp. 214-15, and Gombrich, 'Aby Warburg und der Evolutionismus des 19. Jahrhunderts,' in Robert Gallitz and Brita Reimers, eds., *Aby M. Warburg. "Ekstatische Nymphe … trauernder Flußgott." Porträt eines Gelehrten* (Hamburg, 1995) pp. 52-73.

116　'Whether this liberation … from the mythical world view really helps [the primitive] to answer the enigmas of existence adequately is not something we can assert without qualification.' *Schlangenritual*, p. 52.

117　'The evolution of culture toward the age of reason occurs in the same measure as the tangible, coarse texture of life fades away and becomes a mathematical sign.' Ibid., p. 48.

118　'The modern Prometheus and the modern Icarus, Franklin and the Wright brothers, who invented the dirigible airplane, are precisely those ominous destroyers of the sense of distance, who threaten to lead the planet back into chaos. The telegram and the telephone are destroying the cosmos. Mythic and symbolic thought create … space for devotion or reflection, space which is then murdered by the instantaneous electric connection.' Ibid., p. 56.

119 'Blessed the times where the starry sky is the map of all possible paths – times whose paths are lit up by the light of the stars. Everything is new for them, and yet familiar, full of adventure, and yet their own.' Lukács, *Theorie des Romans* (Munich, 1994) p. 21.

120 ' … where man becomes alone and is only able to find meaning and support in his soul – which is never at home anywhere.' Ibid., p. 89.

121 'Properly speaking, philosophy is homesickness, the drive to be at home everywhere.' Ibid., p. 21.

122 See Warburg's comments on Simmel in his letter of 24/07/1915 to his brother Max. Warburg and Weber enjoyed a rather brief correspondence, in which each expressed admiration for the work of the other. Warburg was particularly drawn to Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, of which he wrote in his diary: 'lese d. prachtvollen Aufsatz v. Max Weber, Prot. Ethik u. Geist d. Kapitalismus. Den müßte man für Hamburg haben. Dadurch wieder Mut zum Glauben an meinen Sassetti-Aufs. weil die Problemstellg. ähnlich: d. traditionelle ('innerweltlich asketische') Gefühlsleben als Causalität d. neuen selbstvertrauenden Weltzugewandheit[.] D. leidenschaftliche Hängen am Alten bedingt [/] leitet über zu einer bedingungslosen Identification mit d. Neuen nach einem krisenzwiespaltbewußten Uebergangszustand.' ('I am reading the splendid essay by Max Weber, Prot. Ethic and Spirit o. Capitalism. We really must have him in Hamburg. He has given me back the courage to believe in my essay on Sassetti, because the problem being faced is similar: the traditional (inner-worldly, ascetic) sense of life the cause of the new, self-confident orientation towards the world. The passionate clinging to the old leads on to an unrestricted identification with the new, after a transitional state [era], conscious of crisis and splitting'). Quoted in Michael Diers, *Warburg aus Briefen* (Weinheim, 1991) p. 94. Warburg subsequently wrote to Weber, sending him a copy of his essay on 'Francesco Sassetti's Last Will and Testament.' Weber's enthusiastic reply has been published in Max Weber, *Werke. Gesamtausgabe* (Tübingen, 1992) II, 5, 'Briefe 1906-1908,' pp. 390-91.

123 As Weber argued towards the conclusion of 'Wissenschaft als Beruf,' 'Es ist das Schicksal unserer Zeit, mit der ihr eigenen Rationalisierung und Intellektualisierung, vor allem: Entzauberung der Welt, daß gerade die letzten und sublimsten Werte zurückgetreten sind aus der Öffentlichkeit, entweder in das hinterweltliche Reich des mystischen Lebens oder in die Brüderlichkeit unmittelbarer Beziehungen der einzelnen zu einander.' ('It is the fate of our time,

with its own specific processes of rationalisation and intellectualisation, above all, disenchantment of the world, that the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from the public sphere into either the otherworldly realm of mysticism or the close fraternal relations between individuals'). Weber, 'Wissenschaft als Beruf' in *Werke. Gesamtausgabe*, I, 17, pp. 109-10.

124 Robert Vischer, *Über das Optische Formgefühl* (Leipzig, 1873).

125 See n. 64.

126 Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Animals and Men* (London, 1872).

127 'The principle of identification reveals itself in social life in the following ways;
Comparison with the dynamic movement of another: following, obeying.
Comparison with reflex actions through reflex repetition of the other both in movement and at rest: imitation (mimicry).
Comparison with the scope of the other: property.' Warburg, *Bruchstücke*, § 386.

128 'Mimicry consists of bodily movement without changing places.' Ibid., § 151.

129 'Stage 1: Assumption that the work of art is something hostile, dynamic (ornamental).
Stage 2: Assumption that the work of art is something static (naturalism). Ibid., § 69.

130 'In a theory of fine art one should distinguish between rhythmical art, connected to the movement of the spectator, and reflexive art, connected to the comparative contemplation of the spectator. Ornament is the mediating link between both types of art.' *Bruchstücke*, § 90

131 Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (Vienna, 1893). On this aspect of Riegl's work see Paul Crowther, 'More than Ornament. The Significance of Riegl,' in *Art History*, Vol. 17 No. 3 (1994) p. 482-94.

132 Boas, *Primitive Art* (Oslo, 1927). Boas writes (p. 25) 'It is sufficient for an inductive study of the forms of primitive art to recognise that regularity of form and evenness of surface are essential elements of decorative effect … intimately associated with the feeling of mastery … ' This echoes Worringer's interpretation of 'primitive' ornament as a sublimated desire for order in a chaotic and uncontrollable universe. On this interpretation of ornament see my 'Anthropology and Art History,' forthcoming in *de-, dis-, ex-.*, 4 (2000).

133 ' … a struggle of two stylistic principles, the drive to universal ornamentation and monumental simplification.' Warburg, 'Das Festwesen,' p. 106.

134 'The decoration of clothing and practical objects demands that the surface be filled in … at any price; as far as all the applied arts are concerned, three-dimensional space is a void.' Ibid.

135 'The ideal of the excessively adorned courtier.' Ibid., p. 9.

136 'A question of tailoring.' Ibid., p. 102.

137 'Ways of losing oneself in an image. I - Tarrying with the feeling of being overwhelmed by the number of things … ' *Bruchstücke*, § 137.

138 In *Kultur und Rasse*, the translation of *The Mind of Primitive Man*, which Warburg bought, Boas writes, 'Der erste Eindruck, den man aus der Bekanntschaft mit dem Denken der Kulturarmen gewinnt, ist der, daß ihre Sinneswahrnehmung hochentwickelt, ihre logische Deutung der Wahrnehmungen aber höchst mangelhaft ist' ('The first impression one gains from familiarity with the thought of the culturally impoverished [i.e. the primitive] is that their sense perception is highly developed but their faculty for logical interpretation of those perception is most lacking'). *Kultur und Rasse* (Berlin, 1922) p. 191.

139 ' … tactile accumulation … ' Warburg, 'Das Festwesen,' p. 102.

140 'Der Process der Abstraction vom Stofflichen: vergleichendes Sehen anstatt tastendes Sehen' (The process of abstraction from the material: comparative vision instead of tactile vision'). Ibid., p. 103.

141 ' … the greatest force is to be found in the smallest point … ' Cited in Kany, op. cit., p. 85.

142 'Collectors are people with a tactile instinct.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 274.

143 Ibid., p. 279.

144 Ibid., p. 422.

145 'Collecting is a form of practical remembering.' *GS*, V, p. 1058.

146 'The mortal titans were still in the ascendant in their struggle against classical Mount Olympus as modern man was discovering himself (coming into being).' Warburg, 'Festwesen,' p. 147.

147 We seek to grasp the spirit of the times as a determinant of style through the comparing study of same object at different times and in different countries.' Warburg, 'Burckhardt Seminar,' Warburg Archive, No. 99.3, p. 12.

148 ' … Conceptions of Antiquity during the Italian Renaissance.' *WGS*, p. 1. It is also significant that Warburg's famous dictum on the meaning of details ap-

pears amongst his notes for the seminar of 1925/26 on 'Die Bedeutung der Antike für den Stilwandel in der italienischen Kunst der Frührenaissance.' See Dieter Wuttke, *Aby M. Warburgs Methode als Anregung und Aufgabe* (Wiesbaden, 19904) p. 68 ff.

149 ' … noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur.' Johann Winckelmann, 'Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst,' in *Kleine Schriften* (Weimar, 1960) p. 44.

150 The relation of Warburg and Nietzsche is explored in Helmut Pfotenhauer, 'Das Nachleben der Antike. Aby Warburgs Auseinandersetzung mit Nietzsche,' *Nietzsche Studien* 14 (1985) pp. 298-313. As Dieter Wuttke has pointed out, the foundation stone of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek was laid on 25 August 1925 which Warburg deliberately chose as being on the anniversary of Nietzsche's death. Wuttke, 'Aby M. Warburgs Kulturwissenschaft,' in Eberhard Knobloch, ed., *Wissenschaft, Technik, Kunst* (Wiesbaden,1997) p. 83.

151 'The untrammelled release of expressive bodily gestures, especially as it occurred amongst the adherents of the intoxicating gods of Asia Minor, circumscribes the entire range of dynamic expression of the life of a humanity shaken by fear, from helpless absorption to murderous frenzy, and all mimetic actions lie between these two … ' Warburg, 'Mnemosyne - Introduction,' Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.1, p. 9-10.

152 'It really depends on the subjective character of the subsequent generations afterwards, not on the objective character of the classical heritage … ' Warburg, 'Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts.' Warburg Archive, No. 97.2, p. 96. At the beginning of the lecture Warburg also quotes with approval Goethe's maxim that 'Was man den Geist der Zeiten heißt, das ist im Grunde der Herren eigner Geist, in dem sich die Zeiten sich bespiegeln' ('What we call the sprit of the times is, at bottom, our own spirit, in which the times are reflected'), ibid., p. 44.

153 'Ever since its waning, pagan antiquity … has provided and still provides European culture with the basis of its mundane civilisation.' Ibid., p. 46.

154 'A classically rarefied version of the ancient gods has so successfully been imposed on us, ever since Winckelmann, as the central symbol of antiquity, that we are apt to forget that it was entirely the creation of humanist scholars: this "Olympian" aspect of antiquity had first to be wrested from its entrenched, traditional, "demonic" aspect'. *WGS*, p. 491.

155 Peter Sloterdijk, *Der Denker auf der Bühne. Nietzsches Materialismus* (Frankfurt a.M., 1986). See too my discussion of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* in *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 78-109.

156 'Der Eintritt des antikisierenden Idealstils in die Malerei der Frührenaissance.' Warburg Archive, No. 88.1. Translated as 'The Entry of the Idealising Classical Style into the Painting of the Early Renaissance,' in Richard Woodfield, ed., *Art History as Cultural History. Warburg's Projects* (London, 2000) pp. 7-31.

157 'In order to prove that a conception of antiquity diametrically opposed to that of Winckelmann actually originated in the spirit of the Quattrocento, let me cite the words of Luigi Lotti who, together with our Giovanni Tornabuoni, sought antiquities for the Medici in Rome and who, in 1488, was lucky enough to uncover a small copy of the Laocoon group during night excavations in a vigna of Cardinal della Rovere. Its mythical content was unclear to him and of no great interest; his enthusiastic admiration was exclusively reserved for its formal pathos: "During excavations at night we found three lovely small fauns on a marble base, all three encircled by a large serpent. To my mind they are quite beautiful. All they are lacking is a voice; they appear to be breathing, shouting out and defending themselves with quite extraordinary gestures. The one in the middle has evidently collapsed and is expiring." We hear nothing more of this group, whose export to Florence was almost certainly prevented; the official discovery of the full-scale Laocoon group, which caused a stir throughout Rome, didn't occur until 1506. Nevertheless one should not make the influence of the Laocoon dependent merely on the fact of its chance re-emergence. I am no longer in fear being misunderstood if I say: even if the sorrowful Laocoon group had not been discovered, the Renaissance would have had to invent it, precisely because of its moving rhetoric and pathos.' Warburg, 'Der Eintritt,' pp. 90-91.

158 ' ... already in the second half of the fifteenth century Italian artists looked in the rediscovered treasury of forms from antiquity just as eagerly for models of intensified mimetic pathos as they did for models of idealising classical tranquillity.' *WGS*, p. 445.

159 'Iconology of the Interval. Art historical material for a developmental psychology of the oscillation between a theory of causation based on images and one based on signs.' Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.2, p. 6.

160 'I shall begin with astrology because nowhere is the problem of the cycle of concrete fantasy and mathematical abstraction more convincingly demonstrated ... than in the metaphor of the heavenly bodies. It effects both a quite unreflective and self-negating subjective confusion with the monstrous apparatus of the astrological bodies, and also an assured subjective certitude which, oriented toward the future, calculates from a distance and with mathematical precision the rising and the setting of the phenomena of the skies.' Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.2, p. 5.

161 'In Dürer the dark child-devouring, planetary demon ... becomes, through a process of humanistic metamorphosis, the plastic embodiment of the intellectual labourer.' *WGS*, p. 528.

162 'Astrology is ultimately nothing more than a name fetishism projected on to the future.' *WGS*, p. 464. Warburg expands this definition of name fetishism: 'einfühlende Verwandlung in den Bildcharakter (Identifikation mit dem Kunstbild) unter völliger Verdrängung des Ichs' (empathic metamorphosis into the character of the image (identification with the artistic image) at the cost of a complete suppression of the ego'). *WGS*, p. 628.

163 Warburg notes, 'Im späteren Mittelalter wich die reale Beobachtung jedoch zurück zu Gunsten eines primitiven Sternnamenkultes' ('In the late Middle Ages however direct observation retreated in favour of a primitive cult of star names'). *WGS*, p. 464.

164 'Man and astral symbol shrivel up in the post-classical Middle Ages into a dreary instrument of sympathetic magic.' Cited in Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 202.

165 On the subject of paintings that generate 'monstrous bibliographies,' including *Primavera*, see James Elkins, *Why are Our Pictures Puzzles?* (London, 1999) esp. Ch. 5 'On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings,' pp. 123-54.

166 'I Costumi Teatrali per gli Intermezzi del 1589,' in Warburg, *WGS*, pp. 259-300; original German version on pp. 422-38.

167 Warburg notes, 'Dabei verfiel man durch den allzu großen Eifer in der Suche nach Attributen auf willkürliche und unnatürliche Kombinationen' (In the event, however, the excessive zeal in the pursuit of attributes led to some arbitrary and unnatural combinations') *WGS*, p. 431.

168 Warburg, 'Italienische Antike im Zeitalter Rembrandts,' in Warburg Archive, No. 97.2.

169 'Essence of the Baroque style: the use of disconnected dynamograms.' Warburg Archive, 102.1.4 p. 23.

170 'Baroque artificiality,' in Warburg, *WGS*, p. 437.

171 ' … a show for the limited and illiterate understanding of the underlings. Master and Slave.' Warburg Archive, 102.1.4, p. 29.

172 On the use of spectacle in Renaissance Italy see James Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589. Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven, 1996); Anthony Cummings, *The Politicized Muse. Music for Medici Festivals 1512-1537* (Princeton, 1992). Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco offers a broader (if rather less in depth) survey of baroque festivals in *La Festa Barocca* (Rome, 1997). For a comparison with the rise of the masque in Stuart England see David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, eds., *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge, 1998). See especially, Martin Butler, 'Courtly Negotiations' (pp. 20-40).

173 In a letter to his brother Warburg wrote: 'Man hat m. E. hier in Hamburg die Pflicht, dem übrigen Reich zu zeigen, daß auf dem historischen Grund einer freien bürgerlich kaufmännischen Kultur eine politisch erfolgreiche und friedliche Gemeinschaft entstehen kann … ' ('In my opinion we here in Hamburg ought to show the rest of the Reich how a politically successful and peaceful community can come into being on the historical foundation of a free, bourgeois mercantile culture … '). Cited in Diers, *Warburg aus Briefen*, p. 163. Warburg's hostility to the Baroque stood in marked contrast to contemporaries such as Riegl and Wölfflin, who had done much to rehabilitate Baroque art. See Hans Tintelnot, 'Zur Gewinnung unserer Barockbegriffe,' in Rudolf Stramm, ed., *Die Kunstformen des Barockzeitalters* (Bern, 1956) pp. 13-91. See too Andreas Haus, 'Leidschaft und Pathosformel. Auf der Suche nach Bezügen Aby Warburgs zur barocken Affektenlehre,' in Klaus Garber, ed., *Europäische Barock-Rezeption* (Wiesbaden, 1991) pp. 1319-39.

174 *WGS*, p. 462.

175 ' … an authentic product of Greek culture, generated by the Greeks' dual gift for concrete poetic intuition and abstract mathematical imagination.' Warburg Archive, No. 81.2, p. 3.

176 'The imaginative capacity for mathematical abstraction enabled … the expansion of the image-based division [of the heavens] into a quantifiable system of points, by providing space with a regularly formed spherical form which made it possible to establish place and change of position by means of a system of ideal lines, and thus calculate the course of stars. The poetical element of the images of the stars no longer has any meaning for the self-consciously progressive astronomy of today, other than as an auxiliary device for spatial designation.' Warburg Archive, No. 81.2, p. 4.

177 Georg Simmel, 'Das Geld in der modernen Cultur,' in Simmel, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt a. M., 1992) 5, pp. 178-96.

178 Simmel notes, 'eine Zunft der Tuchmacher war nicht eine Association von Individuen, welche die bloßen Interessen der Tuchmacherei pflegte, sondern eine Lebensgemeinschaft in fachlicher, geselliger, religiöser, politischer und vielen sonstigen Hinsichten' ('a drapers' guild was not an association of individuals concerned purely with interests of cloth-making, but rather a living community covering professional, social, religious, political and many other issues'). Ibid., p. 179.

179 The theme of indifference and the blasé attitude is also explored in Simmel famous essay on 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben,' in *Gesamtausgabe*, 7, pp. 116-31.

180 'Since things find their equivalent in a completely colourless medium of exchange, devoid of all determinate specific character, and since they are converted into this medium at every moment, they are, to a certain extent, ground down, smoothed out, their surfaces lose friction, they are constantly in the process of being evened out … ' *Gesamtausgabe*, 5, pp. 194-95.

181 Ibid., p. 187.

182 See n. 65.

183 Martin Jesinghausen-Lauster has provided a comprehensive analysis of the relation between Warburg's library and his intellectual project in *Die Suche nach der Symbolischen Form. Der Kreis um die kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* (Baden-Baden, 1985).

184 Kurt Forster, 'Introduction,' in *Aby Warburg. The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles, 1999) p. 52.

185 Pomian, 'La Culture de la Curiosité,' in *Collectionneurs, Amateurs et Curieux. Paris, Venise: XVIe – XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1987) pp. 61-80; Daston and Park *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (New York, 1998). See, too, William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton, 1994) p. 314 ff.; G. Baccazzi et al., eds., *La Curiosité à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1986).

186   See Carlo Ginzburg, 'High and Low. The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in *Past and Present* 73 (1976) pp. 28-41.

187   'We have no concern with curiosity after Christ nor with inquiry after the Gospel.' From *De Praescriptione Hereticorum*, cited in Boccazzi, op. cit., p. 32.

188   'Nothing is more stupid than to know many things.' Cited in Boccazzi, p. 26.

189   Daston and Park, op. cit., p. 109 ff.

190   Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben* (Berlin,1993); Daston and Park, op. cit., p. 276 ff. See too Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Los Angeles, 1994).

191   *Musaeum Tradescentianum or A Collection of Rarities preserved at South Lambeth, near London* (London, 1656).

192   Francis Bacon, *Of the Advancement of Learning*, ed. A. Johnston (Oxford, 1974) p. 69.

193   Bacon adds, 'Neither am I of the opinion in this history of marvels that superstitious narrations … be altogether excluded' (p.69).

194   Daston and Park, p. 351.

195   Ibid., p. 360.

196   See Lorraine Daston, 'Baconian Facts, Academic Civility and the Prehistory of Objectivity,' in Allan Megill, ed., *Rethinking Objectivity* (London, 1994) pp. 37-63.

197   'A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be.' Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 378.

198   To repeat Benjamin's famous formulation, photographs 'saugen die Aura aus der Wirklichkeit wie Wasser aus einem sinkenden Schiff' (' … pump aura out of reality like water out of a sinking ship'). Ibid.

199   '[Baudelaire] indicated the price for which the sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of aura in the experience of shock.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 653. See Baudelaire, 'Perte d'Auréole,' in *Petits Poèmes en Prose* (Paris, 1967) p. 155. Cf. Benjamin, *GS*, V, 474-5: 'Die Bedeutung des Stückes "Perte d'Auréole" kann nicht überschätzt werden. Es ist zunächst darin von außerordentlicher Pertinenz, daß es die Bedrohung der Aura durch das Chockerlebnis zur Geltung bringt' ('It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of

the piece "Loss of Halo." It is especially pertinent, in that it confirms that threat to aura caused by the experience of shock').

200   Benjamin notes 'Die Warenform tritt als der gesellschaftliche Inhalt der allegorischen Anschauungsform bei Baudelaire zutage' ('In Baudelaire the commodity form appears as the social content of the allegorical form of vision'), *GS*, V, p. 422.

201   'Mass production is the principal economic cause and the class struggle the main social cause for the decline of aura.' Ibid., p. 433.

202   'An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura.' Benjamin, *GS*, Vol. I, p. 480.

203   Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmond Jephcott (Chicago, 1994) p. 301. This identity also underlay the conception of the statue. Belting writes (299); 'The relic, as pars pro toto was the body of a saint, who remained present even in death and gave of his or her life by miracles. The statue represented this body of the saint and, as it were, was itself the saint's new body which, like a living body, could also be set in motion in a procession. The bodylike sculpture made the saint physically present, while the golden surface made the saint appear as a supernatural person with a heavenly aura.'

204   Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 998.

205   'Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction … To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose sense of the universal equality of things has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics.' Benjamin, *GS*, I p. 479.

206   'In his work the painter maintains a natural distance from the given object, but the cameraman in contrast penetrates deep into the web of reality.' *GS*, I, p. 496.

207   ' … only in the realm of ritual.' Ibid., p. 638.

208   'Experience of aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships onto the relationship between of man to inanimate objects or to nature … To experience the aura of something means to endow it with

the ability to look back at us in return.' Ibid., p. 646. Later (p. 670) Benjamin adds: 'der Blick wird erwidert' ('the look is answered'). This anthropomorphism repeats, almost word for word, Karl Müller's account of mythic thinking, for whom the primitive mentality regarded nature as a living person, capable of responding when addressed in the same manner as a human being.

209 '*Every* form of intimacy with things is alien to allegorical intention. To touch them means to violate them. To know them means to see through them.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 423.

210 ' ... a fertile street of merchandise, set up merely to awaken one's desires.' Ibid., p. 93.

211 Ibid., p. 993.

212 Writing of Naples Benjamin notes, 'Nur Märchen kennen diese langen Zeile, die man durchschreitet, ohne rechts oder links zu blicken, wenn man nicht dem Teufel verfallen will' ('Only in fairy tales does one come across such long lanes, which one strides along, looking neither right nor left for fear to falling prey to the devil'). Benjamin, *GS*, IV, p. 314.

213 *WGS*, pp. 89-126.

214 'The modest privilege of the donor to be able to stand piously in the corner of the picture is extended by Ghirlandaio and his client, without pausing for thought, into the right of their image to be able to step freely into the sacred story itself, as a spectator or even as a participant in the legend.' Ibid., p. 97.

215 'By permitting votive offerings to sacred images the catholic church ... had left its once pagan flock with a legitimate means of expressing the ineradicable and primal religious impulse to approach the divine, as expressed in the tangible form of a human image, either in person, or through one's own effigy.' Ibid., p. 99.

216 'No longer kept at a distance by the remoteness of church art, the patron and amateur now had a proprietary interest: here was something for him to collect. Freed from its ecclesiastical context, the panel painting raised the humble donor from his knees and put him in command.' *WGS*, p. 189.

217 Benjamin, *GS*, I p. 485.

218 Kemp (1978) p. 251.

219 ' ... it is tempting to speculate that epochs that tend toward allegorical expression have experienced a crisis of aura.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 462.

220 'The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers the last refuge for the cult value of the picture.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 485.

221 'It is the same with our own past. In vain we try to conjure it up again; the efforts of our intellect are futile.' Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann* (Paris, 1954) p. 58. Cited in Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 610.

222 See Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, I, p. 140 ff.

223 Julius von Schlosser, *Tote Blicke. Geschichte der Porträtbildnerei in Wachs*, ed. Thomas Medicus (Berlin, [1910] 1993) p. 17 ff.

224 ' ... sinks its traces into the life of the storyteller ... Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story as the handprints of the potter to the clay of the vessel.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 447.

225 ' ... dry dwellers of eternity ... ' Ibid., p. 449.

226 ' ... which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world.' Ibid., p. 451.

227 Ibid., p. 260.

228 'hopelessness of the earthly condition.' Ibid.

229 '[The past] is hidden in some material object beyond its domain and outside its reach (in the experience gained from this material object) that we don't suspect.' Proust, op. cit., p. 58.

230 ' ... time-space (a time-dream) in which ... the collective consciousness sinks into ever deeper sleep.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 491.

231 'The now of recognition is the moment of awakening.' Benjamin, V, p. 608.

232 ' ... a phenomenon of nature with which a new dream came over Europe and, with it a reactivation of mythic powers.' Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 494.

233 'Acting methodically, one should begin by investigating the links between myth and money throughout the course of history, to the point where money had drawn so many elements from Christianity that it could establish its own myth.' Benjamin, *GS*, VI, p. 102.

234 'History is the object of a construction, whose place is not homogeneous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now. Thus to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 701. The resurrection of the iconography of Rome in the French revolution was first used as an example of historical correspondences by Nietzsche. Nietzsche notes: 'Man kann den Grad des historischen Sinnes, welchen eine Zeit besitzt, daran abschätzen, wie diese Zeit Uebersetzungen macht und vergangene Zeiten und Bücher sich einzuverleiben sucht. Die Franzosen Corneille's und auch noch die der Revolution, bemächtigten sich des römischen

Altertums in einer Weise, zu der wir nicht den Muth mehr hätten … ' ('One can infer the level of historical sense of an age from the way it makes *translations* and seeks to absorb past times and books. In the age of Corneille and even of the revolution the French appropriated Roman antiquity in a way we would no longer have the courage to … '). Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft' § 83, in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed., G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin, 1988) 3, p. 438.

235 Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 577.

236 Benjamin, *GS*, V, p. 587.

237 'The historical materialist approaches a historical subject only when he encounters it as a monad.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 703.

238 Richard Semon, *Die Mneme als erhaltendes Prinzip im Wechsel des organischen Geschehens* (Leipzig, 1904).

239 Dorothée Bauerle, *Gespenstergeschichten für ganz Erwachsene* (Münster, 1988) p. 38.

240 'It is in the area of orgiastic mass seizure that one should look for the mint that stamps the expression of extreme emotional seizure on the memory … with such intensity that the engrams of the experience of suffering live on as an inheritance preserved in the memory.' Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.1, p. 6.

241 See, for example, 'Grundbegriffe': 'Problem der Funktion des collectivenpersönlichen Gedächtnisses' ('Problem of the function of the collective personal memory'). Warburg Archive, 102.3.1, p. 30.

242 'Worauf gründet sich die Überlebenskraft der aktiven dynamischen Ausdruckswertprägung? Sie gehör[t] religiösen Massenerlebnissen leidschaftlicher Arten, die eine Totalergriffenheit von Leib u. Seele von unübertroffener Intensität erwirkten … ' ('Where do active and dynamic expressive values, once minted, draw the power to survive from ? It comes from the passionate mass religious experience, which effected an entire seized of body and soul with unsurpassed intensity … '). Ibid., p. 32.

243 'The substrate is formed from engrams, either current ones or from the past, on the basis of collective memory.' Ibid., p. 43.

244 Warburg touches on a key philosophical issue here, and one that I have deliberately skirted around until now. His view of self-consciousness as an *achievement* restates a philosophical commonplace that can be traced back to Hegel. At the same time, the empathy theory and anthropological theories of mimesis that inform his thinking ensure that his understanding contradicts

Hegel in a crucial way. For Hegel the primary form of perception – sense certainty – is devoid of reflexive determination, and self-consciousness is only achieved through a moment of crisis (the master-slave dialectic) in which the conscious subject is confronted by another conscious subject that refuses to be a simple objectified Other. Communal 'Geist' only comes into being when the solitary subject has learnt to exist in a reciprocal relation with other subjects. In contrast, for Warburg (as for Benjamin) the primal mode of perception is to view even inanimate nature as conscious: to project social relations onto nature. Self-consciousness only emerges once the subject has learnt to objectify the Other, to treat is as a neutral datum, and hence to turn the same eye on itself. The final result is similar, but the logic of the process is the reverse.

245 'Ist doch Rausch die Erfahrung, in welcher wir allein des Allernächsten und des Allerfernsten, und nie des einen ohne des anderen, uns versichern. Das will aber sagen, daß rauschhaft mit dem Kosmos der Mensch nur in der Gemeinschaft kommunizieren kann.' ('For it is in the experience of intoxication alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest and furthest from us, and never the one without the other. This means, however, that only communally can man be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos'). Benjamin, *GS*, IV, pp. 146-7.

246 'For every artist intending to assert his individuality … the compulsion to enter into critical engagement with the world of pre-established forms and expressive values presents a crisis of decisive significance.' *Mnemosyne*, Introduction, p. 10.

247 Warburg notes, 'Machen wir nicht denselben schweren politischen Fehler wie die Sozialdemokratie, die durch feindlichen mechanischen Massendruck erreichen will, was nur durch gemeinschaftliche Vernunft zu erreichen ist' ('Let us not make the same grave political error as that of social democracy, which aims to obtain through the hostile mechanical pressure of the masses what can only be attained by communal reason'). Cited in Diers, op. cit., p. 164.

248 'The artistic interest of scholars is not free of political, social and practical undercurrents[implicit and therefore having all the greater impact] which instinctively … contradict the historical way of viewing things.' Warburg, 'Festwesen,' p. 125. The deletions are those of Warburg himself.

249 'The composed viewer of the work of art becomes immersed in it.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 504.

250 'The process of de-demonising the inherited mass of impressions coined in fear.' 'Mnemosyne Introduction,' Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.1, p. 4.

251 'The inherited consciousness of maximised impressions stamped on the mind (engram) passes them on without regard for the direction of the emotional charge of this experience of energy held in tension.' Cited in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 249.

252 ' ... the international mass migration of pre-coined dynamograms ... ' Warburg Archive, No. 102.4, 10.

253 'Botticelli's images of Venus ... aim to release the goddess from her dual bondage - mythological and astrological - and restore her to Olympian freedom.' *WGS*, p. 478.

254 ' ... the constantly renewed contact with the monuments of the past ... ' Warburg Archive, No. 96.3, 'Schluss' p. 2.

255 Wolfgang Kemp (1975) p. 17 ff. Kemp refers in particular to Halbwachs, *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (Paris, 1925).

256 'When we recall a memory ... we link it to others around it: in truth it is due to other souvenirs connected with it which exist around us, in the objects and things amongst which we live, or in us ourselves: points of contact in space and time, historical, geographical, biographical and political ideas ... ' Halbwachs, *Les Cadres Sociaux*, p. 52.

257 On the relation of gesture and memory see Jan Vansina, 'Initiation Rituals of the Bushong,' in *Africa*, XXV (1955) pp. 138-53.

258 Kurt Forster, 'Die Hamburg Amerika Linie, oder Warburgs Kunstwissenschaft zwischen den Kontinenten,' in Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers, Charlotte Schoell-Glass, eds., *Aby Warburg. Akten des Internationalen Symposiums* (Hamburg, 1991) pp. 11-37.

259 As Freud states, 'Man wolle bloß beachten, daß unsere Lehre nicht auf der Würdigung des manifesten Trauminhalts beruht, sondern sich auf den Gedankeninhalt bezieht, welcher durch die Deutungsarbeit hinter dem Traum erkannt wird. Stellen wir *manifesten* und *latenten Trauminhalt* einander gegenüber.' ('One may wish to take note that our theory is not based on an evaluation of the manifest content of the dream, but relates to the thought content behind the dream discerned by the work of interpretation. We must place the manifest and latent content of the dream in opposition to one another'). Freud, *Die Traumdeutung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1991) p. 148.

260 'The dream becomes *centred*, as it were, *elsewhere*, the axis of its content ordered around different elements from those of the dream thoughts.' Ibid., pp. 309-10.

261 'Die Verschiebung erfolgt in der Regel nach der Richtung, daß ein farbloser und abstrakter Ausdruck des Traumgedankens gegen einen bildlichen und konkreten eingetauscht wird' ('The usual tendency of displacement is towards the exchange of a colourless and abstract expression for a concrete, metaphorical one'). Ibid., p. 342.

262 'The choice of symbol then seems an enigma.' Ibid., p. 353.

263 Freud, 'Das Unbewußte' in *Das Ich und das Es. Metapsychologische Schriften* (Frankfurt a. M., 1998) pp. 119-53.

264 ' ... a substitutive idea which, on the one hand, is connected by association with the rejected idea, and, on the other, has escaped repression by reason of its distance from that idea, and permitted a rationalisation of the still uninhibitable development of anxiety.' Ibid., p. 134.

265 'Notiz über den "Wunderblock",' in Freud, *Das Ich und das Es*, pp. 313-18.

266 'One can compare the critic with the palaeographer, in front of a parchment whose faded text is covered by the lineaments of a more powerful script which refers to that text. As the palaeographer would have to begin by reading the latter script, the critic would have to begin with the commentary.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 125.

267 'Trauer und Melancholie,' in ibid., pp. 173-89.

268 'The object cathexis was negated, but the liberated libido was not displaced onto another object but rather was withdrawn into the ego. It found no purpose there, however, other than to serve to produce an identification of the ego with the negated object.' Ibid., p. 179.

269 Freud, 'Jenseits des Lustprinzips' in ibid., pp. 193-249.

270 'To blow apart the continuum of history.' Benjamin, *GS*, I, p. 701.

271 See Benjamin, *GS*, II, p. 307.

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138

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