

**Atlas, or  
the  
Anxious  
Gay  
Science**

**Georges  
Didi-Huberman**

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*Translated by Shane Lillis*

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*It always happens,  
Bitter presence,  
It is a hard moment to pass!  
And there is no remedy.  
Why?  
You cannot know why.  
You cannot look at it.  
Barbarians!  
Everything is askew,  
I saw it!  
That too,  
And that too.  
Cruel misfortune!  
What madness!  
There is no use in crying out,  
That is the worst of all!  
Truth is dead.  
And if it came back to life?*

F. GOYA, *Los Desastres de la guerra* (1810–20)

*What is the Universal?  
The single case.  
What is the Particular?  
Millions of cases.*

J. W. GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder Die Entsagenden* (2nd version, 1829), in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, ed. G. Neumann and H.-G. Dewitz (Frankfurt-am-Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 576

We, open-handed and rich in spirit, standing by the road like open wells with no intention to fend off anyone who feels like drawing from us—we unfortunately do not know how to defend ourselves where we want to; we have no way of preventing people from darkening us: the time in which we live throws into us what is most time-bound; its dirty birds drop their filth into us; boys their gewgaws; and exhausted wanderers who come to us for rest, their little and large miseries. But we shall do what we have always done: whatever one casts into us, we take down into our depths—for we are deep, we do not forget—and become bright again.

F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann  
(New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 340

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# I. Disparates

“Reading What Was Never Written”



## The Inexhaustible, or Knowledge through Imagination

I imagine that, upon opening this book, my reader already knows what an atlas is, practically speaking. He probably has one on the bookshelf. But has he “read” it? Probably not. You don’t “read” an atlas in the same way you read a novel, a history book, or a philosophical essay, from the first page to the last. Moreover, an atlas often begins—we will soon be able to verify this—in an arbitrary or problematic way, which is quite unlike the beginning of a story or the premise of an argument; and as for the end, it often reveals the emergence of a new country, a new zone of knowledge to be explored, to the extent that an atlas almost never has what we might call a definitive form. Furthermore, an atlas is hardly made up of “pages” in the usual sense of the term, but rather of tables, or of plates on which images are arranged, plates that we consult with a particular aim, or that we leaf through at leisure, letting our “will to knowledge” wander from image to image and from plate to plate. Experience shows that, more often than not, we use an atlas in a way that combines those two apparently dissimilar gestures: We open it, first, to look for precise information. But once we find that information, we do not necessarily put the atlas down; rather, we follow different pathways this way and that. We do not close the collection of plates until we have wandered a while, erratically, with no particular intention, through its forest, its labyrinth, its treasure. Until the next time, which will be just as fruitful or useless.

We can understand, through the evocation of this dual and paradoxical use, that the atlas, behind its utilitarian and inoffensive appearance, may well appear to anyone who looks at it attentively to be a duplicitous, dangerous, and even explosive—albeit an inexhaustibly generous—object. In a word, it is a mine. The atlas is a visual form of knowledge, a knowledgeable form of seeing. Yet, by combining, overlapping, or implicating the two paradigms assumed in its expression—an aesthetic paradigm of the visual form, an epistemic paradigm of knowledge—the atlas actually subverts the canonical forms



in which each of these paradigms tried to find its own excellence and even its fundamental condition of existence. The great Platonic tradition promised an epistemic model founded on the preeminence of the Idea: True knowledge supposes, in this context, that an intelligible sphere was extracted beforehand from—or purified of—the sensible space, of images therefore, where phenomena appear to us. In modern versions of this tradition, things (*Sachen*, in German) find their reasons, their explanations, and their algorithms only in causes (*Ursachen*) that are correctly formulated and deduced, for example, in the language of mathematics.

In short, this would be the standard form of all rational knowledge, of all science. It is remarkable that Plato's mistrust of artists—those dangerous “image-makers,” those manipulators of appearance—did not prevent the humanist aesthetic from embracing the prestige of the Idea, as Erwin Panofsky showed.<sup>1</sup> This is how Leon Battista Alberti in his *De pictura* was able to reduce the notion of tableau to the rhetorical technique of a periodic sentence, a “correct phrase” in which each superior element would develop logically—ideally—from those of an inferior order: The surfaces engender the members that engender the bodies represented in the same way that in a periodic sentence the words engender the propositions that engender the “clauses” or “groups” of propositions.<sup>2</sup> In modern versions of this tradition, which we find, for example, in the modernism of Clement Greenberg or, more recently, of Michael Fried, the higher reason for the tableaux is found in the enclosure of their spatial, temporal, and semiotic frames, to the extent that the ideal rapport between things and causes (*Sache* and *Ursache*) maintains its force of law intact.

As a visual form of knowledge or a knowledgeable form of seeing, the atlas disrupts all these frames of intelligibility. It introduces a fundamental impurity—but also an exuberance, a remarkable fecundity—that these models had been designed to avert. Against all epistemic purity, the atlas introduces the sensible dimension into knowledge, the diverse, and the incomplete character of each image. Against any aesthetic purity, it introduces the multiple, the diverse, the hybridity of any montage. Its tables of images appear to us before any page of a story, a syllogism, or a definition, but also before any tableau, whether we understand this word in its artistic sense (the unity of the beautiful figure enclosed in its frame) or in its scientific

sense (the logical exhaustion of all possibilities definitively organized into X axes and Y coordinates).

Immediately, therefore, the atlas bursts the frames. It bursts the self-proclaimed certainties of a science that is so sure of its truths, as it does of art that is sure of its criteria. It invents, between all of this, interstitial zones of exploration, heuristic intervals. It deliberately ignores definitive axioms. For it has to do with a theory of knowledge devoted to the risk of the sensible and an aesthetic devoted to the risk of disparity. It deconstructs, with its very exuberance, the ideals of uniqueness, of specificity, of purity, of logical exhaustion. It is a tool, not the logical exhaustion of possibilities given, but the inexhaustible opening to possibilities that are not yet given. Its principle, its motor, is none other than the imagination. Imagination: a dangerous word if anything (as is, already, the word *image*). But it is necessary to join Goethe, Baudelaire, or Walter Benjamin<sup>3</sup> in saying that the imagination, however disconcerting it is, has nothing to do with any personal or gratuitous fantasy. On the contrary, it gives us a knowledge that cuts across—by its intrinsic potential of montage consisting in discovering—in the very place where it refuses the links created by obviated resemblances, links that direct observation cannot discern:

The Imagination is not fantasy; nor is it sensibility, even though it is difficult to conceive of an imaginative man who would not be sensitive. The Imagination is a quasi-divine faculty which perceives first of all, outside of philosophical methods, the intimate and secret relations of things, the correspondences and the analogies. The honors and functions that he confers on this faculty give it a value such . . . that a wise man without imagination now only appears like a false wise man, or at least like an incomplete wise man.<sup>4</sup>

The imagination accepts the multiple (and even revels in it). Not in order to summarize the world or to schematize it in a formula of subsumption: This is how an atlas differs from a breviary or from a doctrinal summary. Nor to catalogue the world or to exhaust it in an integral list: This is how the atlas differs from a catalogue and even from a supposedly integral archive. The imagination accepts the multiple and constantly renews it in order to detect therein new “intimate and secret relations,” new “correspondences and analogies” that would be

inexhaustible themselves, as is every thinking about relations that a new montage might show.

The inexhaustible: There are so many things, so many words, so many images all over the world! A dictionary dreams of being their catalogue, ordered according to an immutable and definitive principle (the principle of the alphabet). The atlas, in contrast, is guided only by changing and provisional principles, ones that can make new relations appear inexhaustibly—far more numerous than the terms themselves—between things or words that nothing seemed to have brought together before.

So, if I look up the word *atlas* in the dictionary, then normally nothing else should interest me, beyond any words that might have a direct resemblance to that word, or some visible relation: In the French dictionary I might see, for example, *atlante* (meaning “atlas,” the architectural term for a support in the shape of a man) or *atlantique* (the ocean). But if I begin to look at the double-page spread of the dictionary, open before me like a plate in which I could find “intimate and secret relations” between the French words *atlas* and, for example, *atoll*, *atome*, *atelier* (“workshop” or “studio”), or, in the other direction, *astuce* (“trick”), *asymétrie*, or *asymbolie*, it is then that I will have started to deflect the very principle of the dictionary toward a very hypothetical and very adventurous atlas-principle.

The little experiment I have described here somewhat resembles a child’s game: A child would be asked to select a word in the dictionary, and he would be drawn to the pleasure of a transversal and imaginative use of the reading. The child is no better behaved than the images (from which comes the falseness and hypocrisy of the French dictum “*sage comme une image*”).<sup>5</sup> He doesn’t read in order to grasp the meaning of a specific thing, but rather to link this thing with many other things, imaginatively. There would be two ways, therefore, two uses of reading: a strict way of searching for the messages, and an imaginative way of searching for montages. The dictionary offers us perhaps a tool for the first of these searches, and the atlas certainly offers us an apparatus for the second.

Walter Benjamin has shown better than anyone else the risk—and the richness—of this ambivalence. No one has better revealed the “legibility” (*Lesbarkeit*) of the world to the imminent, phenomenological or historical conditions of the very “visibility” (*Anschaulich-*

*keit*) of things, thereby anticipating the monumental work of Hans Blumenberg on this problem.<sup>6</sup> No one has better liberated reading from the purely linguistic, rhetorical, or argumentative mode that we generally associate with it. Reading the world is something far too fundamental to be confined to books alone or to be confined within them, for to read the world is also to link up the things of the world according to their “intimate and secret relations,” their “correspondences,” and their “analogies.” Not only do images offer themselves to our sight like crystals of historical “legibility,”<sup>7</sup> but every reading—even the reading of a text—must take account of the powers of resemblance: “The nexus of meaning of words or sentences is the bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears” between things.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, we could say that the atlas of images is a reading machine in the wide sense that Benjamin gave to the concept of *Lesbarkeit*. It enters into a whole constellation of apparatuses, from the “reading box” (*Lesekasten*) to the large-format camera and the video camera, as well as to cabinets of curiosities or, more trivially, those shoeboxes filled with postcards that we can still find today in stalls in old Parisian arcades. The atlas would be an apparatus for reading before anything else, that is, before any “serious” reading or any reading “in the strict sense”: It is an object of knowledge and of contemplation for children, both the childhood of science and the childhood of art. This is what Benjamin appreciated in illustrated alphabet primers, in building sets, and in children’s books.<sup>9</sup> And this is what he wished to understand on a more fundamental (anthropological) level when he evoked, in a magnificent phrase, the act of “reading what was never written” (*was nie geschrieben wurde, lesen*). “Such reading,” he adds, “is the most ancient: reading prior to all languages.”<sup>10</sup>

But the atlas also offers all the resources for what we could call a reading after all. The human sciences—anthropology, psychology, and the history of art, in particular—underwent, in the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth, a major upheaval in which “knowledge through imagination” played a decisive role, no less than knowledge of the imagination and of images themselves. This ranged from Georg Simmel’s work in sociology, which paid close attention to “forms,” to Marcel Mauss’s work in anthropology, from Sigmund Freud’s work in psychoanalysis (in which clinical observation arranged in a “tableau” made room for the labyrinth of “associa-

tions of ideas,” transfers, displacements of images and of symptoms) to the “iconology of intervals” in the work of Aby Warburg. Warburg’s iconology was founded on the hypothesis of “co-naturality, the natural coalescence of the word and the image” (*die natürliche Zusammengehörigkeit von Wort und Bild*),<sup>11</sup> which appears not just contemporary with the Benjaminian *Lesbarkeit* but also intimately concomitant. It was an iconology whose ultimate project was the creation of an atlas: Warburg’s famous collection of *Mnemosyne* images, which will be our point of departure as much as our leitmotif.<sup>12</sup>

## Heritage of Our Time: The *Mnemosyne* Atlas

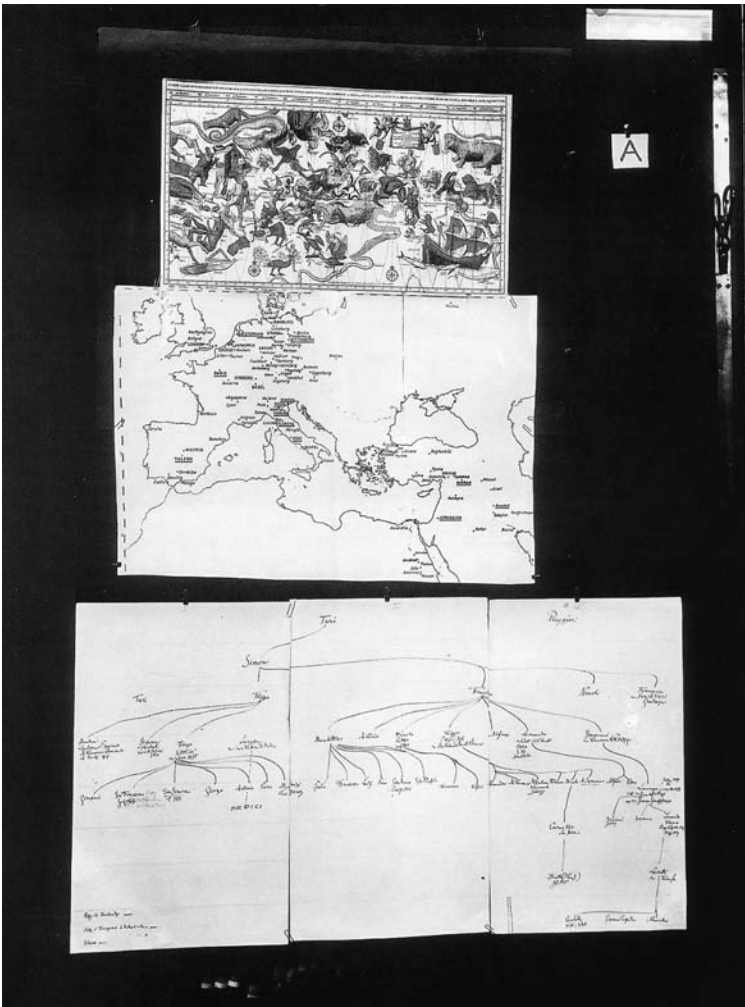
By paraphrasing Ernst Bloch’s *Heritage of Our Times*, we can consider the atlas form—like montage, from which it developed—to be the treasure trove of images and thoughts that remains to us of the “crumbled coherence” of the modern world.<sup>13</sup> Since Warburg’s work, the atlas has not only modified profoundly the forms—and therefore the content—of all “cultural sciences” or human sciences,<sup>14</sup> but also incited a great number of artists to completely rethink, as a collection and a *re-montage* or “piecing together again,” the modalities according to which the visual arts are elaborated and presented today.<sup>15</sup> From the dadaist *Handatlas*, Hannah Höch’s *Album*, Karl Blossfeldt’s *Arbeitscollagen*, or Marcel Duchamp’s *Box in a Suitcase*, to Marcel Broodthaers’s *Atlas*, that of Gerhard Richter, Christian Boltanski’s *Inventories*, Sol LeWitt’s photographic montages, or Hans-Peter Feldmann’s *Album*, the whole armature of a pictorial tradition has been broken apart. Thus, far from the single tableau, closed on itself, bearing grace or genius—including the heightened implication of “masterpiece”<sup>16</sup>—certain artists and thinkers have endeavored to come back to the simpler but more disparate “table.” A tableau may be sublime, a “table” will probably never be so.

An offering table, a table for cooking, a dissecting table, or a montage table . . . atlas table or “plate” (*lámina* in Spanish, but the French *planche*, like *Tafel* in German or *tavola* in Italian, has the advantage of suggesting a certain relation with the domestic object as well as with the notion of tableau). Like the imprint—that ageless procedure that so many of our contemporaries have systematically explored since

Marcel Duchamp<sup>17</sup>—we can surmise that in order to invent a future beyond the tableau and its great tradition, it would be necessary to return to the more modest table and to its unthought survivals or relics. The atlas is an anachronistic object, in the sense that heterogeneous times are constantly at work together in it: “reading before all else” with “reading after all,” as I said before, but also, for example, the technical reproducibility of the photographic age with the oldest uses of that domestic object called the “table.” I remember, during the structuralist period, how they used to talk a lot about the tableau as an “inscription surface”: Indeed, it sets up its authority by means of a durable inscription, a spatial enclosure, a verticality that overhangs the wall on which it is hung, a cultural object’s temporal permanence.

The tableau would therefore be the inscription of a work (the *grandissima opera del pittore*, as Alberti wrote)<sup>18</sup> that seeks to be definitive in the eyes of history. The table itself is only the prop for a work that must always be taken up again, modified, or even started over. It is only the surface of meetings and of passing arrangements: On it we alternately place and get rid of everything that its “work plane” greets without any hierarchy. The uniqueness of the tableau makes room, on a table, for the constantly renewed opening of possibilities, new meetings, new multiplicities, and new configurations. The crystal-like beauty of the tableau—its centripetal found beauty proudly fixed, like a trophy, on the vertical plane of the wall—makes room, on the table, for the broken beauty of configurations that arise in it, from centrifugal beauties-as-finds moving indefinitely on the horizontal plane of its plateau. In Lautréamont’s famous phrase, “Beautiful like the fortuitous meeting on a dissecting table between a sewing machine and an umbrella,” the two surprising objects, the sewing machine and the umbrella, are not what is most important; what matters is the support for engagements that defines the table itself as a resource of beauties or new knowledge—analytic knowledge, knowledge through cuts, re-framings, or “dissections.”<sup>19</sup>

By bringing together a geographical map of Europe and the Middle East, a collection of fabulous animals associated with the constellations in the sky, and the genealogical tree of a family of Florentine bankers, all on the same preliminary plate of his *Mnemosyne* atlas,<sup>20</sup> Aby Warburg probably did not think he was doing the work of a “surrealist” historian (fig. 1). Nonetheless, what appears on his plate—his



1. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927-29), pl. A. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

little “work table” or montage table—is no less than the very complexity of cultural facts that his whole atlas seeks to account for, throughout Western history. The few words Warburg chose to introduce the question did not seek to simplify the inexhaustible element of his task: There is, he said, a great “diversity in the systems of re-

lations in which man is engaged” (*verschiedene Systeme von Relationen, in die der Mensch eigestellt ist*) and which is presented by magical thinking (*im magischen Denken*) in the form of an “amalgam” (*Ineinssetzung*).<sup>21</sup> From the beginning, Warburg expressed in his atlas a fundamental complexity—of an anthropological order—which was not to be synthesized (in a unifying concept) or to be described exhaustively (in an integral archive), or to be classed from A to Z (in a dictionary). Instead, it was a question of making appear, through the meeting of three dissimilar images, certain “intimate and secret relations,” certain “correspondences” capable of offering a transversal knowledge of this inexhaustible historical complexity (the genealogical table), the geographical complexity (the map), and the imaginary complexity (the zodiac animals).

If it is true that the *Mnemosyne* atlas is an important part of our heritage—an aesthetic heritage since it invents a form, a new manner of placing images together; an epistemic heritage since it inaugurates a new genre of knowledge<sup>22</sup>—and if it is true that it continues to mark profoundly our contemporary ways of producing, exposing, and understanding images, then we cannot, before we even outline its archaeology or explore its fecundity, remain silent regarding its fundamental fragility. The Warburgian atlas is an object thought on a bet. It is the bet that images, collected in a certain manner, would offer us the possibility—or better still, the inexhaustible resource—of a rereading of the world. To reread the world is to link the disparate pieces differently, to redistribute the dissemination, which is a way of orienting and interpreting it, no doubt, but also of respecting it, of going over it again or reediting and piecing it together again without thinking we are summarizing or exhausting it. But how is this practically possible?

No doubt it would be necessary, with regard to the famous Warburgian dictum, “The Good Lord nestles in detail” (*der liebe Gott steckt im Detail*), to add the following, which dialectizes it: A little devil always nestles in the atlas, that is to say, in the space of “intimate and secret relations” between things or between figures. A devilish genie lies somewhere in the imaginative construction of the “correspondences” and the “analogies” between particular details. Is there not a certain madness inherent in each great wager? Does it not support, at bottom, all the undertakings set out at the risk of the imagination?



Such is the *Mnemosyne* atlas. Warburg first imagined it in 1905,<sup>23</sup> but did not begin its actual construction until 1924, that is to say, at the precise moment when the historian was just about emerging from—while going over again and reediting or piecing together again—and overcoming a psychosis.<sup>24</sup> The *Bilderatlas*, for Warburg, was neither a simple aide-mémoire, nor a “summary by images” of his thinking; instead, it offered an apparatus for putting thought back into movement where history had stopped, and where words were still lacking. It was the matrix of a desire to reconfigure memory by refusing to fix memories—images of the past—in an ordered or, worse, a definitive narrative. It remained unfinished upon Warburg’s death in 1929.

The fact that the configurations of images can always be changed around in the *Mnemosyne* atlas is a sign in itself of the heuristic fecundity and the intrinsic madness of such a project. Finite analysis (for *Mnemosyne* uses only about a thousand images in total, which is very few in relation to the life of an art historian and, more concretely, in relation to the photographic archive made by Warburg with the help of Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing) and infinite analysis at the same time (since we can always find new relations, new “correspondences” between these photographs). We know that Warburg attached the images of the atlas with little pegs on a black canvas stretched out on a frame—a “table,” therefore—before taking or having someone else take a photograph, obtaining in this way a possible “table” or plate of his atlas, after which he could dismember or destroy the initial “tableau” and begin another one, to destroy that in turn.

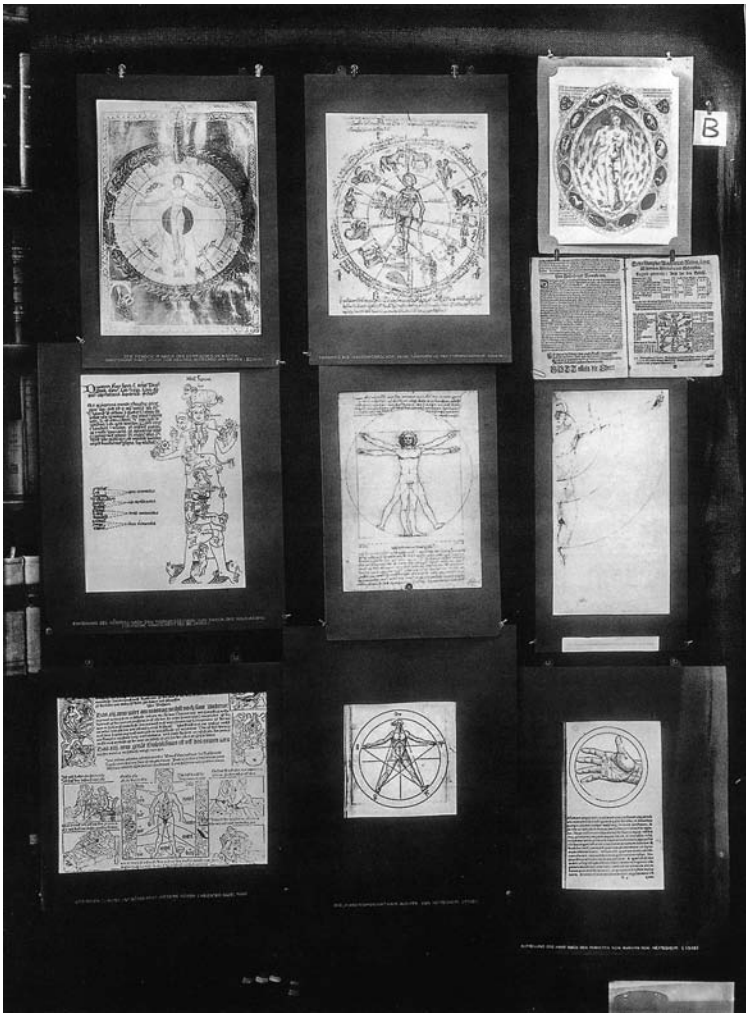
Such is, therefore, our heritage, the heritage of our time. In a sense, this is the madness of excess: proliferating tables, an ostensible challenge to all categorizing reason, in short, Sisyphean work. But it is also wisdom and knowledge, in another sense: Warburg had understood that thought has to do not with forms found but with the transformation of forms. It is a matter of perpetual “migrations” (*Wanderungen*), as he liked to say. He had understood that dissociation is liable to analyze, to go over again and reedit and piece together again, to reread the history of man. *Mnemosyne* saved him from his madness, from the “fleeting ideas” so well analyzed by his psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger.<sup>25</sup> But, at the same time, his ideas continued to “stream out” uselessly, like dialectical images, from the shock or the assembling of particularities. Neither an absolutely mad disorder

nor a very wise layout, the *Mnemosyne* atlas assigns to montage the capacity to produce, through the meetings of images, a dialectical knowledge of Western culture, that constantly renewed tragedy—renewed and therefore without synthesis—between reason and unreason, or, as Warburg said, between what lifts us toward the sky of the mind (*astra*) and what precipitates us again into the abyss of the body (*monstra*).

## Visceral, Sidereal, or How to Read the Liver of a Sheep

“To read what was never written”: The imagination is first of all—anthropologically—what makes us capable of casting a bridge between the most distant and most heterogeneous orders of reality. *Monstra, astra*: visceral things and sidereal things gathered on the same table or on the same plate. Walter Benjamin no doubt did not know the montages of Warburg’s *Mnemosyne*, but he described exactly the same fundamental motives when, in his essay “On the Mimetic Faculty”—a subject that was obviously shared by the two thinkers—he evoked the “reading before all language [*das Lesen vor aller Sprache*]” by stating where it occurs: in the “entrails, in the stars, or dances [*aus den Eingeweiden, den Sternen oder Tänzen*].”<sup>26</sup> Dances, human gestures in general, make up the essential, the center of Warburg’s collection conceived from the beginning as an atlas of the “formulae of pathos [*Pathosformeln*],” those fundamental gestures transmitted—and transformed—to us from antiquity: gestures of love, gestures of combat, gestures of triumph and of subservience, of elevation or of falling, of hysteria and of melancholy, of grace and of ugliness, of desire in movement and of petrified terror . . .

Man, then, is indeed at the center of the *Mnemosyne* atlas within the contrasted energy of his thoughts, his gestures, and his passions. But Warburg would have taken care to make that energy appear on a background that designated the conflicting limit, the unthought, the zone of nonknowledge, with *astra* on one side, *monstra* on the other. On the one hand, man goes about under an infinite sky of which he knows very little, and that is why the preliminary plates of the atlas are given to sidereal-anthropomorphic correspondence, that is, the “transferring of the cosmic system onto man [*Abtragung des kosm-*



2. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. B. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

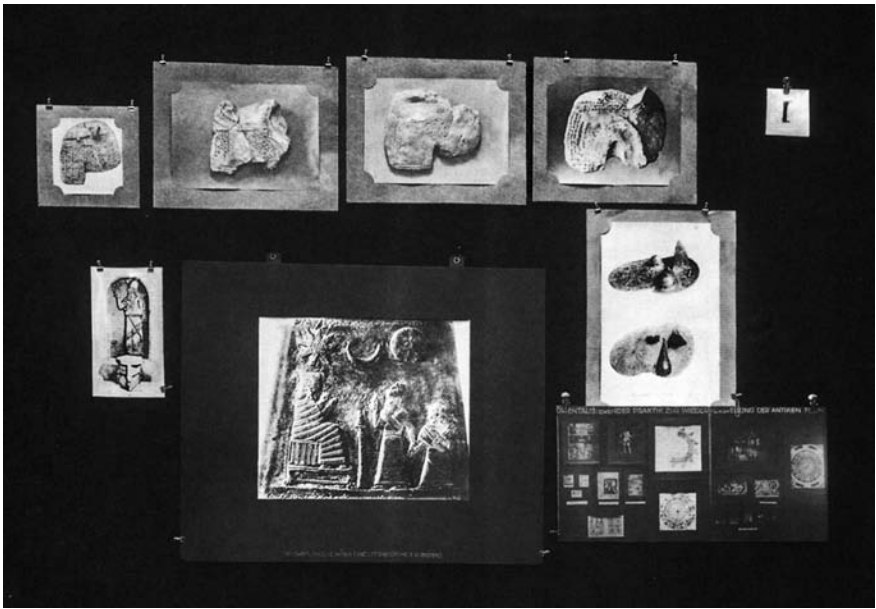
*ischen Systems auf der Menschen]*” (fig. 2).<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, we have the symmetrical abysses of the visceral world, with man going about on the earth without understanding exactly what moves him from the inside: his own “monsters.” And the atlas suggests that there is no human gesture without psychic conversion, no conversation



3. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 1. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

without organic humors, nor any humor without the secret entrails that, indeed, secrete it.

Plate 1 of *Mnemosyne* is, from this point of view, as surprising as it is significant (fig. 3). Surprising, because beside images that are so easily identifiable, like the astronomical or astrological figures of the sun, the moon, or Scorpio, beside the royal figures (Ashurbanipal, visible on the left) indicating perhaps the horizon or, at least, the po-



4. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 1 (detail). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

litical use of every representation of the world, at the very top of the plate five brutal things are put forward, five formless forms that the art historian of Western art will no doubt have some difficulty recognizing. One needs to look closely (fig. 4). We then see—but to do so we need to explore patiently certain zones of the extraordinary library made up by Warburg,<sup>28</sup> a “thought space [*Denkraum*]” in which nothing that he ever undertook can be separated—that it concerns antique, Babylonian or Etruscan representations of a sheep’s liver.

How strange . . . If the *Mnemosyne* atlas is a treasure of visual knowledge, the inheritance of our time, then one must acknowledge that the initial or even initiatory object of this inheritance—a prestigious inheritance, since it is the ground on which our very history of art in its long duration is played out—is found in a few sheep’s livers presented as the first “phrases,” so to speak, of a history of Western culture. The stupefying character of this introduction to the subject matter, at the top of plate 1 of *Mnemosyne*, would nevertheless have nothing arbitrary about it, were it not for the fact that Warburg

took the dark potencies of the imagination very seriously, on both the philosophical and anthropological levels.

First, those formless objects, strategically chosen by a historian of images, are neither insignificant nor simple objects. Their complexity has to do with their function as dialectical images: images destined to edit and piece together those heterogeneous spaces of the visceral folds, on the one hand, and the celestial sphere, on the other. Warburg dedicated a considerable part of his research to questions of astrology: Is not reading the movements of time in visual configurations—like the constellations of the stars—a fundamental paradigm for all knowledge that seeks to extract the intelligible from the sensible? And is this not, just to mention it, the principal work of any archaeologist, of any art historian? Whatever it is, Warburg spent a long time trying to understand the cultural importance of this astrological “pre-science,” or prescience, in the aesthetic history of the Renaissance,<sup>29</sup> as well as in its political and religious history.<sup>30</sup> And on the right-hand side of the plate, Warburg wanted to place within it, *mise en abyme*, or as a medallion, two plates that he had created in the context of an exhibition on ancient oriental astrology.<sup>31</sup> He was inspired at this time by the work of his friend Franz Boll, from whom he borrowed—and whose ideas he adapted to his own theoretical questions—the famous formula *per monstra ad sphaeram*.<sup>32</sup>

Second, the divinatory sheep’s livers were of interest to Warburg because they represented, in his view, an exemplary case of that historical and geographical mobility for which images are the privileged vehicles:<sup>33</sup> migratory images whose consideration makes every “artistic style” and every “national culture,” as we say incorrectly, an essentially hybrid, impure, and mixed entity. A mix or montage of things, of places, or of heterogeneous times. One of the most decisive contributions in the Warburgian history of art is found in his discovery, at the very heart of the most “classical” or most “measured” things the West has produced—referring to Greco-Roman art and the Italian Renaissance, respectively—a fundamental impurity linked to the great migratory movements that could only be brought to light by a *Kulturwissenschaft* worthy of that name, that is, one capable of reading the movements of spaces in each visual configuration.<sup>34</sup>

This is how, in order to account for the astrological frescoes of the Palazzo Schifanoia of Ferrara, Warburg understood that it was nec-

essary to pass not only through the obvious Greek and Latin traditions but also through those less obvious Arab branches, all in all a historical and geographical “corruption” observable in many other domains, and in perspective in particular.<sup>35</sup> Everything that happens at the heart of the artistic centers has to do also with those less visible threads woven by cultural migrations, so that one must go all the way to Baghdad or to Tehran, Jerusalem, or Babylon to grasp the extent of what has happened in Rome, Florence, or Amsterdam. It is to such a deterritorialized nomad knowledge that the fundamental impurity of images brings us, their vocation being to displace, their intrinsic nature to exist as montages. This is why, when Warburg seeks to show later in his atlas Rembrandt’s *Anatomy Lesson*, he begins by dissociating these lessons from their most obvious—scientific, Cartesian—signification by a montage of religious scenes and ancient evocations that might help us understand them from the perspective of a far-off survival (*survivance*) of “magical anatomy [*magische Anatomie*],”<sup>36</sup> as a way to remind us of the divinatory livers of the first plate.

The first of these, at the top left (fig. 4), is a liver in Babylonian clay now in the British Museum (fig. 5). It was probably made around 1700 BCE. The three others beside it, now in the museum of Near Eastern archaeology in Berlin, date from the first half of the fourteenth century BCE. They are fascinating and duplicitous objects, as are all dialectical images: They bring together at least two temporalities, two worlds, two orders of reality that everything normally moves apart. On the one hand, they are extremely realistic images—the sheep’s liver, for instance, is life-size, appearing more or less as it might have to a Babylonian “hepatoscope” who would have seen and touched it while placing the bloody organ on a table after removing it from the body of the animal killed moments before. A contemporary anatomist can, without any difficulty, see in it all the morphology of the organ: the dissymmetrical lobes (one of which is called the “quadrate lobe”) and the protuberance called the *processus pyramidalis*, the portal vein with its *porta hepatis*, above, as well as the gallbladder, which descends to the right. The numerous clay models discovered in the East by archaeologists all have this characteristic of anatomical precision.<sup>37</sup>

But, on the other hand, these objects are quite different from mere naturalistic representations. We understand this at once when



5. Anonymous Babylonian, "Divinatory Liver" (c. 1700 BCE), clay. London, British Museum. Photo: DR.

we note that the liver in the British Museum, like all the others, is covered in writing and divided into geometric zones punctuated by regular concavities, as though strategically placed on the whole surface of the object. The writing makes us think of a law or an engraved sentence, and the geometric distribution makes us think of a mysterious game of chess. In a fundamental study on Mesopotamian divinatory practices, Jean Bottéro shows that "deductive divination," as it is called, covered a considerable field, ranging from simple observation of natural phenomena—stars, meteors, eclipses, stones, plants, animals, and, of course, man himself, observed from his physiognomy to his dreams<sup>38</sup>—to a complex elaboration of artificial situations, such as the arrangement of pieces in a game of chance<sup>39</sup> (as we do today when we "pick a card" to make a prediction).

Liturgical divination, seen in the observation of the animal livers



sacrificed for the occasion, superimposes the artificial on the natural, the intelligible construction on sensible knowledge. This is why hepatoscopia mixes empirical precision (close vision, grafted onto the entrails) and symbolic proliferation (clairvoyance haunted by a whole dramatic art of far-away relations between the gods).<sup>40</sup> The clay livers are therefore like interfaces, operators of transformation between the visceral observed up close and the sidereal invoked from far away. They are inseparable, as much from the anatomical observation as from astrological and magical imagination.<sup>41</sup> For example, as Jean Nougayrol writes, citing a Babylonian inscription, “the Sun-God continued to write his wishes ‘in the stomach of the sheep.’ The spectacle of nature was a message that could be read.”<sup>42</sup> The folds of the animal body offered the possibility “to read what was never written” in the map of the sky and in the body of the gods.

The extispicious rituals—divination through the viscera—make up a bizarre mix in which gestures of the body toward the formless, bloody heap of organs torn from the animal’s body go along with a legal, religious, casuistic formalism in which writing ruled.<sup>43</sup> It operated on condition that the imagination and the image—meaning the clay model itself—edited or pieced together, memorized or relinked these diverse realities. In front of the statue of a god, the priests placed a table engraved with the question addressed to fate by some lord (in general, the king himself, for example, Ashurbanipal addressing the god Shamash). When the high priest burned and opened up the victim, he scrupulously assessed the condition of the entrails, as well as their colors, and then separated the liver from the carcass while inspecting the parts that surrounded it, which were called the “palace” of the liver. The soothsayer, or *bârû*, then placed the still warm organ on his left hand or on the table and noted all of its particularities. The knife then gave way to the stylus, since the *bârû* wrote down a long report on the basis of very precise formularies, something like the following:

There is a “place.” The “path” is dual. The one on the left crosses the one of the right: the enemy’s weapons will rage against the weapons of the King.—There is no *kal*. A protuberance is seen on the right side of the “place”: ruin of an army or a sanctuary.—The left portion of the gall-bladder is firm: your foot will crush the enemy.—The “finger” and

the “little finger” are normal. The back part of the liver is spoiled on the right: injury to the head, change of the army’s campaign plan.— The portion underneath is as follows: a *sa-ti* seat on the crown, the “finger” of the liver at the center, its base is insubstantial, the *kaskasu* is shiny, there are fifteen intestinal circumvolutions, the interior of the sheep is normal. To sum up: the “path” is dual; the one on the left crosses the one on the right; there is no *kal*; a “finger” on the side of the “place”; the back portion of the liver is spoiled on the right; a *sa-ti* is on the crown.—Total: five unfavorable signs. Not one favorable sign. It is unfavorable.<sup>44</sup>

The oriental custom of contemplating the livers torn from animals—let us remember that “to contemplate” means first of all to observe a natural reality by delimiting it like a *templum*, that is to say, like a strictly framed field of supernatural action delivering signs of prediction, so that looking at space becomes looking into time—this ritualized, casuistic, formal custom made it possible to “read what was never written.” But from there, it called on a whole dialectics of formless matter seen like a cartography of symptoms making room for an intense activity of interpretative writing. The table upon which the organic mass of the liver became image in the clay model that served as an aide-mémoire and an orientation manual, and then a writing tablet with writings that are at the same time diagnostic (meticulously descriptive) and prognostic (infinitely declining the “intimate and secret relations of things, the correspondences and the analogies” inherent in every observed particularity).

The Assyrian and Babylonian hepatoscopic literature is substantial. From the beginning of the second millennium, libraries were formed, and there are thousands of divinatory reports, collections of observations of the liver, and interpretative formulae. We can find, for example, two thousand documents for the Sargonid period alone, between 721 and 627 BCE.<sup>45</sup> Remarkable formulations appear everywhere, as in this example: “If, since the path is dual, [the two] embrace: revolt; the days will constantly get darker.”<sup>46</sup> The vocabulary is immense, precise and metaphoric at the same time: “presence” (*manzâzu*, the word that is no doubt the most frequent), “body,” “dangerous,” “lie,” “excrement,” “cake,” “lamentation,” “insect,” “upside-down,” “ruin,” “foundation,” “to rebel,” “interval,” “pustule,” “palace,”

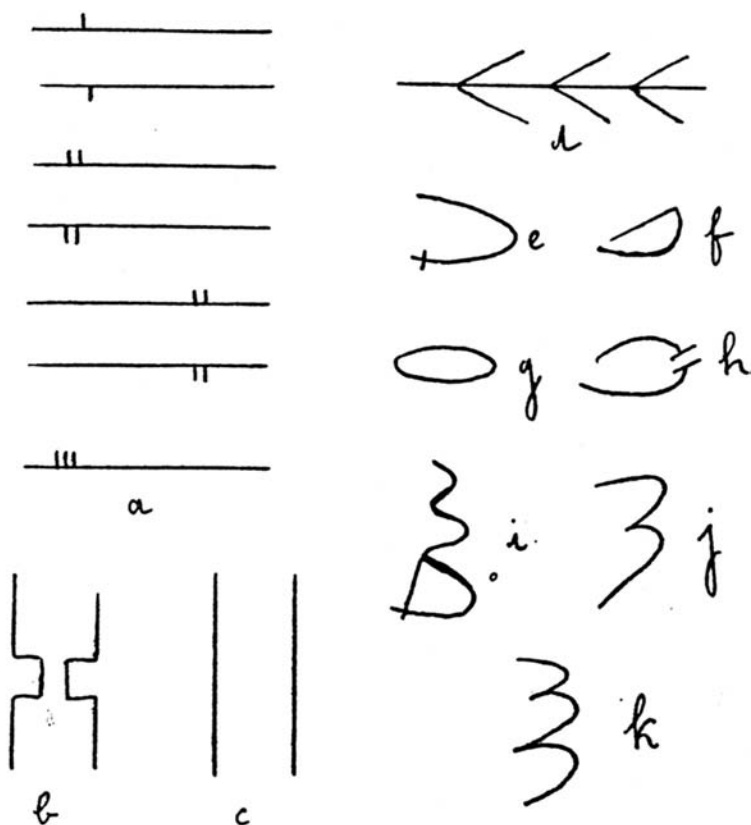
“similar to,” “side by side.”<sup>47</sup> The table of contents alone of a *Bârûtu* collection—which means “divination par excellence”—leaves us wondering:

I. Of the parts of the victim, other than the liver, the lungs, the intestine, for example, the spine and the ribs, the kidneys, etc.—II. Of the intestines [and more particularly, of the spiral colon].—III. Of the line and zone of the liver called Presence [divine].—III. Of another hepatic fissure, normally perpendicular to the preceding and which is called Path.—V. Of the “gastric face” of the liver, with its Crucible, its Fort, its Gates-of-the-Palace, its Peace.—VI. Of the Bitter [the gallbladder], previously called the Shepherd and which, since the beginning, is, with the Finger, the essential part.—VII. Of the Finger itself [the third lobe which is characteristic of the sheep’s liver].—VIII. Of the Weapon and other fortuitous marks.—IX. Of the lung in its different parts.—X. Of confrontation [or dialectics, which no longer studies “signs” taken separately, but the relations between them or with the exterior circumstances].<sup>48</sup>

The wording of the last chapter of this divinatory treatise reveals by itself the complexity and the great subtlety of the semiotic universe at work in the practices of extispicy. A whole theory of signs is deployed, beyond any simple universal or fixable rule in a dictionary. The imagination of relations opened onto all the possible correspondences, leaving chains of association to relink or to “reread” the organ outside of any fixed link between the sensible and intelligible signification.<sup>49</sup> The observation of particularities, for its part, did not dissociate the general nomenclature of signs and the circumstantial exception of symptoms.<sup>50</sup> Hence the particular importance of “fortuitous marks,” allowing for systems of graphic notations that created, as such, “atlases of particularities” detected in the livers of sacrificed animals (fig. 6).<sup>51</sup>

## Madness and Truths of the Incommensurable

By arranging, on the first plate of his *Mnemosyne* atlas, right beside the divinatory liver in the British Museum, three objects of the same



6. Anonymous Babylonian, "Anomalies of the Liver Drawn on Hepatoscopic Tablets." From G. Contenau, 1940, 242.

kind linked to the exchanges between Hittite and Babylonian civilizations (fig. 4), Aby Warburg probably intended to suggest the "migration [*Wanderung*]," both geographical and temporal, of the surprising practices I have just mentioned. Assyrian and Babylonian extispicy did, in fact, spread everywhere, from the Middle East—Egypt, the Kingdom of Suse, Canaan—to Greece, and as far as the Etruscan and Roman West.<sup>52</sup> This migration was strictly homogeneous with the astrology with which hepatoscopic divination has, as we have seen, fundamental links.<sup>53</sup> If the liver appears to have had particular value in such practices, this is also due to very much diffused psychophysics, which, in fact, in man himself, made the liver the organ of life and of

the soul par excellence.<sup>54</sup> (Of course, things would change noticeably when, in the fifth century BCE, Hippocrates redefined the heart as the seat of life.)

This is why, in the Semitic domain, we find a large number of formulae that transmit this very ancient psychophysical conception: from the song of the liver in the Psalms to certain rabbinic formulae regarding the human soul lodged in the liver.<sup>55</sup> And this continues again to the expression of later Arab poets, on the “liver broken and torn” by the pain of love or on the fruits of love—the children—who are formed “by the deepest blood of the liver.” One writes, for example: “The pain caused in my soul by your absence is salt thrown on my liver.” Another says that “the letter of desire . . . traces on my liver the lines that dictate my insomnia.”<sup>56</sup> Richard Onians emphasized the importance of the liver in *The Origins of European Thought*. He gives the example of Bion’s dirge for Adonis, in which Kypris demands “a kiss lasting ‘until from your soul your breath flows into my mouth and into my liver.’”<sup>57</sup>

The liver is, therefore, for the Greeks also, at the center of relations between the body and the soul. It is associated with *phrèn*, which signifies first of all the diaphragm—because it envelops the liver, but also because it separates the heart and lungs from the lower viscera—and then the spiritual principle that makes us either wise or foolish (“frenzied”). The liver is at the center of the body because that is where the substances of life (the blood) and of passion (the bile) are made. When Ulysses thinks of killing the Cyclops with his sword, he aims first at his liver; when Prometheus or Tityos is punished by Zeus, it is the liver that is attacked; when tragic characters kill themselves, they pierce their livers.<sup>58</sup> The liver would also serve as a special “meat” in the sacrifice of animals in ancient Greece: It would be placed on an offering table and its internal layout would be observed—with, as was said, its “seat” and its “gates”—in such a way that the very space of the city, as such, became ordered.<sup>59</sup>

The liver would be, therefore, for the Greeks, too—and instead of other organs, such as the heart, the spleen, the stomach, the lungs, or the kidneys—the “high seat of divination, the *tripod of manticism*,” as Auguste Bouché-Leclercq wrote in his *Histoire de la divination dans l’Antiquité*:

Without a head or a lobe, it augurs ruin and death. Thus were Cimon, Agesilaus and Alexander warned of their imminent death. But this first examination was only the beginning of a complicated analysis in which all the signs or “languages” [*glôssai*] of the liver were observed. Art, quite simple in the beginning, had to become, as is always the case, overburdened with arbitrary or incoherent distinctions. One can guess that the “gates” of the liver [*plutai, dochai*], whose shrinking was an unfortunate omen, were the opening of the portal vein, but where could one find and how could one divide up all these regions designated by such strange names as seat, table, tomb, knife, god, river, link, barrier? The liver occupied the Greek hieroscopes so much that they almost completely neglected the other organs.<sup>60</sup>

But we are in Greece, the fatherland of dialectics. What, then, would philosophy say of such practices, in which the fate of a whole human society could be “read” in the viscera of an animal by means of a celestial organization engaging the will of the gods? A modern epistemologist, familiar with the notion of “epistemological obstacle” proposed by Gaston Bachelard,<sup>61</sup> would no doubt question this propensity—typical of astrology, of divination, of magical thought in general—for inventing links, by “analogies” interposed between orders of incommensurable reality, such as the stars or the gods, animals, men. Where an objective sign appears to induce a legitimate relation (as smoke is for the fire), where physical or imaginary monstrosity creates an illegitimate link (as a beard is for a woman or teeth for a hen), the Greek soothsayers were happy to understand, as one ensemble, “signs,” “monstrosities,” and “images” (*sêméia, térata, and phasma*).<sup>62</sup> Plato, of course, asked these questions of legitimacy. He even asked these questions from the starting point of the liver. He tells, in the *Timaeus*, how the Demiurge, conscious that the human species would forever be torn between reason (*logos*) and images (*eidôla*), decided to make a liver for the human body:

And knowing that it would not understand reason or be capable of paying attention to rational argument even if it became aware of it, but would easily fall under the spell of images and phantoms by day or night, god played upon this weakness and formed the liver, which

he put into the creature's stall. He made it smooth and close in texture, sweet and bitter, so that the influence of the mind could project thoughts upon it which it would receive and reflect in the form of visible images [*eidôla*], like a mirror. When the mind wants to cause fear, it makes use of the liver's native bitterness and plays a stern and threatening role, quickly infusing the whole organ with bitterness and giving it a bilious colour; at the same time it contracts the liver and makes it all wrinkled and rough, bending and shrivelling the lobe, blocking and closing the vessels leading to it and so causing pain and nausea. By contrast, gentle thoughts from the mind produce images of the opposite kind, which will neither produce nor have connection with anything of a contrary nature to their own, and so bring relief from bitterness, using the organ's innate sweetness to render it straight and smooth and free, and making the part of the soul that lives in the region of the liver cheerful and gentle, and able to spend the night quietly in divination and dreams, as reason and understanding are beyond it [*logou kai phronèsêôs*].<sup>63</sup>

Here, the founder of our Western rationalism is constrained to enter into the swirls, the folds of organic and irrational life. Confronted with the dark potency of a visceral "monstrosity" placed at the center of the human body—an amorphous mass that is yet active from the interior—Plato is obliged to make the demands of reason accord to the customs, knowledge, and beliefs of his times regarding the role of the liver in the relations between the body and the soul.<sup>64</sup> The text of the *Timaeus*, retrospectively, strongly justifies the idea that the representations of the divinatory liver can open the great album of the "tragedy of cultures" and of the history of Western art, which the *Mnemosyne* atlas shows in its own way. For what Plato affirms is, above all, that the liver is the organ of desire—or at least that it is established in the space reserved for the desiring species—and, as such, works as a receptacle for images.

The liver, then, according to this ancient perspective, is a sort of image table: a plane of erratic inscriptions or, as Plato says, a very clear mirror (its impurities being regularly cleaned by the spleen) capable of receiving and reflecting the "impressions" and the phantoms that come to it.<sup>65</sup> It would also be an image pouch, insofar as it contains the humors and colors, which are either "sweet" or "bitter,"

that will color our desires. It is, finally, a volume of images that Plato describes in his text, from the perspective of a surprising plasticity: The bitterness bends it, contracts it, crumples it, makes it “rough,” blocks its lobes, and pushes our bad humors to the point of nausea, if not of madness; the sweetness, however, gives it its straight position, its normal extension, its smooth texture, its freeness, all of which give us our good humor even in sleep.

Thus, an organ of desire and of imagination. Explaining two paradigms allows us to understand how Warburg’s interest in divination and astrology was anything but marginal to his fundamental investigations of the efficiency of images in a very, very long history. Images give a figure, not only to things and to spaces, but to times themselves: Images configure the times of memory and of desire at the same time. They have a corporeal, mnemonic, and votive character.<sup>66</sup> This is why it did not escape Plato’s attention that the liver, the receptacle of images, was also—or, rather, for that very reason—an apparatus of prediction, capable of figuring the times to come on the basis of a certain memory of times past. The liver, he concludes in the passage from the *Timaeus*, is indeed “the seat of divination” that the spleen must always keep clean and clear so that divinatory images, sent by the gods, can appear as clearly as possible upon it.<sup>67</sup>

The philosopher is there, of course, to distinguish himself from the soothsayer. He warns us that reason is firmly opposed to the imagination and that signs are distinct from indistinct signs, however clear the hepatic surface of a sacrificed sheep. Plato reminds us, in *Phaedrus*, that there is only one step from the *mantikè*, the art of the soothsayer, to the *manikè*, the delirium of the madman (just as the French words *foie* meaning “liver” and *folie* meaning “madness” are separated by only one letter).<sup>68</sup> But Plato knew also, through tradition or by some intuition as yet impossible to formulate, that images can foresee the times by means of montages between incommensurable things, such as those formed by inspired dreamers or “enthusiastic” oracles:

Take the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona, for example, and consider all the benefits which individuals and states in Greece have received from them when they were in a state of frenzy, though their usefulness in their sober senses amounts to little or

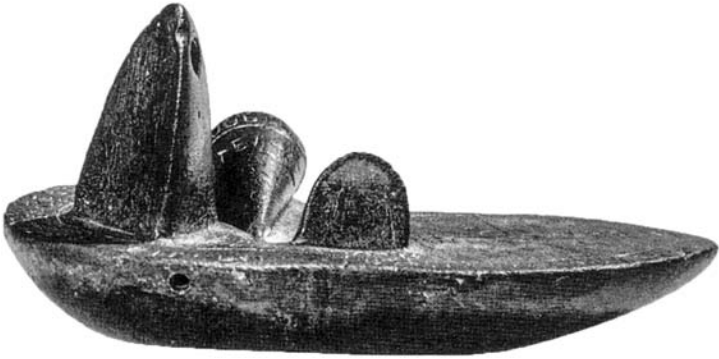


nothing. And if we were to include the Sibyl and others who by the use of inspired divination have set many inquirers on the right track about the future, we should be telling at tedious length what everybody knows.<sup>69</sup>

In the Platonic doctrine there is, of course, a whole arsenal of conceptual solutions designed to solve these problems. But the suspicion remains, just as there remains—in Plato himself and right up to Descartes, for example—this anxiety of reason in the face of the powers of the imagination. The idea that the imagination might have anything to do with madness and, consequently, with error and illusion is not at all worrying for a rationalist philosopher. But if, in its proximity to madness, the imagination is capable of bringing to light the reasons of which reason is unaware—as Goethe, Baudelaire, Benjamin, or Bataille, among others, saw it—then this strangely complicates the whole theory of knowledge. Madness and truth are not as incommensurable as the traditional dualisms would have us think. What Sigmund Freud taught us on the psychical level regarding the unconscious knowledge of dreams or symptoms Aby Warburg showed us also on the cultural level, when he focused on the surviving knowledge that images transmit in the long term.<sup>70</sup>

This is how the immemorial hepatoscopic practices of the Assyrians and Babylonians survived, at a distance of ten to fifteen centuries, in the Etruscan and Roman worlds. The first plate of the *Mnemosyne* atlas places, under the Babylonian divinatory livers, two photographs of a small bronze object, an extraordinary object discovered in Grossolengo, near Piacenza, in 1877 (figs. 3-4 and 7-9). It will not be surprising, then, that an artist like Joseph Beuys should reveal his fascination with this ageless thing, which evokes less an Italic statue than it does certain surrealist sculptures like those created by Alberto Giacometti in the 1930s.<sup>71</sup> It is an Etruscan model of a divinatory liver. It has the same characteristics as its Babylonian predecessors: sufficient realism for us to grasp the organ's morphology precisely; an extreme symbolism that organizes the surface into dissimilar compartments but ones that are carefully delimited—a circle, several triangles, a margin that follows with regularity the sinuous contours of the object—and, furthermore, that are covered in writing.

Aby Warburg was fascinated by this object. He tried to obtain



7-9. Anonymous Etruscan, "Piacenza Liver," second-first century BCE, bronze, 12 × 8 × 6.4 cm. Piacenza, Museo Civico. Photo: DR.

the cast (we do not know if he succeeded, but in any case the object does not appear in the archive found today in London). He had in his library numerous monographs devoted to the “Liver of Piacenza.”<sup>72</sup> Following his pioneering work, the dating of the object was reviewed by archaeologists, thanks notably to the study of the inscriptions: It is thought today that the object was created not in the third century BCE but rather at the end of the second or in the first century BCE.<sup>73</sup> It is evidence of an obviously very ancient practice that characterized the Etruscan religion and undoubtedly marked the archaic Roman religion, while continuing to occupy the mind right up to Pliny and Cicero.<sup>74</sup> The bronze model from Piacenza looks, in any case, like a tool for divinatory purposes, a technical aide-mémoire, a miniature atlas for soothsayers whose task is to recognize, in each visceral part, observed *de facto* on the “dissecting table” or the consultation table, the corresponding sidereal zones *de jure*—that is, the gods of the Etruscan pantheon implicated in each symptom, in each fold of the organ itself.

The “Liver of Piacenza” is thus at one and the same time a practical object and a conceptual object: a practical object, which makes it possible to observe the zones of the liver that are favorable (*pars familiaris*) and unfavorable (*pars hostilis*) in the concrete exercise of interpreting it;<sup>75</sup> a conceptual object, whose geometrical zones form a symbolic map delimiting, in the detail of the liver examined, the different *templa* or “frames” of intelligibility attributed to each of the twenty-eight divinities invoked.<sup>76</sup> Aby Warburg was no doubt particularly interested by the fact that the area of the margin, in the “Liver of Piacenza,” looks like a division of the sky, an astrological partition into sixteen regions, a partition that we find six centuries later in Martianus Capella, whose influence, as we know, was to continue through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>77</sup> This is also what justifies the fact that objects as bizarre and “nonartistic” as divinatory livers could have opened Warburg’s atlas of the long memory (Mnemosyne)—not the chronicle (Clio)—of our Western visual arts.

Both a practical and conceptual object, the “Liver of Piacenza” was nonetheless an empathetic object in the precise sense in which Warburg wanted to adapt the concept of *Einfühlung* to his own anthropological questions on “knowledge through incorporation”;<sup>78</sup> in the sense, too, in which Karl Reinhardt wanted to think about cosmic-

anthropomorphic correspondences in antiquity.<sup>79</sup> Thus, each “figure” in the sheep’s liver that was contemplated would put into play on its own scale, on the dissecting table, the sidereal forces of a flash of lightning, of a meteoric trajectory, or the movement of a planet. But we must be careful with the word *contemplation*: It does not in any way denote the notion of the sublime purity of the gaze. It is technical, concrete, right up to its handling of concepts. It is above all polymorphic. For we must see in the “Liver of Piacenza” a genuine cosmopolitan object, something that is both hybrid and mixed. It is a montage of cultic, cultural, and temporal heterogeneities. It is undoubtedly a typically Etruscan object,<sup>80</sup> though filled with exogenous beliefs—not all the divinities inscribed are Etruscan—and with remote Assyro-Babylonian migrations whose harmonics we can “hear” right down to the choices of vocabulary in descriptions and interpretations of hepatoscopic soothsayers: the “Path,” the “Presence,” the “Great Gates,” the “River,” the “Impediment.”<sup>81</sup> Even the word for the officiating priest—the *haruspex* in Latin—defies normal etymology while evoking, inevitably, the Assyrian word for “liver,” *har*.<sup>82</sup>

Such cosmopolitanism came from the past—migrations of beliefs and practices from the East to the West—but it was also enriched and prolonged in later periods in Roman civilization where the *haruspex*, as the interpreter of viscera, officiated alongside the *auspex*, the interpreter of birds. Rome integrated, therefore, even in a constant possibility of conflict, the ancient Etruscan techniques of divination, right through late antiquity.<sup>83</sup> The liver of the enemy, for example, was particularly aimed at by the Romans in practices of bewitchment using so-called curse tablets, or *tabellae defixionis*.<sup>84</sup> The deeds and gestures of the emperors abounded in prodigious events and omens, as in the following anecdote about Augustus told by Suetonius, in which the flight of birds—of vultures, moreover—meets, significantly, the folds of the liver:

In Augustus’ first consulship, when he was taking the auspices [*augurium capienti*], twelve vultures appeared, as they had to Romulus, and, when he slaughtered the victims, all their livers were found to be doubled inwards underneath [*omnium victimarum iocinera replicata intrinsecus abima fibra paruerunt*]; all the experts agreed in interpreting this as an omen portending a good and great future.<sup>85</sup>

It is necessary, of course, to give each difference and specificity its place: Where the Etruscans cut up the viscera in order to isolate and examine them on the table set out for the purpose, the Romans, for their part, united the two acts of beneficial offering (*litatio*) and examination (*probatio*) of the viscera undetached from the opened animal (*adhaerentia exta*).<sup>86</sup> But, as Robert Schilling noted, the two practices often came to be confused.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, “Etruscan discipline,” as extispicy was referred to, does not, in the Roman world, escape suspicion from the very authority that was given to it. In the year 44 BCE, Cicero wrote, in a context of reflections on religion (in his *De natura deorum*) and on fate (in his *De fato*), a treatise entirely devoted to omens, the *De divinatione*. His dialectical argumentation upset numerous commentators: He notes, he takes a position— notably against the political exploitation of the haruspices—but he also leaves it to readers to draw their own conclusions.<sup>88</sup>

Like Plato before him, Cicero criticized the incommensurability of the scales of grandeur—the too close and too particular form of a sheep’s liver, the too remote and too general structure of superterrestrial realities—united in the divinatory act:

For it is not Stoic doctrine that the gods are concerned with every single fissure of livers [*singulis iecorum fissis*], with every birdsong (for that is neither appropriate nor worthy, nor in any way possible), but that the world was created from the beginning in such a way that predetermined signs would precede predetermined events [*ut certis rebus certa signa praecurrerent*], some in entrails, others in birds, others in lightning, others in portents, others in the stars, others in the visions of dreamers, and others in the utterances of those inspired.<sup>89</sup>

Such would be, once again, the anxiety of reason in front of images made, not merely to allow us to *see* the things that appear before us, but to glimpse and to predict the things that still escape us. Madness is no doubt to blame for any imagination given to “correspondences” between things or incommensurable times. Still, it is necessary to admit the possible truth of the symptom, which suggests a link between “certain things [*ut certis rebus*]” and “certain signs [*certa signa*].” This is why Cicero adopts a double position in front of the haruspex, which he calls into question on the level of pure reason—

if we can use such a term—but will refuse to exclude on the level of practical reason:

Let us begin with the haruspices; it is necessary, in my opinion, to practice it for the good of the Republic and the common religion, but we are alone and we can seek the truth without being poorly thought of, above all I who doubt the majority of things. Let us examine first of all, if you do not mind, the viscera. Who would be convinced that the signs supposedly given by the viscera are known by the haruspices with the help of a long period of observation? How long? How long did this observation last? How did the confrontation between the different haruspices come about to establish which is their “enemy” part [*pars inimica*], the “familiar” part [*pars familiaris*], which lesion shows danger, and which other an advantage? . . . Some obviously interpret the viscera [*exta interpretari*] one way, and others in another way, and the doctrine is not the same for everyone. And, undoubtedly, if there exists in the viscera a power capable of announcing the future, it is necessarily linked to nature or formed in some way by the will of the gods and by a divine power. But what can nature, so vast and so splendid, spread over all parts and all movements of the world, have in common I dare not say with the gall of a chicken (for some say that the viscera speak the most), but with the liver, the heart or the lung of a bull fattened for the sacrifice: what is natural in them [*quid habet naturale*] that can announce the future [*quid futurum sit*].<sup>90</sup>

Pliny the Elder, one century later, would implicitly renew this epistemological ambivalence. Presenting the general structure of the “world” in book 2 of his *Natural History*, he will quickly denounce “the warnings drawn from lightning, the forecasts made by oracles, the prophecies of augurs, and even inconsiderable trifles—a sneeze, a stumble—counted as omens”<sup>91</sup> which are, of course, incommensurable with the workings of the universe. But when, in book 11, it is a matter of describing the internal parts of the animal, he will shamelessly mix the peculiarities of the liver—some of them completely imagined—with the omens they were said to have given:

The liver is on the right hand side; contains what is called the head of the internal organs, which varies a great deal. Marcus Marcellus,

near the time of his death, when he was killed by Hannibal, found the liver missing among the organs, but on the following day a double liver was discovered. The liver was also missing with Gaius Marius on January 1 at the commencement of his consulship in the year of his murder, and with his successor Claudius in the month in which he was poisoned. When the late lamented Augustus was sacrificing at Spoleto on the first day he was in power the livers of six victims were found with the bottom of their tissue folded back inward, and this was interpreted to mean that he would double his power within a year. It is also of gloomy omen when the head of the liver is accidentally cut—except at a period of trouble and alarm, when it removes anxieties. Hares with two livers are found in the district of Briletum and Thames and in Chersonese on the Sea of Marmara, and surprising to say, when the animals are moved to another place one of the two livers disappears.<sup>92</sup>

## Tables for Collecting the Parceling-Out of the World

Magical thought, one might say. However, it is necessary to agree on the sense of such an expression. Stefan Czarnowski, a sociologist of religions who worked in the circle of Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Henri Hubert, very pertinently studied the notion of divinatory *templum* from the perspective of the “parceling-out of the expanse” and its limitation in a precise setting in which everything is transfigured according to a new “system of concrete qualities” whose interpretation is organized with a view to orienting human gestures, practices, and decisions.<sup>93</sup> Jacques Vernant carried these analyses further in a classic study on the psychology of divination in which he described the structural transformation that touches, in the haruspices’ technique, the very perception of the organ observed:

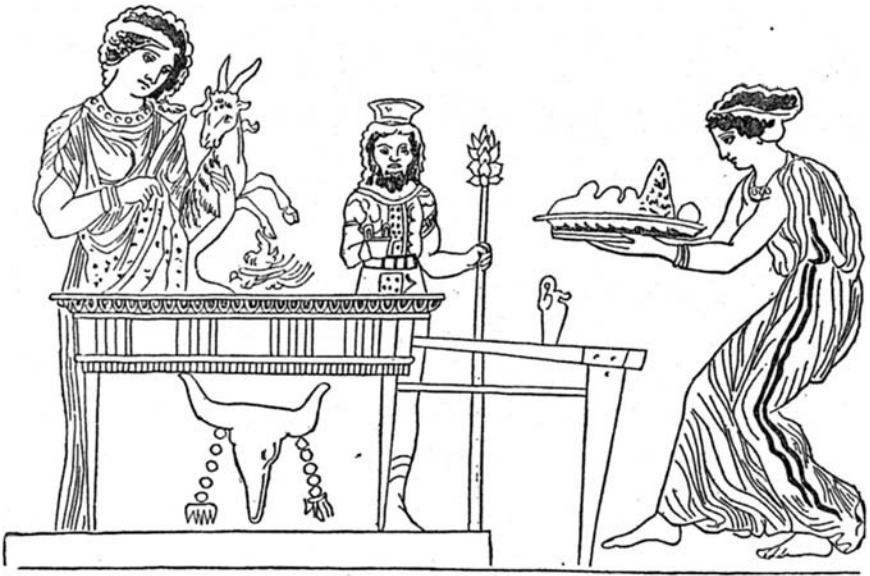
At the moment of opening the body of the victim, an invocation to the divinities who preside over the different parts of the organism “transmutes” the body, without changing its aspect, into a temple. The influences of the different divinities are confined to their allocated places.<sup>94</sup>

The haruspex sees well—and even “contemplates” with a particular attention—the animal liver placed on the “dissecting table.” But he does not merely see it, nor does he simply see it “well”; rather, he sees it differently. The “transmutation” that Jacques Vernant evokes concerns first of all a decisive modification in the visible status of the object contemplated: From visible thing in the empirical sense of the term, it becomes the support for other things to be glimpsed or to be predicted. To glimpse, I say, which does not only mean “to see less well,” but, on the contrary, to see from the perspective of “intimate and secret relations of things, correspondences and analogies.” There is structural transformation because, in the very precise spatial and temporal setting of the *templum*, the thing as visible unit makes room for a system of multiple figural relations where everything that is seen is seen only by means of detours, relations, correspondences, and analogies.

For this, however, space itself still must be modified: the space of appearance, of presentation, or of the arrangement of things to be seen. And one must acquire a table to greet this transformation of the gaze and of the sense, to collect the bundle of the figural multiplicities that wait to be seen. “As soon as a space is arranged, limited, and divided—without these operations responding to a necessity or to implicated needs by the actual sensible situation, but instead according to a rite—it thereby gains a symbolic value which makes it capable of serving as a field for divinatory practices.”<sup>95</sup> This begins by a sequence of precise, concrete, technical gestures: the art, if I may say, of “setting up” or of setting the table (fig. 10). And this ends with a new knowledge being put in place whose epistemological profile Vernant outlines in conclusion: “Divination, consequently, is not founded here on an affective confusion, but instead on both concrete and precise classifications that cannot nonetheless be superimposed upon our scientific classifications.”<sup>96</sup>

Jacques Vernant invites us, in this text, to rethink the whole notion of “magical thought,” or of “mythical thought,” however obsessed this notion may be by unilateral theories—either positivist or neo-evolutionary—regarding the “confusion of ideas”: this madness of the imagination that Plato and Cicero had begun to denounce in the name of “reason” or “nature.” A founding text on this question—





10. Sacrifice in ancient Greece. From C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, eds., *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1873), 349.

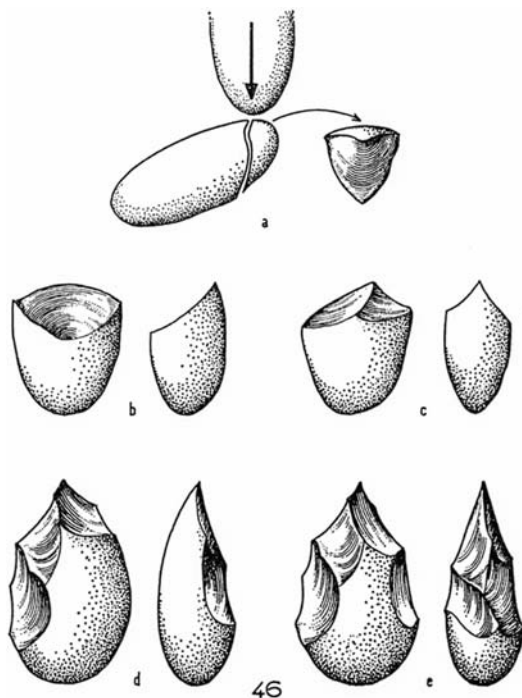
and probably the source for Vernant's hypotheses—was the article by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, published in 1903, on “primitive forms of classification.” That which in rites and myths makes us speak of “primitive thought” has nothing to do, they write, with “simple and elementary” functioning (as Freud had just shown with dreams and psychical symptoms), but overlaps “mental operations that are in reality very complex.”<sup>97</sup> It is simply wrong, therefore, not to deal with magical thought—divination, for example—from the perspective of confusion or of empathetic contagion opposed to any conceptual distinction. The two work together, meaning that in this subject it becomes ineffective to oppose imagination and reason at all costs.

The imagination is at the crossroads of the sensible and the intelligible (we know Kant attempted to construct a formula through that “art, hidden in the depths of the human soul,” which he called “transcendental schematism”).<sup>98</sup> Sensible things and their intelligible relations work together in every classification, in every knowledge or technical practice, however “primitive” they may be. Marcel

Mauss explained that “participation” itself—which Warburg envisaged, for his part, from the aesthetic notion of *Einführung*—should be recognized for its structural and operating qualities, as shown in the precise study of Australian, Chinese, Hopi, or Winnebago classifications.<sup>99</sup> All of this is guided by fundamental sociological and anthropological intuition: The affective element, as much as the cognitive element of “primitive classifications,” their *monstra* and their *astra*, would be nothing else than the renewal, on the level of mental representations and of intelligible categories, of a certain organization of society.<sup>100</sup>

It would be necessary to complete the sociological point of view with the technical notion of operating chain, introduced in anthropology by André Leroi-Gourhan. On the one hand, the technical operation parcels out the world, as we see very quickly in the prehistoric industry of “broken pebbles,” where the first “distinct forms,” as Leroi-Gourhan calls them, were obtained by a violent, percussive montage—a kind of dissection of things, you could say—of natural pebbles (fig. 11). On the other hand, Leroi-Gourhan sees the tool obtained as an actual “secretion of the body,” in which the two senses of the Greek word *organon* converge.<sup>101</sup> It is a pity that this technical anthropology neglected to further study what makes every table a form of equipment of the world and of the body, something much more complex than a simple support.<sup>102</sup>

But in *Le Geste et la parole*, we find a crucial chapter devoted to the birth of graphic arts, where Leroi-Gourhan goes from prehistoric rock engravings to Far Eastern ex-votos, then to two representations on the facing page of his text, taken, however, from two very different cultural contexts (fig. 12). We see, on the left, a drawing of a Polynesian statuette representing the myth of the creation of the gods and of man on the body of the great Ocean god; on the right, a reproduction of a xylograph from the Renaissance with a “Zodiac Man,” many incarnations of which Aby Warburg had placed on plate B of his *Mnemosyne* atlas, covering a period from the twelfth to the thirteenth century (fig. 2). In both cases, the anthropomorphic body is figured as a place of parceling and of multiplicity at the same time: The swarms of strange creatures that invade it seem to adhere to its surface, but also to dilacerate its corporeal unity, above all in the case of the “Zodiac Man,” which seems, in its rectangular frame, to be placed on a table



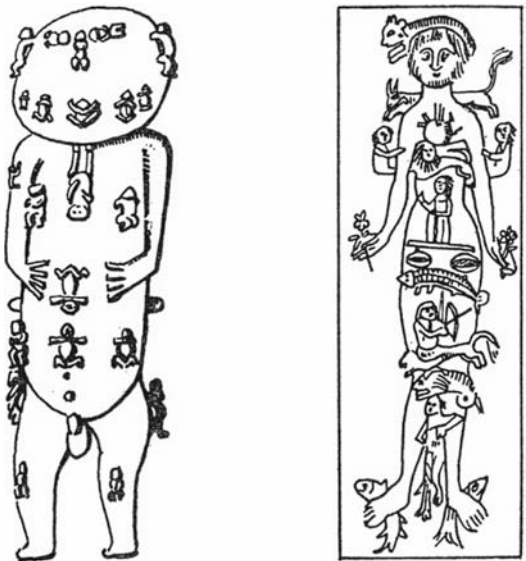
11. Prehistoric technique of broken stones. From A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1964) 1974, 131.

where it might have been dissected to bring to light the animal—but also sidereal—swarming that disfigures it.

Leroi-Gourhan had his reasons for seeing in these graphic examples what he called operating fields where the lines of the drawing, the pictogram, or even the letter itself are not dissociable from concomitant technical gestures, from “rhythmic motricity,” or from elements of the oral character inherent to every ritualization of the body.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, with its “logic of classifications” and its “systems of transformations,”<sup>104</sup> would remain unfounded—or purely abstract—if the “science of the concrete” were neglected.<sup>105</sup> That is, the practical experimentation where “playing around” with certain devices—notably visual devices like the Polynesian statuette or the “Zodiac Man” from the Renaissance—creates the necessary link between the body and thought, technical gestures and intelligible categories, mythic narra-

tives and scientific knowledge.<sup>106</sup> (Jack Goody’s critique of “graphic reason” errs, in my opinion, in his refusal to envisage graphics in the broader context of a spatialization of the body and of thought, without which, for example, the notions of “table” and of “tableau,” which I am attempting to distinguish here, are unilaterally joined to each other.)<sup>107</sup>

Like the Etruscan and Babylonian divinatory livers, the Polynesian statuette and “Zodiac Man” chosen by André Leroi-Gourhan are organic forms that take on, at the same time, the function of operating fields. On the first figure other figures are grafted and arranged, and interact with each other—figures that are, however, incommensurable, such as a fissure of the liver that is called “Gates of the Palace,” an anthropomorphic representation in which animals, homunculi, and fabulous creatures swarm about. What, therefore, is an operating field in this context? It is a determined place—framed like a *templum* in every possible expanse, the sky, the sea, a flat stone, the liver of a sheep—capable of making heterogeneous orders of reality meet, then of constructing this very meeting in place of overdetermi-



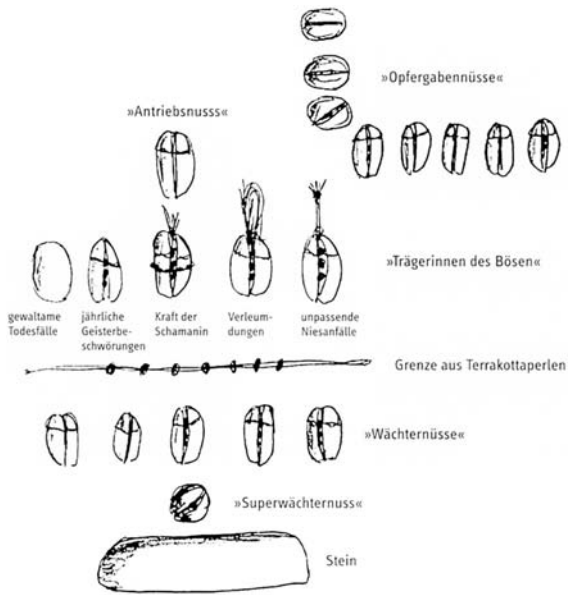
12. Polynesian statuette (Tubuai, nineteenth century) and “Zodiac Man” (France, sixteenth century). From A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1964) 1974, 277.

nation. It is a “table” on which one decides to place certain disparate things with a view to establishing multiple “intimate and secret relations,” an area possessing its own rules of arrangement and of transformation for relinking certain things whose links are not at all obvious. And for making these links, once they are brought to light, the paradigms of a rereading of the world.

The examples chosen by Aby Warburg and André Leroi-Gourhan have the theoretical advantage of widening what, spontaneously, we might expect from the notion of operating field. From the humanism of Leon Battista Alberti right up to the structuralism of someone like Hubert Damisch, the only operating fields are “prepared surfaces,” regular, squared, as in constructions of perspective or a chessboard: surfaces prepared according to a preliminary rule whose enunciation serves as the foundation for a certain concept of “tableau.”<sup>108</sup> Yet, if we return to the more heuristic notion, the nonaxiomatic notion of “table,” we see that the “prepared surface” reveals very well its efficiency as an operating field outside of any preliminary rule.

For example, in certain shamanic exorcism rites from Puyuma, Taiwan, all that is needed to make up an authentic operating field is a banana-tree leaf, a stone, a few terracotta beads, and a few trimmed nuts (figs. 13–14).<sup>109</sup> There is poverty, therefore, and extreme fragility of the device: The banana-tree leaf is placed on the ground, the disparate little objects are laid out . . . and a whole world is played out there, but a world that the slightest breeze could destroy and disperse in an instant. There is a system, however: It engages each object in its function as sign, not as itself, of course, but according to its role in the arrangement. The nuts become, then, “nuts as offerings,” according to the way they are trimmed and laid out, in threes (vertically) and in fives (horizontally) above the banana-tree leaf—or plate, or page. Others will be, differently, the “nuts, bearers of evil,” one of which represents violent death, another slander, and another “inappropriate sneezes.” Together they outline a “harmful zone” (as in the *pars hostilis* of the divinatory livers) to which the protective bead necklace acts as an obstacle, like the “guardian nut” and, finally, the beneficial stone situated at the bottom of the composition.

It is a complete system, no doubt, and is preliminarily inscribed in a symbolic and social organization. But it is an open system where the rule that it implements, the signs it organizes, do not—and this



13-14. Shamanic altar from Puyuma (Taiwan, twentieth century). Banana leaf, nuts, terracotta beads, stone. From J. Cauquelin, 2001, 159.

is crucial—go without the exceptions that it gathers in order to take into account the symptoms of every concrete situation. There is a gnoseology, no doubt, but one that metamorphoses, that adapts constantly to the phenomenology of every particular case. This is why the arrangements are not fixed once and for all on the banana-tree leaf (as, in chess, where the bishop moves diagonally once and for all, the castle perpendicularly once and for all, and so forth). Since the issue is particular (what precise evil, on that day, was to be warded off?), the rule of the game is, too: We learn here that the woman shaman who was to conduct the exorcism had, the night before, dreamed of this particular arrangement that nothing could have predicted.<sup>110</sup>

The example of the banana-tree leaf shows us everything that will make up the strangeness—and the fecundity—of a table or a plate in an atlas. The props, the rules of arrangement, and the objects arranged can be disparate. There is, above all, an unexpected complicity—of the kind that particularly worries philosophers descended from Plato—between classification and disorder or, if we prefer, between reason and imagination. Yet we find this impure mix in the cultic tables of ancient Greece, for the distinction in the nomenclature of “altar” (*bômos*) and “table” (*trapèza*) does not fully succeed in obstructing the ambiguities, the passages, or the impurities of the practices at work.<sup>111</sup> The sacrifice and the offering are performed at the same time and on adjoining tables, so that the tables serve both as operating fields in order to dissociate, cut up, destroy the body of the animal, as well as to agglutinate, accumulate, or arrange the food offerings (fig. 10).<sup>112</sup> Among the typological varieties of the ancient “sacred tables,” we find the most hierarchical and the most *dispars*, the most “triumphal” (“agonistic tables” where the winning athletes arranged their rewards) and the most melancholic (“funerary tables”), the most organized and the most disordered (fig. 15).<sup>113</sup>

Disorder is only unreason for those who refuse to think, to respect, or to accompany, in a way, the parceling-out of the world. The table would thus be a privileged place for gathering and presenting this parceling-out; for affirming its founding and operating value, that is to say, the always open possibility of modifying, of producing a new configuration. Each table would establish, in its own way, the share of things: their vocation for being dissociated, then redistributed. Hence the immediate social, cultic, and political dimension of the



15. Altar table of Agia Irini (Greece, 700–475 BCE), surrounded by terracotta statuettes. From C. G. Yavis, 1949, fig. 64.

table: The word *mensa* in Latin meant, first of all, a kind of cake that was shared in pieces, to be arranged like offerings for the gods and like food that could be consumed on an operating field that soon took on its name.<sup>114</sup> In his study of Greek and Roman “sacred tables,” Christian Goudineau noted the link between “operating fields” of the cult of offering and the divinities of the earth and vegetation, Dionysus in particular.<sup>115</sup> How can one not be troubled, for example, by the fact that all marble tables, in religious buildings as well as in their domestic or luxurious uses, are made with a material taken from the entrails, the bowels of the earth?<sup>116</sup>

How, then, can we not think that the table is above all a conversion operator between the potencies of nature and the powers of culture, rough things and organized signs, the parceling-out of the *monstra* and the constellation of the *astra*? Whether it be for a meal, for laying out offerings, for dissecting a body, for organizing a form of knowledge, for playing a board game, or for practicing magic, the table in every case gathers heterogeneities and gives form to multiple relations. In their work on the religious superstitions of the table in ancient Rome, Waldemar Deonna and Marcel Renard recognized—including in numerous contemporary relics or survivals—this respect

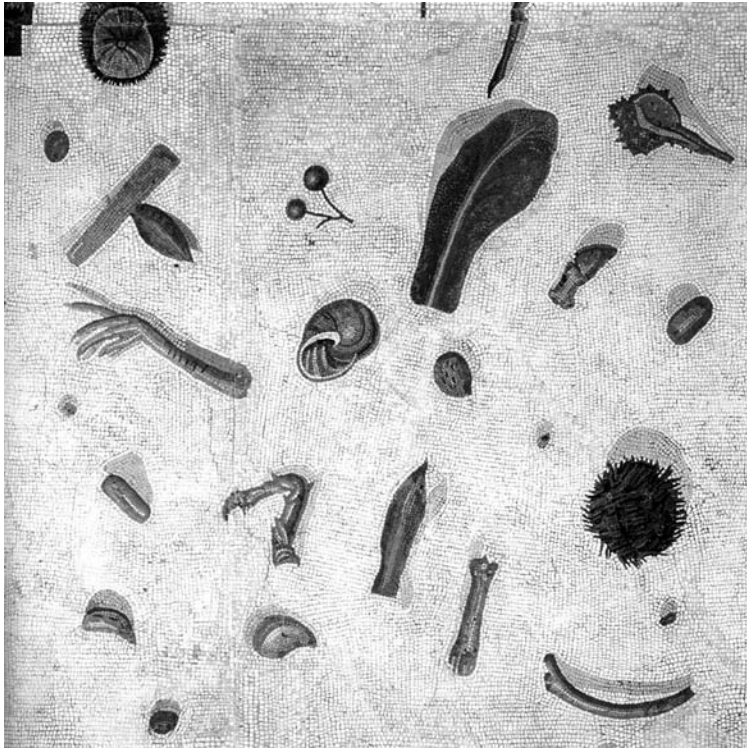


for the parceling-out of things, for example, in the practices related to the leftovers of meals, where “the table must not remain entirely empty.”<sup>117</sup>

During the meal, the guests threw on the ground what they did not eat, according to the custom which was to continue for a long time into modern times; other leftovers remained on the table. They kept, like those of the sacrifices, the sacred value of foods, gifts of the gods to men, their mystical force, *pars pro toto*. Having been in contact with those who ate, imprinted with their personality, they can be used against them by magicians, sorcerers, and by demoniacal powers. They must not be treated with disrespect, be misused, nor abandoned without precaution, or this will bring bad luck, and instead, they must be treated with respect, and prevented from falling into the wrong hands. They can be put out of use, hidden, buried, burned. But they can also be kept, for [as Petrarch wrote] one must “leave something of the present for the future, and . . . dream today about tomorrow.”<sup>118</sup>

This desire to expose the disorder in which the courses of a meal are spread out has its source in numerous beliefs, illustrated notably by the Pythagorean precepts according to which it was prohibited to pick up anything that fell on the ground, which is a way, speaking literally, to respect the symptom. Previously, the leftovers that fell from the table were attributed to the dead and, according to an Athenian expression, “belonged to the dead.”<sup>119</sup> In book 28 of his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder recounts that to sweep the ground when one left the table was considered a very bad omen, and he adds that this practice was founded on a belief that the gods participated in the meals of the humans as, moreover, in all of their daily acts.<sup>120</sup> It is as though, once again, the powerful link between the sidereal and the visceral were at work again, by means of fundamental gestures necessary for human life.

In 1833, between the gates of San Sebastiano and San Paolo in Rome, in the vineyard of Lupi, at the foot of the Aventine, a superb mosaic was discovered, dating from the time of Hadrian (fig. 16).<sup>121</sup> Here, too, a parceling-out is shown, as much on the level of the material as what it represents. Its original dimensions, approximately



16. Anonymous Roman, "The Unswept Room," detail (Vigna Lupi [Rome], second century CE), mosaic. Vatican, Musei Laterani. Photo: DR.

4 by 4 meters, made it an extraordinary puzzle composed of about 12 million tesserae, small cubes of marble and of colored molten glass, of admirable variety and subtlety. What this mosaic represents is simply astonishing: chicken bones with seashells, fish bones with mollusks of all kinds, a cock's head with the remains of a lobster, apple peelings with sea urchins and cuttlefish, snail shells with strawberries and cherries, grapes with nutshells, remains of a lemon with a leaf of lettuce, not to mention a little mouse that, in a corner, is benefiting from the respect given by humans toward the parceling-out of things. And it is a random parceling-out that is henceforth fixed on the ground of the Roman villa by a composition entitled *Asarôtos oikos*, "The Unswept Room":

Paved floors originated among the Greeks and were skillfully embellished with a kind of paint-work. . . . In this latter field the most famous exponent was Sosus, who at Pergamon laid the floor of what is known in Greek as “the Unswept Room” [*asarotos oikos*] because, by means of small cubes tinted in various shades, he represented on the floor refuse from the dinner table and other sweepings, making them appear as if they had been left there.<sup>122</sup>

## Heterotopias, or the Cartographies of Defamiliarization

All these examples of sheep livers or chicken legs, do they not displace us by their very triviality and bring us to the opposite extreme, to the antipodes, of the notion of an atlas, a notion that I situated, at the beginning of this study, in the perspective of things destined to be shared by art and knowledge? But such is the price that an archaeology demands of every historic object. The *Atlas* of Marcel Broodthaers and Gerhard Richter belongs, without any doubt, to what we can call the “grand history” of art. It is not, however, a matter of the “little history” to place, on the horizon of these contemporary forms, the ancient custom of the “unswept room” or the reliefs of meals littering a Roman banquet table. It was actually in order to better understand—archaeologically and not chronologically—Raphael and Rembrandt that Aby Warburg arranged the defamiliarizing Mesopotamian sheep livers on the threshold of his own *Bilderatlas*.

Like Raphael and Rembrandt, Gerhard Richter excelled in the tableau form, defined by Furetière in the seventeenth century as “an image or representation of something by a painter,” or alternatively as “the representation of a subject that the painter encloses in a space adorned for the ordinariness of a frame or border,” as we read, in the eighteenth century, in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopedia*.<sup>123</sup> However, beyond the usual sense of the painted tableau, a more general meaning arose, which assumed both visual unity and temporal immobilization: “*Tableau*, a frozen moment of a scene creating a visual unity between the placement of the characters in the scene and the arrangement of the decors, in such a way that the whole gives the illusion of forming a fresco.” This is perfectly denoted by the expression “living tableau,” and we know the crucial aesthetic issue here, from

the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, for painting as well as for the theater and, later, for photography, as well as for cinema.<sup>124</sup>

But the prestigious French word *tableau* comes directly from an extremely banal Latin word, *tabula*, which simply means a plank or a board (*planche*, in French). A board on which to do all kinds of things: to write, to count, to play, to eat, to arrange, to disarrange.<sup>125</sup> In the practice of the *Atlas* in the work of Gerhard Richter, as well as, in times past, the series of *plates* (also *planches*, in French) engraved in several “states” by Rembrandt, it is no doubt a question of *tables* more than of *tableaux*. This means, first of all, the renunciation of any visual unity and of any temporal immobilization: Spaces and heterogeneous times do not cease to meet there, to confront each other, to cross each other, and to amalgamate. The tableau is a work, a result on which everything has always already been played out; the table is a device on which everything can always be played again. A tableau is hung in a museum; a table is reused constantly for new feasts, new configurations. As in physical love, where desire is constantly replayed, stimulated, it is necessary to constantly reset the table. Nothing, therefore, is fixed in place once and for all, and everything is to be done again—started again for pleasure rather than as a Sisyphian punishment—to be rediscovered, to be reinvented.

From its most instrumental and basely material definitions (“*Table*, word used to describe several things that are flat . . .”) <sup>126</sup> to the great variety of its technical, domestic, juridical, religious, playful, or scientific usages, the table serves first of all as an operating field of the disparate and the mobile, of the heterogeneous and the open. The anthropological point of view, so important to Warburg, has the considerable methodological advantage of not separating the trivial manipulation of the *monstra* (the sheep’s livers) and the sublime elaboration of the *astra* (the tableaux of Raphael), just as, later, Claude Lévi-Strauss would refuse to separate the little gestures of “table manners” and the aspirations to the most grandiose “systems of the world.” <sup>127</sup>

I believe it is significant that Aby Warburg always failed to determine his thinking when attempting “definitive” tableaux, which he would generally leave empty or unfinished.<sup>128</sup> The *Bilderatlas* project, by means of its indefinitely modifiable device that is its montage table—by the mediation of mobile clips with which he hung the

images and with the succession of photos with which he documented each configuration obtained—allowed him always to bring back into play, to multiply, to refine, or to branch off his intuition relative to the great overdetermination of images. The *Mnemosyne* atlas was thus the actual apparatus for a way of thinking that Warburg himself had explained in conclusion to a speech given at the opening of the German institute of art history in Florence, in 1927: “*Si continua—coraggio!—ricominciamo la lettura!*”<sup>129</sup> As though “to read what was never written” demanded a reading that is always started over: an incessant re-reading of the world.

To perceive “the intimate and secret relations of things, correspondences, and analogies”? This probably does not happen without perpetually being put back into play, which is seen, notably, in plates 50 and 51 of the *Mnemosyne* atlas, where Warburg, on his black “montage table,” placed, next to a famous tableau by Mantegna reproduced on a very small scale, different card games reproduced as though they, too, were worthy “tableaux” (fig. 17). We can see the *Muses* of the Master of Tarot from Ferrara next to the popular contemporary game of *Tarot of Marseille*, with its well-known figures, *le Bateleur* (the Fool), *l'Amoureux* (the Lover), *la Roue de la Fortune* (the Wheel of Fortune) . . . So, to bring back into play: to reshuffle and to redistribute the cards—of art history—on some table. And to glean from this redistribution the ability—which Baudelaire called “quasi-divine,” and by which, I understand now, he probably meant “quasi-divinatory”—to reread time in the disparity of images, in the always renewed parceling-out of the world.

To shuffle and to redistribute cards, to disassemble and to reassemble the order of images on a table to create “quasi-divinatory” heuristic configurations, that is, which are capable of glimpsing the working of time in the visible world: Such would be the basic operating sequence for any practice that we call here an *atlas*. We have seen how Warburg immediately constructed this practice from an explicit recourse to archaeology: the Etruscan divinatory livers, not far from the *Anatomy Lesson* by Rembrandt; or the Roman sarcophagi, not far from the *Luncheon on the Grass* by Manet.<sup>130</sup> So the archaeological “perspectives” opened up from the time of Michel Foucault, in the field of the history of science, are not unrelated, I believe, to this re-



17. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pls. 50–51. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

distribution operated by Aby Warburg in the field of art history. In the two cases, the irrevocability of value is demolished (the “work of art,” criticized by a popular image, a card from a pack or a postal stamp; the “discourse of science,” criticized by transversal, deviating, political practices), as are the distributions of time (where the archaeo-

logical point of view disassembles the chronological certitudes) and, finally, the units of representation (since, in both cases, it is the *tableau classique* that will be shaken to its foundations).

We can hope to learn, from this complicity, something regarding an archaeology of visual knowledge. It is striking that Michel Foucault often “framed” his epistemological analyses with strategic “images” borrowed from the history of painting and of literature. Just as his *Histoire de la folie (Madness and Civilization)* began with Franz Hals’s *The Regents*, Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things)*, began with *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez: two tableaux, therefore, two ways of signifying—of showing, and of analyzing—the potential of representation in the “*âge classique* [classical age],” as Foucault liked to call it.<sup>131</sup> But this archaeology had meaning only when defining the lines of fracture and the front lines of a structural conflict from which would emerge the “modernity” that exemplifies, not monumental tableaux fixing the social dignity of the bourgeois guilds and the royal courts, but series of violent images in which, in the nineteenth century, Francisco Goya would explore the domain of “man cast into the night” by means of his little compositions on prisons and lunatic asylums, the engravings of the *Disparates*, or his enigmatic paintings of the *Quinta del Sordo*.<sup>132</sup>

While the subject of Cervantes opened the chapter of *The Order of Things* devoted to “classical representation,”<sup>133</sup> it was in the work of a Hispanic author—but in a constellation that includes Nietzsche, Mallarmé, Kafka, Bataille, or Blanchot<sup>134</sup>—that Foucault found “the birthplace” of his own archaeological and critical undertaking. This author is Jorge Luis Borges:

This book [*Les mots et les choses*, or *The Order of Things* in English] first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a “certain Chinese encyclopaedia” in which it is written that “animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Em-

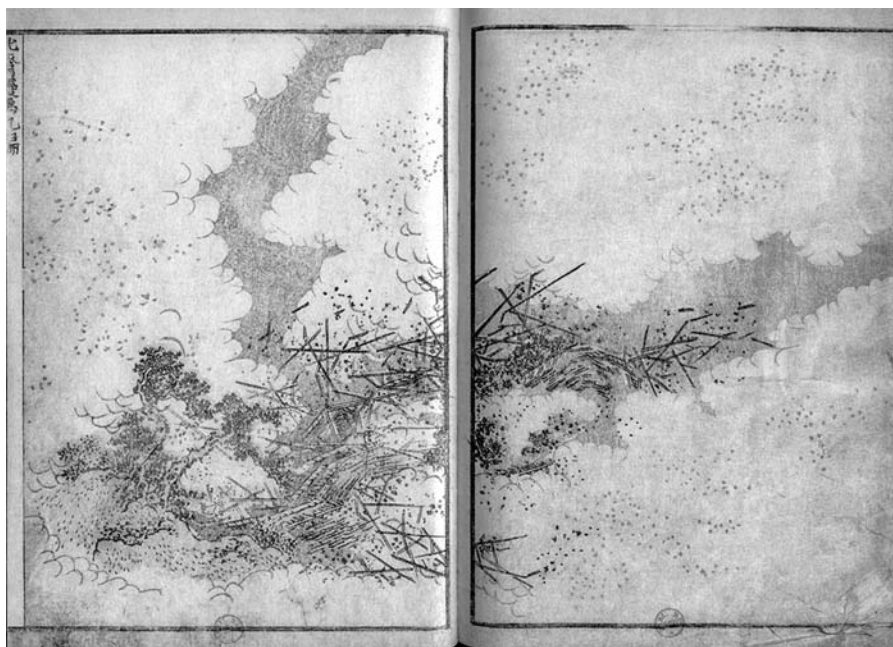
peror, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.”<sup>135</sup>

*Las Meninas* would give Foucault, a few pages later, the opportunity to analyze classical representation, focusing on a tableau of subjects that are royal portraits painted by Velázquez: an existing tableau, made majestic and complex by its successive mises en abyme—the subject in the tableau, the subjects themselves, the tableau in the tableau, the framing of the door, and so on—that become always more concentrated. The *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge's Taxonomy*, the title given by Borges to an encyclopedia whose existence seems doubtful, provokes another kind of disorientation: It would be, rather, a table of contents equivalent to that in the hepatoscopic treatise cited earlier, with its semiotic turmoil and its nonconcentric but rather centrifugal vertigo.

“Borges’s table” does not participate in the context of a single tableau that its square pattern or even its perspectivist malice might organize. It evokes instead the enormous compilations of Chinese drawings or Japanese stamps (I am thinking of, for example, the insatiable *Manga* by Hokusai [fig. 18]), and it breaks the frames or the squares of classificatory space by demanding to open countries, not one of which will ever have been determined by the preceding one: The “stray dogs” have already escaped the tableau, the “innumerable” will always escape our count, those that “have just broken the water pitcher” are unexpected and indiscernible, the “*et cetera*” can never be compiled in a list, while even those “that from a long way off look like flies” are imposed immediately upon our imagination by the force of their visual suggestion.

This force, as Foucault explains it at the beginning, is none other than a movement that is “breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things.” On the one hand, it ruins the tableau or the habitual system of knowledge; and on the other hand, it liberates the laughter that “shattered all the familiar landmarks of thought,” the enormous laughter that is not without a certain uneasiness—“*malaise*,” as





18. Katsushika Hokusai, *Manga* (1814), wood engraving, 29.5 × 21 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Res. Dd 654, vol. 7, fols. 28v–29r). Photo: DR.

Foucault would often repeat.<sup>136</sup> Why this laughter? Because the stability of relations breaks apart, because the law of gravity is turned upside down, and thus made subject to the burlesque: Things are fused together, rise up, are crushed, dispersed, or they agglutinate, like the men in one of the famous images of Goya's *Disparates*—and in the counterpoint that they form with all the others in the series—who see themselves transformed into disarticulated puppets that appear to be spat into the air by the force of a “shaking surface,” a simple sheet shaken by six women, a dark sheet that conceals once again in its folds a man lying on his stomach, and . . . a donkey (fig. 19). Here, too, it is a laughter that shakes us to the point of malaise, because it comes from the depths of darkness and nonknowledge.

But what malaise is this, and what jolt? What is threatened in Borges's disparate series (as in Goya's *Disparates*, a collection that is at the same time comic and menacing)? Foucault is very careful to clarify: “Moreover, it is not simply the oddity of unusual juxtaposi-

tions that we are faced with here. We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other.”<sup>137</sup> The disparate, the sundry cannot be reduced to the “strangeness” of a mere contrast: This is a way for Foucault to suggest to us that the path of the fantastic (in the manner of Roger Caillois) or of the material reverie (in the manner of Gaston Bachelard) is certainly not the right one to take. What shakes us with laughter and shakes also “all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things” is actually the fact that the planes of intelligibility are parceled out to the point of crumbling. What collapses in the Chinese encyclopedia, or on “Borges’s table,” is no less than the coherence and the very support of classical painting as a classificatory surface of the multitude of beings.

In the interval between the animals who have “just broken the water pitcher” and those “that from a long way off look like flies,” what cracks and becomes ruined is “the common ground on which



19. Francisco Goya, *Disparate femenino* (c. 1815–24), etching and aquatint (artist’s proof), 24 × 35 cm. Madrid, Museo Lázaro Galdiano. Photo: DR.

such meetings are possible.”<sup>138</sup> The whole undertaking of *The Order of Things* was summarized by the author as a history of resemblance, a history of the Same,<sup>139</sup> and it is actually in the tableau that their “classical” form of exhibition is to be found. Foucault, in this undertaking, proceeded dialectically: He began by respecting and by teaching a thing or two about the academic notion of the tableau. He gave it back its complexity as a “series of series.”<sup>140</sup> A tableau like *Las Meninas* is not the place for a totality of the unique, as certain aesthetes would have it. Rather, a totality of the multiple is found in it, organized synoptically under the authority of the similar.

This authority engages a cultural coherence that actually determines the form of the relations between things seen and spoken words: The tableau is then a space for “the possibility of *seeing* what one will be able to *say*, but what one could not say subsequently, or see at a distance, if things and words, distinct from one another, did not, from the very first, communicate in a representation.”<sup>141</sup> And this is how, in the classical age, which is the “age of representation” par excellence, a “great, unflawed table”<sup>142</sup> was arranged as a support for classificatory exposition of “communications,” as Foucault says, between words (*les mots*) and things (*les choses*).<sup>143</sup> But we know that the whole Foucauldian undertaking consists equally in recounting the disassembling of that system in the age—referred to as “modern”—in which the point of view of history dramatically parcels out this great timeless vision and organizes similitudes into hierarchies.<sup>144</sup> There are no doubt “tableaux of history,” as they say, and for Alberti *istoria* was probably the “great work” of the tableau, which made it visible. Nevertheless, after Goya—and Sade, according to Foucault—the great “tableau of things” becomes irrevocably ruined by the disparate elements of becoming: “The epistemological field became fragmented, or rather exploded in different directions.”<sup>145</sup>

This is why Borges’s defamiliarizing or disorienting table is so suitably named in the first pages of *The Order of Things*, an “atlas of the impossible.”<sup>146</sup> This is why it immediately involves the elaboration of a concept that will be crucial in every dimension of Foucault’s thinking—from the epistemology of politics, through aesthetics—a concept for designating an operating field that will not be that of the “tableau” or the “common locus”: This concept is *heterotopia*, which can,

without any difficulty, be understood from the disparate inventions of Goya or Borges. Heterotopia is

the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are “laid,” “placed,” “arranged” in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all.<sup>147</sup>

Just as the disparate or sundry are distinct from “strangeness” or from the “incongruous,” heterotopias are distinct from utopias, which Foucault says “console” us—when heterotopias threaten or worry—which is a way of suspecting what Louis Marin, later, was to show in his analyses of Thomas More: that utopian spaces are only a particular avatar of classical representational space.<sup>148</sup>

*Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy “syntax” in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to “hold together.”<sup>149</sup>

In 1982, Foucault would imagine heterotopias from a much more political perspective, but it would be to say once again that “freedom is a practice” and even a technique,<sup>150</sup> as were, on their own scale, the technical choices of Warburg to make his atlas of images work freely like an actual heterotopia of art history.

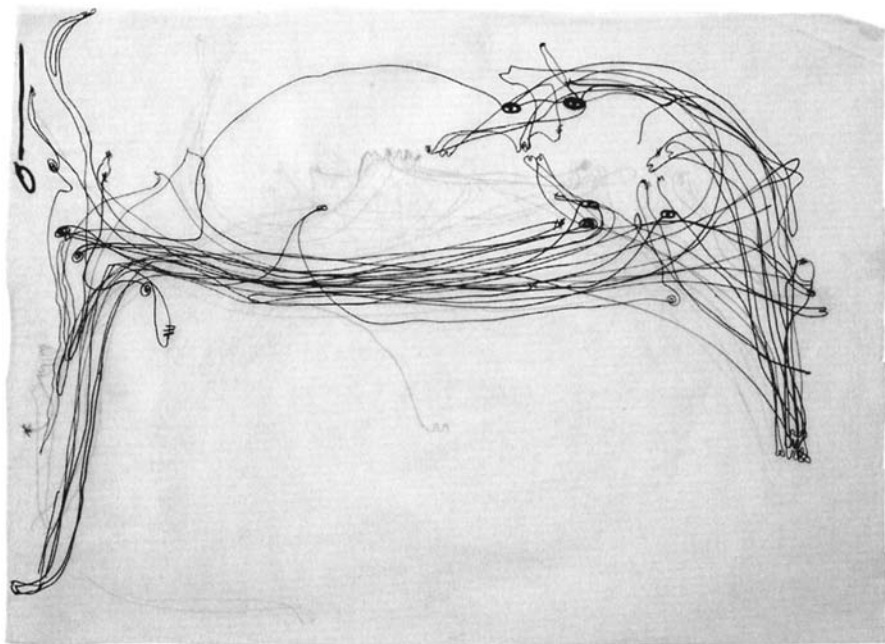
In 1984, in a magnificent text entitled “Des espaces autres” (“Of Other Spaces”), Foucault would explain again what he meant by “heterotopias”: spaces of crisis and deviance, concrete arrangements of incompatible places and heterogeneous times, socially isolated devices but that are easily “penetrable,” in other words, actual machines of imagination that “create a space of illusion which accuses all real space, all locations inside which human life is compartmentalized,

as being far more illusory.”<sup>151</sup> Would the atlas, in this context of compartmentalization—and in spite of the fact that Foucault, in 1966, still refused to make a clear distinction between “table” and “tableau”—not be that operating field which is capable of implementing, on the epistemic, aesthetic and even political levels, “a kind of contestation, that is both mythical and real, of the space in which we live,” in other words, the space for “the greatest reserve of imagination”?<sup>152</sup>

## Leopard, Starry Sky, Smallpox, Spatter

“Borges’s table,” like the notion of heterotopia that comments on it, transforms knowledge itself in its support, in its exposition, in its arrangement, and, of course, in its content. It anticipates the idea of plateau that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari made the constitutive element of the “rhizomes” of inventive thinking, that in which genuine discoveries are made. Plateau: “any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome.”<sup>153</sup> And we understand, faced with the mobile plates of the *Mnemosyne* atlas, that images are considered less as monuments than as documents, and as less fecund as documents than as plateaux connected to each other by routes that are both “superficial” (visible, historic) and “subterranean” (symptomatic, archaeological). Everything here responds to the principle of cartography, whereby “the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification.”<sup>154</sup> What Deleuze and Guattari admire in the same pages, by means of “Deligny’s method” (“to map the gestures and movements of an autistic child, combine several maps for the same child, for several children . . .”),<sup>155</sup> can be recognized, on the level of migrations of cultures in the short and the long term, by means of the “Warburg method,” which we are examining here—that “history of ghosts for big people” in which multiple mobile maps for the human emotions, gestures, and *Pathosformeln* were drawn up (figs. 20–21).<sup>156</sup>

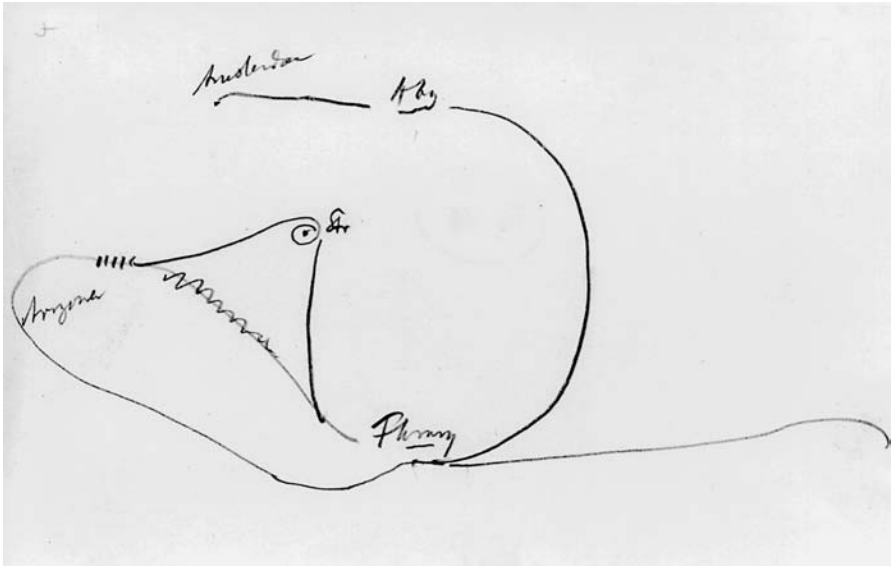
From this point of view, the “iconology of intervals” invented by Aby Warburg has, with the history of art that preceded it, the same relations that “nomad science”—or “eccentric” or “minor” science—has, in *Mille Plateaux*, with the “royal science” or “State science.”<sup>157</sup> It



20. Fernand Deligny, *Calque de Monoblet* (1976), india ink on tracing paper, 36.6 × 49.7 cm. Archives Jacques Allaires et Marie-Dominique Guibal. Photo: DR.

is a knowledge that is “problematic” and not “axiomatic,” founded on a model of “becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant.”<sup>158</sup> Where Panofsky again proposed a science of the *comparis* in search for the “invariable form of variables,” Warburg had already proposed that science of the *disparis* which Deleuze and Guattari envisaged dynamically: “it is not exactly a question of extracting constants from variables, but of placing the variables themselves in a state of continuous variation.”<sup>159</sup>

Long before recognizing the philosophical fecundity that is assumed almost fraternally in Foucauldian heterotopias,<sup>160</sup> Gilles Deleuze found in Borges enough to make knowledge burst out laughing, and so “to shatter the familiar landmarks of our thought” or “to break up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things.” The chapter in *Logique du sens* devoted to the “ideal game,” for example, opens on a reminder of the “Caucus race” in Lewis Carroll, where “you start



21. Aby Warburg, *Outline for a Personal Geography* (1928), pencil drawing. London, Warburg Institute. Photo: Warburg Institute.

when you want and you stop whenever you like,” as well as of Borges’s “Lottery of Babylon,” in which the “number of draws is infinite [so that] no decision is final.”<sup>161</sup> Such paradoxes can generally only be thought of “as nonsense,” and yet, says Deleuze, they are “precisely: the reality of thought itself,” and are consequently “the game reserved for thought and for art . . . by which thought and art are real and disturb reality, morality, and the economy of the world.”<sup>162</sup>

By adjoining the paradoxes of Borges and the Stoic idea of temporality, Deleuze succeeds in making us understand something essential in the idea of the atlas that I am hoping to construct here: What happens in the paradoxical space of the different “tables of Borges” is possible only because a paradoxical time affects all the events that happen to it. This time is neither linear, nor continuous, nor infinite: Instead, it is “infinitely subdivisible” and is “to be parceled out”; it is a time that does not cease to disassemble itself and to reassemble and return itself to its most immemorial conditions. This time is the Stoic *Aiôn* placed by Deleuze in opposition to measurable *Chronos*: time “at the surface”—or at the table—of which the events are, he

says, “gathered as effects.”<sup>163</sup> This is how “each present is divided into past and future, ad infinitum,” according to a “labyrinth” whose forms Borges would invent,<sup>164</sup> but of which, one must remember, Warburg and Benjamin, a few decades earlier, had already provided a decisive formulation with expressions such as *Vorgeschichte* and *Nachgeschichte*, the “pre-” and “post-” history<sup>165</sup> that is contiguous with everything in the world.

We can understand, in such a context, why Gilles Deleuze—again, via the Stoics—chooses not to separate the games with the sense, which we find everywhere in Borges or Lewis Carroll, from the games with time that the most ancient divinatory practices assume, “to divide the sky into sections and to distribute the lines of flights of birds, to follow on the ground the letter traced by the snout of a pig, to pull the liver to the surface and to observe its lines and fissures”<sup>166</sup>—there exactly where Warburg began his own “visual tables” of Western culture. That the *Aiôn* should appear in the visible through the flight of a swallow, the snout of a pig, or the liver of a sheep can—as Deleuze insists—help us understand how far the most profound issues of human fate are linked with bursts of laughter and, in general, that “art of surfaces, of the singular lines and points that appear there,” as crystals of nonsense.<sup>167</sup> Like Warburg in his *Bilderatlas* and like Benjamin when he evoked the art of “reading what was never written,” Deleuze will speak about the game with the *Aiôn* from the perspective of a meeting of heterogeneous spaces, for example, “the two tables or series [of the] sky and [of the] earth,” of the sidereal and the visceral, of the *astra* and of the *monstra*.<sup>168</sup>

Borges himself became a master of the art—an art that was both superficial and profound, humoristic and overwhelming—of inventing objects that are so many games, tables in which the abundance of spaces and times will collect all of a sudden, only to be better rediffracted, reparable ad infinitum. In “The Secret Miracle,” for example, a man opens a “worthless atlas” among the four hundred thousand volumes of the Clementine library; he comes across a “dizzying” map of India, and places his finger without thinking on “one of the tiny letters” on the map; and then, at the same time, feels certain that he has “found God” and wakes up from a dream that is now merely lost pieces.<sup>169</sup> But, in each piece of debris, in each parcel of matter or language, from the *A* of the *Aleph* to the *Z* of the *Zahir*, Borges will also



find the crystal of worlds disassembled and reassembled ad infinitum. The *Zahir* is that absolute rarity capable of focalizing—and even of carrying, like the righteous in the Jewish tradition—the entire universe in the most dissimulated form possible, humble and changing at the same time, common and passing at the same time:

In Buenos Aires the *Zahir* is a common twenty-centavo coin into which a razor or letter opener has scratched the letters *N T* and the number 2; the date stamped on the face is 1929. (In Gujarat, at the end of the eighteenth century, the *Zahir* was a tiger; in Java it was a blind man in the Surakarta mosque, stoned by the faithful; in Persia, an astrolabe that Nadir Shah ordered thrown into the sea; in the prisons of Mahdi, in 1892, a small sailor's compass, wrapped in a shred of cloth from a turban, that Rudolf Karl von Slatin touched; in the synagogue in Cordoba, according to Zotenberg, a vein in the marble of one of the twelve hundred pillars; in the ghetto in Tetuan, the bottom of a well.)<sup>170</sup>

As for the *Aleph*, it is finally no more than “a small iridescent sphere” and “probably little more than an inch,” yet in which everything in the world converged, paradoxically, “undiminished”:

Each thing (a mirror's face, let us say) was infinite things, since I distinctly saw it from every angle of the universe. I saw the teeming sea; I saw daybreak and nightfall; I saw the multitudes of America; I saw a silvery cobweb in the centre of a black pyramid; I saw a splintered labyrinth (it was London); I saw, close up, unending eyes watching themselves in me as in a mirror; I saw all the mirrors on earth and none of them reflected me; I saw in a backyard of Soler Street the same tiles that thirty years before I'd seen in the entrance of a house in Fray Bentos; I saw bunches of grapes, snow, tobacco, lodes of metal, steam; I saw convex equatorial deserts and each one of their grains of sand; I saw a woman in Inverness whom I shall never forget; I saw her tangled hair, her tall figure, I saw the cancer in her breast; I saw a ring of baked mud in a sidewalk, where before there had been a tree; I saw a summer house in Adrogué and a copy of the first English translation of Pliny—Philemon Holland's—and all at the same time saw each letter on each page (as a boy, I used to marvel that the let-

ters in a closed book did not get scrambled and lost overnight); I saw a sunset in Querétaro that seemed to reflect the color of a rose in Bengal; I saw my empty bedroom; I saw in a closet in Alkmaar a terrestrial globe between two mirrors that multiplied it endlessly; I saw horses with flowing manes on a shore of the Caspian Sea at dawn; I saw the delicate bone structure of a hand; I saw the survivors of a battle sending out picture postcards; I saw in a showcase in Mirzapur a pack of Spanish playing cards; I saw the slanting shadows of ferns on a greenhouse floor; I saw tigers, pistons, bison, tides, and armies; I saw all the ants on the planet; I saw a Persian astrolabe; I saw in the drawer of a writing table (and the handwriting made me tremble) unbelievable, obscene, detailed letters, which Beatriz had written to Carlos Argentino; I saw a monument I worshipped in the Chacarita cemetery; I saw the rotted dust and bones that had once deliciously been Beatriz Viterbo; I saw the circulation of my own dark blood; I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death . . . ; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept.<sup>171</sup>

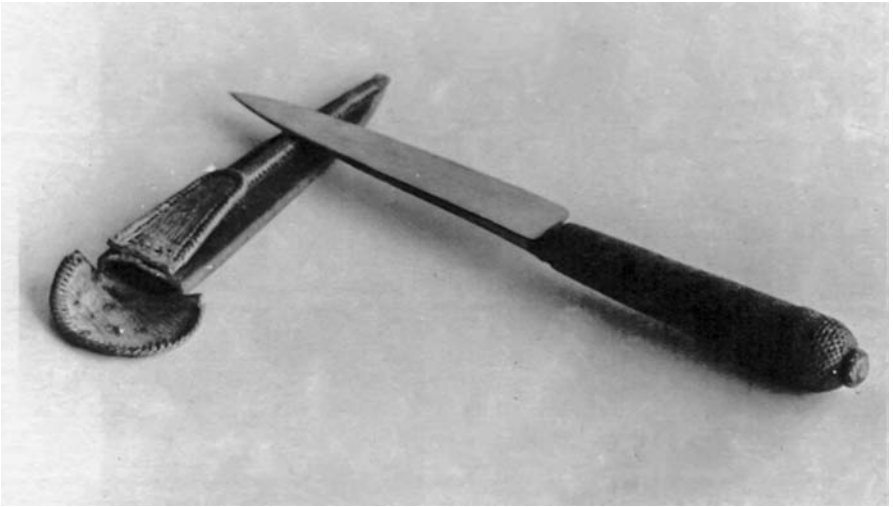
This quotation may well be long, yet it is made up of only one sentence, which obliges us to see in it a single plate of what would be the “atlas of Borges,” an atlas that would itself be formed by an indefinite number of “tables” of this kind. But what matters, in such an enumeration of images or of “things seen,” is not their summation, their list or inventory, but rather the relations that they weave between them, from the distance of the “teeming sea” to the closeness of the body of a beloved woman, from the impersonal “ring of baked mud in a sidewalk” to the intimate “circulation of my own dark blood.” It is the “secret rigor” of things chaotically united that is important here, as Borges would say of Lewis Carroll.<sup>172</sup>

To write—whether *Fictions* or chronicles, poems or documentary essays—would thus consist, in this context, of forming the atlas or the defamiliarizing cartography of our incommensurable experiences (which is very different from writing the story or the catalogue of our incommensurable experiences). In *The Author*, for example, there are random lists of fugitive impressions or attempts to list heterogeneous memories that, upon our death, will disappear into nothingness.<sup>173</sup> But there are also perfectly rigorous lists—only random in appearance—lists of things (*Sachen*) that are very different even if engendered by a

single cause (*Ursache*), as when the reality of slavery justifies for itself a gathering of very disparate events such as: “Handy’s blues, . . . the mythological stature of Abraham Lincoln, the half-million dead of the War of Secession, . . . the inclusion of the verb ‘lynch’ in respectable dictionaries,” and so on.<sup>174</sup> A single pile of dust at the bottom of a shelf bears witness, for Borges, to “universal history,”<sup>175</sup> and this is why one must constantly invent, for language itself, new operating rules destined to open the possibilities of a knowledge of the “intimate and secret relations” between things.

Such is the “Chinese encyclopaedia” evoked by Borges in the context of his essay entitled “John Wilkins’ Analytical Language,” in which the erudite reference to a certain “Dr Franz Kuhn” will appease neither bursts of laughter, nor the shaking of surfaces, nor philosophical uneasiness.<sup>176</sup> Such will be Ramon Llull’s “thinking machine” — which of course only malfunctions — the hyper-metaphoric world of *Kennigar*, the numbering system invented by Funes (a different word for each number), the “labyrinth in which the impious wander” according to Aurelian of Aquileia, or the extraordinary language of the Yahoos in which “the word *nrrz*, for example, suggests a dispersion or spots of one kind or another: it may mean the starry sky, a leopard, a flock of birds, smallpox, something splattered with water and mud, the act of scattering, or the flight that follows a defeat.”<sup>177</sup>

It seems that as he got older, Borges concentrated a lot of his energy, like Aby Warburg after his psychosis, on reconfiguring his own poetic experience in the form of an atlas that could have been called *Mnemosyne*. In 1960, he made a little “museum” of scattered quotations.<sup>178</sup> In 1975, he established a collection of disasters, while recognizing the incommensurable character — too small, too big, too disparate — of “memorable facts,” for example, attempting to make the “inventory” of his attic.<sup>179</sup> In 1981, he came back, once again, to his unreasonable love — and to his heterodox use — of encyclopedias.<sup>180</sup> In 1984, two years before his death, Borges finally published that work entitled *Atlas*, a book “made up of images and words,” of discoveries arranged according to a “cleverly chaotic” order, in which the photographs are not arranged for others to see, since this illustrated atlas was, after all, the work of a man who was practically blind.<sup>181</sup> It was an atlas of the incommensurable, as any real atlas should be, in that it



22. "The Dagger of Pehuajó." From J. L. Borges, (1984) 1999, 66.

placed images of the world explored—an Indian totem pole, a stone tower, the San Marco square in Venice, the ruin of a Greek temple, a living tiger, a brioche to eat, street corners in Buenos Aires, the Egyptian desert, a Japanese inscription, an antique kitchen knife (fig. 22)—and also images from dreams that haunted his nights, dreams of women and of wars, dreams of "slate tables" and encyclopedias in which the articles have an end but no beginning.<sup>182</sup>

We can find here the essential dialectics of the atlas, as it was characterized by Walter Benjamin throughout his texts on memory, collecting, and the world of images: It is a *materialistic* practice in the sense that it leaves things their anonymous sovereignty, their abundance, their irreducible particularity.<sup>183</sup> But it is at the same time a psychological activity in which the reasoned inventory makes room for association, anamnesis, memory, the magic of a game that is linked to childhood and imagination.<sup>184</sup> The imagination, again: the "queen of the faculties," according to Baudelaire, that "touches all the others," both an analysis and a synthesis because it is material, to the point of seeing in the world an "immense store of observations," and which is poetic because it "decomposes all creation and, with materials amassed and arranged according to rules whose origin can

only be found in the depths of the soul, it creates a new world.”<sup>185</sup> It is this “new world” for which the atlas draws up a paradoxical and fecund cartography, a cartography capable of disorienting us and orienting us at the same time, which we must now start to explore, or start again to explore.

# **II. Atlas**

“Carrying the Whole World of Sufferings”



## A Titan Bent under the Burden of the World

The *Mnemosyne* atlas was, in Aby Warburg's hands, like a great visual poem that could evoke or invoke, through images, without diminishing them in any way, the great hypotheses that belong everywhere else in his work: in his published articles, of course, with their labyrinthine footnotes, but also in his innumerable manuscript sketches and, in general, in all of his working tools, boxes of files, outlines, and picture libraries, as well as in the classification of his library. The atlas of images was thus the workroom of a thinking that was always potential—inexhaustible, as strong as it was unfinished—a thinking about images and their fate. Not only an anamnesis of the iconological problems brought up by Warburg throughout his life, but also a matrix of new questions that each affinity of images sought—and continues to do so today, before our eyes, as though waiting—to provoke, at the center of each plate, and from plate to plate. We know also that this open and fecund apparatus, for Aby Warburg, was nothing other than the anxious and genial response to a psychical situation that had held him enclosed and sterile between the walls of the Kreuzlingen sanatorium, between 1921 and 1924.

The atlas of images owes its name, of course, to an epistemic genre known since the Renaissance, notably in the domain of cartography, and that became, through the encyclopedism of the Enlightenment, very fashionable in the cultural sciences—archaeology, history, anthropology, psychology—at the end of the nineteenth century. But before we consider this tradition that Warburg both renewed and deconstructed, we must keep in mind that the choice of such a word, in the mind of this historian who was as interested in mythology as in ancient astrology, was obviously not accidental. Like the leitmotif of Orpheus, the personification of the “tragedy of culture” according to Warburg, the Titan Atlas appears, in the totality of Warburg's project, as a figure that is at the same time mythological and methodological, allegorical and autobiographical. It is, indeed, in the image of the Titan Atlas that Warburg's atlas can appear: like the free and bursting



response—both open and fecund—to a situation of weighty oppression, enclosed and sterile, that was his own situation from the end of World War I. The *Mnemosyne* project would thus be a response to the gay science of something like a tragedy or a punishment of fate.

It is in plate 2 of Warburg's atlas, just after the visceral-sidereal arrangement of plate 1, that the figure of Atlas appears, in a context of cosmic representations and mythological scenes projected onto the firmament for stars to enjoy the prestige of divine names (fig. 23).<sup>1</sup> In a previous version of this plate, the figure of Atlas appeared next to the "formless" series of divinatory livers, which already suggested an exegesis on the Atlas-Prometheus pair, the two brothers punished by the gods but to whom humanity owes so much . . . Whatever the case, Atlas appears here with the characteristics of the famous *Farnese Atlas* in the Archaeology Museum of Naples: a monumental figure in marble, discovered and restored in the sixteenth century, and sculpted around 50–25 BCE after a Hellenistic model from at least two centuries before.<sup>2</sup> Aby Warburg would thus have made this the *ammonitore*, so to speak, the emblematic figure, not only of the plate on which it appears, but perhaps of his whole atlas, according to the double aspect of the figure: a body bending under the weight of the burden; a displayed space, spherical and legible, of the astrological sky, sculpted in bas relief on the Roman sphere and taken up again in the engraving of the eighteenth century, which perfectly clarifies its profusion of motifs (fig. 24).

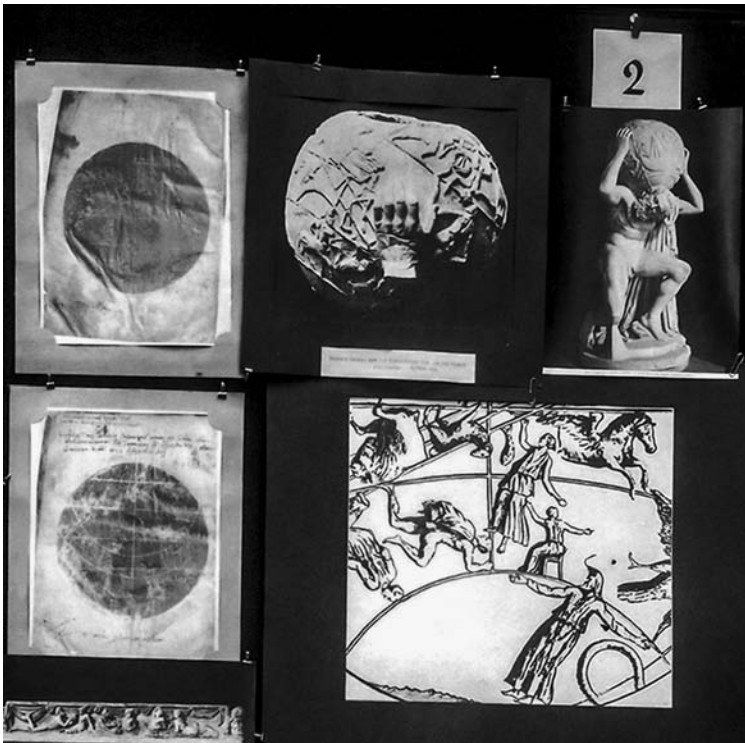
Atlas would thus be the emblematic figure of a fundamental polarity through which Warburg never stopped thinking about the history of Mediterranean civilizations: on the one hand, the tragedy by which every culture demonstrates its own monsters (*monstra*); on the other hand, the knowledge by which every culture explains, redeems, or thwarts its monsters in the sphere of thought (*astra*). We should remember that Atlas, son of Heaven and Earth, was already present in the pantheon of the Phoenicians.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore not unlikely that, in spite of the "late" character—or better still, the surviving character—of the Roman sculpture represented on the plate, Warburg might have wanted to underline the "primitive" character of the iconography as well as its signification.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the mythical genealogy of Atlas—Iapetus and Clymene according to Hesiod, Aether and Gaia according to Hyginus, Uranus and Clito according to Diodorus



23. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 2. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

of Sicily<sup>5</sup>—the sources agreed on making him, with his brothers Epimetheus and Prometheus, an ante-God as well as an anti-God.

Atlas belongs to a generation anterior to that of the Olympians, a generation of “monstrous, immeasurable beings,”<sup>6</sup> which, as we know, decided to dispute the gods’ power over the world. Hesiod named twelve Titans who were the counterparts to the twelve gods of Olympus: symmetry and, therefore, rivalry. The Titans would take



24. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 2 (detail). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

hold of the world, thanks to Kronos—Time itself would thus be an anti-god—and reign until he was dethroned by his son Zeus. But the war, the Titanomachy, would last ten years, before the Olympians finally pushed their enemies into Tartarus.<sup>7</sup> Let us not forget that, in this history, the Titans would equally be punished for having wanted to give to men—a race they created themselves—that which the gods wanted to keep as their own privilege, resulting in the concomitant tortures of Prometheus in the East (a visceral torture) and Atlas in the West (a sidereal torture). Hence the words of Prometheus in the eponymous tragedy of Aeschylus:

The fate of Atlas grieves me [*dustukhō*]*—*my own brother,  
Who in the far West stands with his unwieldy load

Pressing upon his back, the pillar of heaven and earth  
[*akthos ouk euagkalon*].<sup>8</sup>

Here, then, is Atlas, that “immeasurable” being, condemned to the torturing immobility of a labor that consists in carrying the axis of the world and the whole canopy of heaven on his shoulders. “Under strong constraint, [he] holds up [*ékhei*] the broad sky with his head and tireless hands, standing at the ends of the earth, away by the clear-voiced Hesperides, for Zeus the resourceful assigned him this lot,” as Hesiod wrote in his *Theogony*.<sup>9</sup> And as Ovid wrote later in his *Metamorphoses*: “See, Atlas himself is in difficulties [*laborat*]: his shoulders can barely sustain the weight of the white-hot vault.”<sup>10</sup> But for what is he punished in this way? Hyginus would say it was because he “tried to climb into heaven [*caelum ascendere*]” that Atlas, henceforth—and until the end of time—“holds up the sky [*caelum sustinere*].”<sup>11</sup> We could probably say, with Theodor Reik, that the myth owes its form here to a structure of guilt,<sup>12</sup> provided we add that the guilt supposes a dialectics of pathos and of potency: Does Atlas not suffer a punishment that is, all in all, the very actualization of his titanic strength, that which for centuries would make up a personification of the pivot—the axis and support—of our whole world?<sup>13</sup>

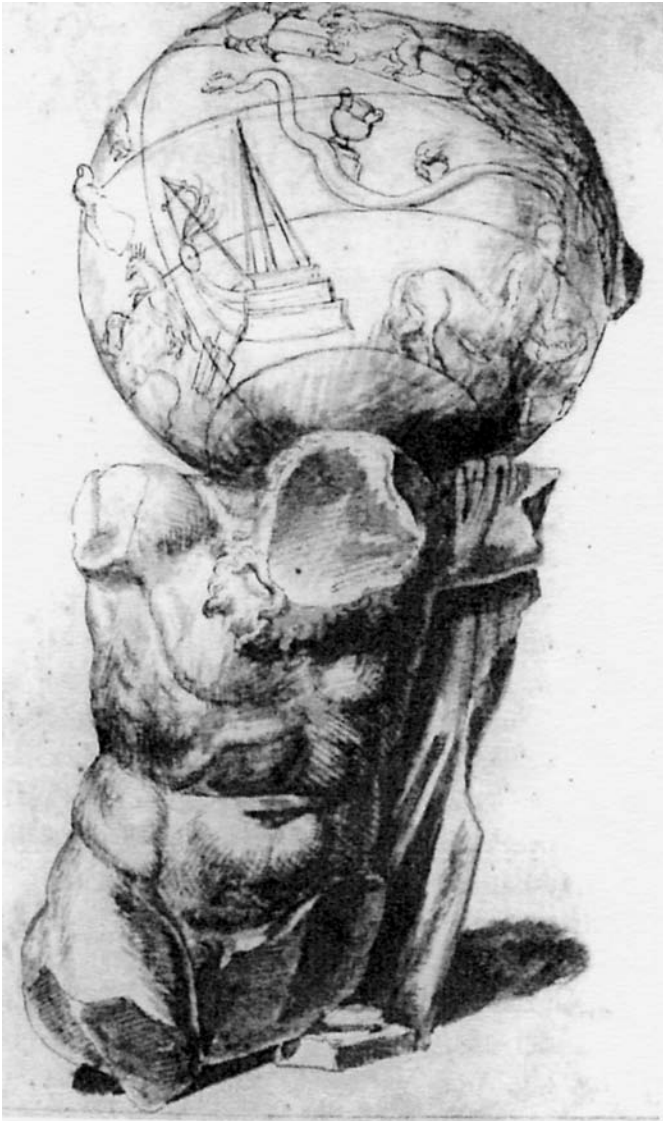
Warburg was an avid reader of Hermann Usener who, by no coincidence, had devoted a significant passage to Atlas in his work on the names of the gods, Atlas the “carrier” or the “support” of the cosmos.<sup>14</sup> The word *atlas*, in Greek, is made up of the combination of the prosthetic *a* (the adjunction, to the initial of a word, of a nonetymological element that does not modify the meaning of the word itself) and the form of the verb *tlaô*, which means “to carry” or “to support”. *Tlas* or *atlas*, in the literal sense, means “the carrier” par excellence. But to carry is by no means a simple gesture. Carrying is possible only by the meeting of two antagonistic vectors: gravity, on the one hand, and muscular strength, on the other. Carrying shows the potency of the carrier, but also the suffering that he endures under the weight of what he carries. Carrying is an act of courage, of force, but also of resignation, of oppressed, weighed-down force: it is the vanquished; it is the slaves who suffer the most under the weight of what they carry.

This is immediately evident in the figure of the *Farnese Atlas* that

Aby Warburg placed in the top right corner of one of the plates in his atlas (fig. 24): The potential of the athlete is inseparable, in this sculpting, from the suffering of the vanquished warrior. In a drawing in the *Codex Coburgensis* that shows the appearance of the *Farnese Atlas* at the moment of its archaeological discovery—and to which the description that Ulisse Aldrovandi gave it in 1556 corresponds very well<sup>15</sup>—this double condition appears with an overwhelming clarity (fig. 25): The mythological hero does not even have any arms left to carry the weight that crushes his shoulders; his head is miserable, empty and smashed, while the sphere appears luxurious, full and perfect; his broken legs pull him closer to the earth, which, with the sky, forms his inexorable prison, the condition of his own eternal immobility. It is enough, moreover, to look, in the Naples museum, at the figure that was restored in the sixteenth century to find ourselves facing a clean, violent vision of this conjunction of the carrier (the body) and the carried (the sky): the great sphere crushing the Titan's back, and forming in this way a tragic pair with his shoulders, which are both powerful and suffering (fig. 26).

Before—or rather beyond—concerning himself with the iconography of the images on which he worked, Warburg tried to grasp what he wanted to call their *dynamography*,<sup>16</sup> a notion founded on a permanent, even suspenseful play of constantly moving polarities, constantly in conflict or in reciprocal transformations. An interesting image, for Warburg's eyes, and for our eyes today, is always a dialectical image. Thus, the figure of Atlas must be envisaged from the perspective of multiple polarities that it allows to appear, at the front of which is this double aspect, visible in the *Farnese Atlas*, of potency and suffering. In the great photo library of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg that Fritz Saxl developed following his master's indications, we find numerous representations of Atlas, including a whole series that documents, for example, the great mythological polarity of Atlas and Hercules. This in turn responds to the history of the Farnese collection itself, in which we find these two monumental masterpieces of antique art that are the *Farnese Atlas*, on the one hand, and the *Farnese Hercules*, on the other.<sup>17</sup>

The cardinal collection—in which Patricia Falguières saw a founding moment in the modern notion of museum<sup>18</sup>—made visible, through this symmetrical rivalry between Hercules and Atlas, two pos-



25. Master of the Codex Coburgensis, *Farnese Atlas* (mid-sixteenth century), drawing on paper. Coburg, Kunstsammlung der Veste. Photo: DR.



26. Anonymous Roman, *Farnese Atlas*, detail (c. 150 BCE), marble. Face, arms, and legs restored in the sixteenth century. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Author photo.

sible images of potency, which we can call the *vis activa* (the directly efficient potency of Hercules) and the *vis contemplativa* (the immobile and divided potency, the pathetic potency without power of Atlas). In his classic study on the iconography of Hercules, Erwin Panofsky neglected the political dimension of this polarity in favor of a more ethical alternative, which would challenge the character of Hercules to choose between voluptuousness and virtue.<sup>19</sup> But Françoise Baridon saw, in the political iconography of sixteenth-century France, the eminent role of this double image of potency: “These two [Atlas and Hercules] are the ones who truly carry the weight of the world on their shoulders.”<sup>20</sup> So, Pope Julius III and King Philip II of Spain appealed to the image of Atlas on the back of their medals, which was a way of placing the Titan at the heart of a reflection on *potency* itself, insofar as it can distinguish itself from exercised *power*, or even contradict it. It is no coincidence that the figure of absolute power—whether the emperor, Kronos, or God the Father—often produces a direct inversion of the figure of Atlas, where the sphere of the world no longer weighs on the shoulders of the allegorical character, but lies humbly at his feet.<sup>21</sup>

By gathering in his library, in parallel with the images of his photo library, a whole series of studies on the myth of Atlas and his iconography,<sup>22</sup> Aby Warburg undoubtedly sought to observe experimentally the “dynamography” of this figure through different historical and ideological contexts. Because he supports the entire world, Atlas can personify man’s authority over the universe. But since he remains immobilized under the weight of the celestial vault, he is also able to personify the impotence of man facing the determinism of the stars. Between these two extremes, the history of images offers an extraordinary range of versions, of bifurcations, of inversions, and even perversions.

Christological versions, for example, appear in the famous *Saint Christopher* of the Basel museum, where the saint carries on his shoulders not only the Christ Child, but the whole celestial sphere; religious engravings also exist in which Jesus carries, at the same time as his cross (a sign of humiliation and of passion), the cosmic globe on his shoulders (a sign of glory and of potency). Warburg himself commented on a teratological version of Atlas when he evoked the



“figure of a man suffering from the French scourge, drawn by Dürer for a xylograph made to accompany a medical prediction of Usenius, dating from 1496” in which the head of the poor syphilitic is topped with a stellar sphere, which is a way of indicating the influence of the stars on our terrestrial sufferings.<sup>23</sup> Later, epistemological variants would dominate, like the engraving in which Rubens represented geometry as a titanic figure observing the carried shadow of his sphere, or the figure of the frontispiece that opens the geographical *Atlas* of Mercator, or numerous other works in which the author himself is shown with the “laborious” traits of Atlas.

In this iconographic litany where the model of the Hellenistic Atlas gives way to a Roman model,<sup>24</sup> and where the names of Francesco di Giorgio, Hans Holbein, Tintoretto, Baldassare Peruzzi, or Taddeo Zuccari are dotted along the way,<sup>25</sup> the question of knowledge will always be more clearly superimposed on that of punishment. It is because the suffering of carrying becomes, with Atlas, a potential to know, a potential without power given to him by the fact that he is in tune with the celestial vault and the movement of the stars. Since the sphere that he supports is engraved with remarkable precision, the *Farnese Atlas* has often been commented on from the perspective of a history of astrology and astronomy (figs. 24 and 26): This is what Giovanni Battista Passeri did in 1750, and what Fritz Saxl was to do in 1933, in the wake of Warburg’s work, as well as of the work by Franz Boll and Auguste Bouché-Leclercq on ancient astrology and its relics or survivals.<sup>26</sup>

More recently, Germaine Aujac synthesized the ancient knowledge the *Farnese Atlas* carries, while noting the topological strangeness, foreignness, of the celestial sphere, which is like a glove turned inside out since it shows the sky as seen from the exterior (and not from the earth):

The concept of celestial sphere, born very early of the observation of the circular movement of the stars, was one of the most fecund, as much on the practical level, by the geometrical treatment that it allowed, as on the philosophical level, by the vision of the world that it offered to reflection and to meditation. Anaximander of Miletus was the first, it is believed, to “construct” a sphere, in a representation of

the sky. A full or “solid” sphere, it showed the cosmos as seen from outside, from the viewpoint of the Creator we could say. Inside this compact mass, we could imagine the Earth, the sea and all the beings that populate them. Two centuries later, Eudoxus of Cnidus carried, for the first time, the drawing of the constellations on a solid sphere, accompanied by instructions or a reading guide, of which remain only the verse translation by Aratos in the following century, a poem entitled *The Phenomena* which had a considerable success throughout Antiquity. It is likely that the sphere of Eudoxus, which was conceived as a working tool, when stitched into the right place on the characters or animals representing the constellations, carried the corresponding stars. . . . We can get an idea of what the sphere of Eudoxus was when we see the celestial sphere carried on the shoulders of Atlas, in the Naples museum.<sup>27</sup>

One can add that, on Atlas’ shoulders, the celestial sphere offered him the possibility of a real tragic knowledge, knowledge through contact and pain: Everything he knew about the cosmos he gained from his own misfortune and his own punishment. A close knowledge, but an impure knowledge for that reason; an anxious and even “grievous” knowledge, if we take literally Homer’s expression in the *Odyssey* to characterize Atlas: “the malevolent Atlas,” he says, using the formulation *oloophrôn* (from the adjective *oloos*, meaning “harmful”), and who yet “knows the depths of all the seas and supports the great columns that hold earth and sky apart.”<sup>28</sup> Atlas would, therefore, protect us, with his bodily strength, from the sky crushing the earth. But with his spiritual strength, he is as knowledgeable of the abysses as he is of the great cosmic intervals: He is the holder, therefore, of an abyssal knowledge as worrying as it is necessary, as “harmful” as it is fundamental.

It is a proliferating knowledge, then, for this very reason: He was made the founding father of astronomy, astrology, geography, and also of philosophy itself—according to a remark by Diogenes Laertius at the opening of his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*<sup>29</sup>—and even of the construction of boats or the art of navigation.<sup>30</sup> Virgil tells that Atlas taught Iopas how to play the cithara and to sing, stating that he “sang to his gilded lyre of the wanderings of the moon

and the labours of the sun, the origin of the human race and of the animals, the causes of rain and of the fires of heaven.”<sup>31</sup> This is a way of returning to the fundamentals, that is, to the sky and to sidereal knowledge, as Cicero was to explain: “Tradition would never make Atlas the pillar of the sky, nor nail Prometheus to the Caucasus . . . if they had not received from astronomy a marvelous science [*caelestium divina cognitio*] that symbolized their mythological fable.”<sup>32</sup>

Ancient cosmology, the principal theme in the plate of the atlas upon which the figure of the Titan appears (fig. 23), was interesting to Warburg only for its capacities for spatial and temporal migrations, for persistence and mixed transformations, and, all in all, for survival (*Nachleben*). The moment when Atlas enters onto the scene could not be understood without the plates that precede and follow it, and that show, on the one hand, the oriental sources of Greek cosmology (in plates 1 [fig. 3] and 3, for example) and, on the other hand, the Western fate, right up to Michelangelo and Kepler, even up to the twentieth century itself (plates B [fig. 2] and C), of these great cosmic and spherical conceptions of antiquity.<sup>33</sup>

The notion of sphere or of celestial dome would survive for centuries, with the figure of Atlas, among others, appearing in a structure that is both homogeneous and proliferating, including demons that carry the sky and giants painted on certain vaults in Pompeii, and including the east dome of San Marco, which Karl Lehmann spoke of in terms of a *Nachleben* of antiquity.<sup>34</sup> Atlas also appears in a long poem of seven hundred and three hexameters composed in the sixth century CE by John of Gaza, entitled “Description of a Cosmic Tableau”: It is an astronomical representation combining Christian symbolism—a majestic cross dominated the center of this universe—with the profusion of typical figures of pagan astrology.<sup>35</sup> It would be for historians of Byzantine and medieval art to complete Warburg’s hypotheses on the survival of ancient astrology at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation:<sup>36</sup> The “cosmic cross” of John of Gaza is found also in Sinai and San Vitale of Ravenna,<sup>37</sup> while the Titan Atlas would lose nothing of his reputation as astronomer in the work of Ado of Vienne in the Middle Ages, or Jacopo da Bergamo in the Renaissance.<sup>38</sup>

## Gods in Exile and Knowledge in Suffering

What, therefore, does Atlas's own knowledge consist of? It is a tragic knowledge, I said, a knowledge acquired by the Titan on the basis of a conflict he lost, and of a punishment he had to endure, a punishment accompanied by exile—Zeus chained the two brothers Atlas and Prometheus to the two extremities of the world for two dialectically arranged tortures,<sup>39</sup> the one visceral (the devoured liver), the other sidereal (the supported sky)—and by suffering experienced in his very potency, his superhuman capacity to carry alone the great burden of the world in its entirety. Atlas was the only one able to return to Hercules (who deceitfully promised him freedom) the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, but this miraculous picking was merely a brief interval (not a second deceit by Hercules) in his life as eternal prisoner condemned to the knowledge of the extreme things his body held, the abysses of the sea and the constellations of the sky. Aeschylus' famous expression, "knowledge through suffering [*pathei mathos*]," fits perfectly with the Titan Atlas. It even fits—at least this is my hypothesis—the learned Warburg, the inventor of a new kind of atlas.

The Titan's exile was his eternal punishment. In punishment he was repudiated, destroyed, enslaved. In the eternity of punishment and in the knowledge that resulted from it, however, he was affirmed, preserved, and magnified. Atlas was thus constrained by *Nachleben*: by survival as a relic and not by the simple act of survival (*Überleben*). Atlas did indeed disappear, and no one, for a long time, has really been able to say what he looks like. This is because he has, since then, become a thing, or several things, a common noun, our common good. It is told that one day Perseus came to see him, but Atlas, fearing that the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides might be stolen, denied him hospitality. So Perseus

produced from a bag on his left-hand side the loathsome head of Medusa.

The Mighty Atlas [*quantus erat*: in all of his being] was turned to a mighty mountain [*mons factus Atlas*]; his hair and beard were transformed into trees, his massive shoulders and arms

to a line of ridges, his erstwhile head to a cloud-capped peak;  
his bones became rocks [*ossa lapis fiunt*]. Then rising in every  
direction [*altus in omnes*]  
he grew and he grew (so the gods had decreed), till the whole  
of the sky with all of its stars could now bed down on his ranges.<sup>40</sup>

The photo library of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg contains several iconographical testimonies of this period—an engraving by Cherubino Alberti after a drawing by Polidoro da Caravaggio, images by Antonio Tempesta or Gillis Coignet—that Fritz Saxl did not forget to mention in his study of Atlas.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to see, in the different written versions from this period, how the fossilization of Atlas is not reduced to a simple mortifying act, but instead allows the description of a territory that is as strange and marvelous as it is proliferating:

[6] Mount Atlas, which is the subject of the most marvelous stories [*fabulosissimum*] of all the mountains in Africa. It is reported to rise into the sky out of the middle of the sands, a rugged eminence covered with crags on the side facing towards the coast of the Ocean to which it has given its name, but shaded by dense woods and watered by gushing springs on the side facing Africa, where fruits of all kinds spring up of their own accord with such luxuriance that pleasure never lacks satisfaction [*ut numquam satius voluptatibus desit*].  
[7] It is said that in the daytime none of its inhabitants are seen, and that all is silent [*silere omnia*] with a terrifying silence like that of the desert [*alio quam solitudinum horrore*], so that a speechless awe creeps into the hearts of those who approach it, and also a dread of the peak that soars above the clouds and reaches the neighbourhood of the moon's orb [*super nubila atque in vicina lunaris circuli*]; also that at night this peak flashes with frequent fires and swarms with the Avanton gambols of Goat-Pans and Satyrs, and echoes with the music of flutes and pipes and the sound of drums and cymbals. These stories have been published by celebrated authors, in addition to the labours performed in this region by Hercules and Perseus. It is an immense distance away, across unexplored country [*spatium ad eum immensum incertumque*].<sup>42</sup>

Such would be the great lesson of this myth: a punishment transformed into immense knowledge, an exile transformed into territory of abundance, even of Dionysian pleasures. Atlas, the vanquished warrior, forced to immobilize his strength, unfortunate hero oppressed by the weight of his punishment: Atlas eventually becomes an immense, moving thing, with a wealth of teachings. He has given his name to a mountain (Atlas), an ocean (the Atlantic), to an underwater world (Atlantis), to all kinds of monumental, architectural statues designed to support palaces (atlases),<sup>43</sup> and soon a new kind of knowledge intended to gather, through images, the dispersion—but also the secret coherence—of our entire world. We can verify here, once again, the pertinence of the notions introduced by Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, then by Claude Lévi-Strauss, regarding the epistemic fecundity of myths and their remarkable heuristic and classificatory role.<sup>44</sup>

But it is the task of the poets and artists—even the philosophers and art historians—never to reduce the myth to mere obsolescence, and, at the same time, never to forget, in the survivals of the refigured myth, the simple pathos that accompanies its original burst. Not far from the *Farnese Atlas*, in the collection of Cardinal Alexander—and today in the same rooms of the archaeological museum in Naples—we could find a statue of the “Kneeling Barbarian” recalling the fundamental gesture of Atlas as a stranger/foreigner (neither god nor man) and as a vanquished man carrying his burden of defeat. The tragic pair of the powerful-suffering shoulder and its all-too-heavy load (fig. 26) will not have disappeared from the poetic, pictorial, and even musical repertoires of the “formulae of pathos” (*Pathosformeln*) discovered by Aby Warburg in art history from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, on the basis of that “survival of antiquity” which, decidedly, confirms that it has had a hard life (but one should say instead, moving and fluid as well as petrified).

The *Farnese Atlas*, it seems—although Peter Sloterdijk, I remember, saw things differently<sup>45</sup>—does not forget his own original pain: We can see the Titan with his two knees bent, as though he were about to collapse. It is clear, in any case, that he is fighting against his own weakening, against exhaustion, with a gesture that recalls the expressions already visible in the painting of Greek vases, where some-

times the two knees of the colossus are ostensibly bent.<sup>46</sup> In spite of a relatively conventional restoration, the Roman statue acquires a new legibility if we place it back in the context of Roman mannerism and that *figura sforzata* that still functioned in the sixteenth century, as the dialectical image par excellence of the relation between potency and suffering, irresistible strength and the danger of collapse. We can think of the figures painted by Michelangelo that represent angels carrying the great cross or, better still, the column of the flagellation.<sup>47</sup> We might think, above all, of the extraordinary sculpted series of “Slaves,” which could be looked at as so many variations on the tragic body of the Titan, to the point that one of them was nicknamed “Atlas” (fig. 27).<sup>48</sup>

Independently even of the possible dimensions of the images of this large iconographical series—be they obsidional, as in the Sala dei Giganti of Mantua, or reduced to a gold-plated object, like the figures of Atlas made by Abraham Gessner<sup>49</sup>—what strikes me is that the fundamental gesture of sustaining must be understood in the sense of both the weight supported and the fight carried on. Yet this does not have to do with fighting face to face: It is not a brawl in the open air, but instead a fight immobilized by verticalization. It is a fight with something that weighs and overhangs, and which in this way appears altogether like the *fatum*, like fate, on the shoulders of the one who must, literally, fight against time and suffer its incessant strikes. D. W. Winnicott explained very clearly how the risk of falling mixed with the risk of becoming depersonalized and of playing again by means of a misfortune experienced since the dawn of time. “The fear of collapsing,” says Winnicott, “is that of a collapsing that has already been experienced,” but that the subject is missing and cannot be included in his history.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the “formula of pathos,” in the figure of Atlas, concerns no doubt the immobilization—but also the indefinite repetition, the unconscious eternalizing—of a conflict whose surviving form is at risk of collapsing at every instant.

In the general poetics of Aby Warburg, the figure of Atlas probably occupies, in its own way, a symmetrical position to that of the Nymph.<sup>51</sup> Everything that the Warburgian *Ninfa*—for example, the beautiful servant of Ghirlandaio in the frescoes of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which Warburg displayed on a plate of his atlas,



27. Michelangelo, *Slave (Atlas)* (1519–36), marble. Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia. Author photo.



in a series that even includes a photograph of a pagan Italian in the village of Settignano<sup>52</sup> (fig. 28)—everything she transports so generously and lightly on her head, like an ancient goddess of Victory, Atlas would only carry alone, almost at the end of his strength. Everything that appears as an erotic offering and as grace (although cruel) on the Nymph's head appears as tragic destiny and suffering on the shoulders of Atlas. The Nymph and Atlas, therefore, are two antithetical figures—both necessary, one exaggerating in a hysterical parade, the other crumbling under melancholic prostration—of *Pathosformel* and *Nachleben*, according to Warburg.

The possibility that human gestures may be capable of surviving from Greek and oriental antiquity right down to the attitudes, captured by Warburg's own camera, of an Italian pagan from the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century—is what the *Mnemosyne* atlas seeks to show us in its full range (or rather, I might say, in its full “rhizome” of images). Consequently, there is no doubt that the “fear of collapse” itself survives in our cultural history as a counter-subject of any gesture and any strength (plate 56 of *Mnemosyne* is devoted to this). In his library Aby Warburg included numerous critical editions of the works of Friedrich Hölderlin—which accompanied his study of the poet's tragic descent into madness<sup>53</sup>—and this was because he intended to put this poetry back into the context of the modern survivals of antiquity. Between 1801 and 1803, Hölderlin had written a sketch for a hymn devoted to the Titans: “They still are / Untethered. What's divine does not strike the unconcerned.”<sup>54</sup> In the same years, and not by chance, while sketching his poem *Mnemosyne*, he combined the fear of collapse with the patience or the *pathos* of truth:

A sign, this is what we are, and without meaning,  
 Dead to any suffering, and we have almost  
 Lost our language . . .  
 [. . .] Yes, the mortals, rather [*die Sterblichen*]  
 Reach the edges of the abyss [*an den Abgrund*]. So things turn  
 With them. Time  
 Is long, but then appears  
 The true.<sup>55</sup>



28. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 46 (detail). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

Just as the Titan Atlas remained on the verge of collapse between sky and earth, the “mortals” of Hölderlin remain motionless—or trembling—on “the edges of the abyss.” That the project of a hymn dedicated to the Titans was unfinished gives us an indication of the movement that Jean-Christophe Bailly characterized as “the end of the hymn” through, in fact, the works of Hölderlin, Büchner, Kleist, Baudelaire, or Leopardi.<sup>56</sup> But “the end of the hymn” signifies neither forgetting nor obsolescence; instead, it is a reminiscent declination—to use a notion close to what Walter Benjamin describes regarding the aura—or else a suffering knowledge, which is another name for *Nachleben*. Aby Warburg may have been unaware (this is at least what I deduce from the index of his works and the catalogue in his library) that Giacomo Leopardi had translated and commented in depth, from 1817, the *Titanomachy* of Hesiod.<sup>57</sup> But he would not have been unaware—and it is fundamental for his whole conception of *Nachleben*<sup>58</sup>—of the *Gods in Exile* of Heinrich Heine, a magnificent text written in 1853 in which the fate imposed by the Titans on the gods, then by the gods on the Titans, was transformed into the fate imposed by men on the Titans and the gods together:

upon the definitive victory of Christianity, that is to say in the 3rd and 4th centuries, the ancient pagan gods found themselves grappling with the troubles and necessities that they had already had to deal with in primitive times, that is, in that revolutionary epoch when the Titans, forcing open the doors of the Tartarus, piled Pelion upon Ossa and climbed Olympus. These were obliged to flee ignominiously, like poor gods and goddesses, with all of their trains, and they came and hid among us on Earth, with all kinds of disguises.<sup>59</sup>

A fundamental turning point appears in the text: Heine—contrary to someone like Winckelmann, for example—theorizes the decline of pagan antiquity without needing to make it ideal, without it being considered a definitively lost object (the depressive aspect) or else like the aesthetic canon, or even the categorical imperative, of a textbook imitation (the maniacal aspect). The pagan gods are in exile, which we must recognize without trembling. But we must also recognize the very nonacademic manner in which they survive in spite of all: They survive disguised, which makes it possible for Heine to

describe humorously—that wisdom, that joy above all unilateral tragedy—the very process of their disguised return or reappearance, that “crowd of specters out for a good time,” that “posthumous orgy” of “sprightly ghosts” who amuse themselves with the very nonclassical or non-neoclassical anachronism of the “paganism polka” or “antiquity cancan.”<sup>60</sup>

There is nothing frivolous, or even cynical, in this humor. It appears to me, on the contrary, to consider very seriously the uncanny character that every reminiscent apparition of that suffering antiquity then takes on, at the same time present and spectral, rising and legible—symptomatic of something in which Sigmund Freud saw a repressed desire. Moreover, it is in the context of his analysis of the “uncanny” that Freud referred to Heine’s *Gods in Exile*, whose grotesque character had a certain malaise or anxiety about it:

The uncanny aspect can indeed only come from the fact that the double is a formation that belongs to the original times passed of psychological life, which then takes on a more likable meaning. The double has become an image of terror in the same way as the gods become demons once their religion has crumbled (Heine, *Gods in Exile*).<sup>61</sup>

It happens that, in his *Buch der Lieder*, published in 1827, Heinrich Heine had actually presented a brief prosopopoeia of Atlas, a sort of lamentation of the Titan on himself—an echo, perhaps, of Goethe’s *Prometheus*—his hurting body bending under the weight of the world. The uncanny in this poem is not some spectral “accessory,” since the character is not described. It is instead a moving litany, full of pathos, whose role, it seems, is to spread out or to eternalize the weight of a suffering—“world” and “suffering” becoming the very same heavy thing—expressed in the rhythm of words like *Herz* and *Schmerzen*, *glücklich* and *unendlich*, *unglückselger* and *Unerträgliches*:

Ah! Wretched Atlas [*ich unglückselger Atlas*] that I am!  
The whole world of sufferings must I carry [*die ganze Welt der  
Schmerzen muss ich tragen*]  
And carry the unbearable [*ich trage Unerträgliches*]  
While my heart [*Herz*] breaks in my breast.  
Proud heart [*du stolzes Herz*], you wanted it thus!

You wanted to be happy, happy without end [*unendlich glücklich*],  
Or infinitely unhappy [*oder unendlich elend*], proud heart,  
And now you are unhappy [*und jetzo bist du elend*]<sup>62</sup>

The poem, in its simplicity, resembles an Andalusian *letra*. For it is a very simple—yet conflicting, divided, dramatic—thing that is said there: carrying the unbearable, carrying the whole world like a world of infinite sufferings. And so to suffer the world and oneself at the same time, far from the pride or self-esteem that initially sought happiness without end. We know that from the very first appearance of the *Buch der Lieder*, the composer Franz Schubert decided to put to music this lament by Atlas. This was in 1828, the year of his death (he was thirty-one), when he wrote: “I feel so worn out that I have the impression that the bed will give way under my weight.”<sup>63</sup> But, at the same time, Schubert assured his friend Eduard von Bauernfeld that in spite of his suffering—or because of it—“entirely new harmonies and rhythms trotted around in his head,” which, unfortunately, “were carried off by sleep and death.”<sup>64</sup>

Schubert did, however, have the time between August and October 1828 to compose his admirable lied. This was published after his death by Tobias Haslinger, without any opus number, in a collection entitled *Schwanengesang*, or “Swan Song,” containing seven poems of Heine put to music by the great composer.<sup>65</sup> In his beautiful book on Schubert, Rémy Stricker wrote that this final group of lieder shows a “strange alliance between passivity and aggression,”<sup>66</sup> in which we can already sense the fundamental gesture of Atlas, the vanquished warrior, that being of strength transformed into suffering. Schubert was no doubt interested in the inexorable effect of this transformation, since he repeats—which Schumann never did in his own lieder—the words of Heine’s poem.

Before the baritone Thomas Quasthoff gave his admirable version, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau superbly sang and commented *Der Atlas*, mentioning its “work on the negative”: “The initial theme of *Der Atlas* is of a symphonic, tragic and grandiose nature. It is presented as groaning under the burden, and dragging its feet. The repetition of the second stanza, owed to Schubert, leads, under the weight of suffering, to the triumph of self-mortification. The defiant tone of re-

volt, the tension of the recitative, the memories of pride in the central part, the triumph of the negative at the end.”<sup>67</sup> All of this competes to make this song something like greatness under duress. The score, written in G minor in three-four time, says *Etwas geschwind*, which corresponds to *poco allegro*. Brigitte Massin has analyzed this almost immobile little musical drama, in which the theme is sung in a low register violently emphasizing the bass, and where the “jumps,” as she writes, always end with a “catastrophic fall back down”—notably on the pronunciation of the word *elend*, “wretched”—and the close of any perspective. For example, in the second stanza, Schubert repeats the first two lines of the poem while the harmony “falls back on the G minor”; a last “jump” reaches the peak of the A-flat—in a *fortissimo* that is “emphasized by a dissonance,” to the extent that “the fall back down is only made heavier.”<sup>68</sup> As Rémy Stricker writes, the fall “culminates” in the point of its greatest intensity, its paradox.<sup>69</sup>

All these choices of composition construct a remarkable legibility of the poetic, stylistic, philosophical, and even political content—according to Frieder Reininghaus<sup>70</sup>—of Heine’s poem. When Schubert worked on the texts of Heine for the series of lieder of the *Schwangesang*, “the accompaniment,” wrote André Cœuroy,

became more complex and tighter. The vocal line is often fragmented; it no longer has the continually long and supple melodic, sometimes almost too melodic, unrolling of the preceding lieder. It tends, no doubt unconsciously, towards a sort of recitative. . . . One could say that, sensitive to the lyrical novelty of the texts of a young poet who was as yet unknown, but upon whom the personality made an impression, Schubert, instead of seeking to illustrate poems and to transpose them into sounds, wanted to leave their entire musical poetry intact.<sup>71</sup>

The simplicity of listening that the lied *Der Atlas* allows seems to place Schubert’s solutions in agreement with the novel positions taken by Heine on the particular lyricism of popular forms—at the opposite extreme of neoclassicism—as the depositories of a genuine suffering knowledge of suffering itself.<sup>72</sup> Like the “specters out for a good time” of *Gods in Exile*, this knowledge will find its musical form

in what Jacques Drillon sees in Schubert as “fragmentary truths,” which, like pieces of ancient statues in a field of ruins, hesitate indefinitely between the “stable” and the “collapsed.”<sup>73</sup>

## **Survivals of Tragedy, Aurora of the Anxious Gay Science**

Atlas, therefore (and I am speaking about the character as well as the thing, about the ancient Titan as well as the modern tool for visual work in Aby Warburg’s hands): an organism for supporting, carrying, or conjointly arranging a whole suffering knowledge that the notion of *Nachleben* refers to as potencies of memory and as potentialities of desires, and a knowledge of suffering that the notion of *Pathosformel*, for its part, makes it possible to observe in its raw gestures, symptoms, and images. It is a tragic knowledge: a Sisyphean labor, or rather “Atlantean,” a work that makes punishment something like a treasure of knowledge, and makes knowledge something like a fate made up of infinite patience—the endurance for “bearing” the crushing disparity of the world. But it is a game, too: the capacity to bring together orders of incommensurable realities (earth and celestial vault, in the Atlas myth), and to spatially rearrange the world (Atlas the astronomer, inventor of constellations, or Atlas the geographer of unknown and abyssal worlds) . . . And even to sing all of this to the accompaniment of a cithara.

Nietzsche, better than anyone, could make it possible to think of this paradoxical relation, this multiple metamorphosis of sufferings and of knowledge, of work and of games. Aby Warburg drew much from *The Birth of Tragedy*, even from *The Genealogy of Morals* and the second *Untimely Consideration*, to theorize the primacy of the Dionysian, the “tragedy of culture,” the aesthetic of intensity, of pagan survivals, of fractures in history, of fruitful inactualities or decisive mishaps, the plasticity of becoming, the unappeasable conflicts whose art would be the central swirl<sup>74</sup> . . . But it is in *The Gay Science* that Nietzsche allows us to understand this reversal of values capable of setting suffering knowledge on the way to a free game of knowledge, which does not, however, ignore the tragic tension in which it finds its own origin.

As usual in Nietzsche, everything starts from an anger, a revolt, a violent critical statement of fact: He takes on the Judeo-Christian God, just as Atlas, before him, had taken on the gods of Olympus. And like Atlas, in a sense, he paid a high price for it: the collapsing of his own thinking into madness. He takes on men, too, his contemporaries: "We Europeans confront a world of tremendous ruins. A few things are still towering, much looks decayed and uncanny, while most things already lie on the ground."<sup>75</sup> He takes on science as it is managed by mere "schematizers" guided by an obtuse "faith in a proof."<sup>76</sup> He denounces in this vulgar knowledge a need for the already-known and an instinct of fear toward anything foreign or strange: That knowledge, indeed, does not dare to compare anything—for in order to compare, it is necessary to transgress a boundary and so to find oneself in foreign territory—and wants only that "something strange [be] reduced to something familiar."<sup>77</sup> So, "what is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is most difficult to 'know'—that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as 'outside us.'"<sup>78</sup>

To know the world, says Nietzsche in those pages, is first of all to try to make it problematical. To do this, it is necessary to arrange things in such a way as to make their strangeness appear within their contact with each other, made possible by the decision to transgress the preexisting categorical limits, where things were more calmly "arranged." Did Nietzsche not already give us, in his reflections, the operating program that Aby Warburg gives us in his atlas of images? Whatever the case, the science of the nineteenth century—the positivist science—appeared to the philosopher to be merely a vast "prejudice" from which all the "question marks" tend to disappear, where existence is seen to be "demoted" into univocal determinations, and where those "mechanics"—these pages point above all to Herbert Spencer—produce interpretations that are "of the poorest in meaning" when it is, says Nietzsche, the "music" of the world—albeit a musical complaint—which should be the principal object of our questionings, of our knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

But every twilight needs its dawn.<sup>80</sup> And here, it is called the *gay science*. The *gay science* or—in every sense of the word—the *human science*, that which never removes the subject from its object: "It will do to consider science as an attempt to humanize things as faithfully



as possible; as we describe things and their one-after-another, we learn how to describe ourselves more and more precisely.”<sup>81</sup> It is to recognize in knowledge a strength and not only a content that is more or less objective and more or less formalized.<sup>82</sup> It is to understand things like the birds that we would like not to immobilize in an all too conventional way, that cage of our language and of its categories of thinking.<sup>83</sup> It is, also, to consent to the appearance of phenomena and thereby to “be able to stand above morality—and not only to stand with the anxious stiffness of a man who is afraid of slipping and falling any moment, but also to float above it and play!”<sup>84</sup> It is, finally, to be artists, to know how to live in the dream, to become “somnambulists of the day,” to heal the mortifying immobility by “a bit of merry-making after long privation and powerlessness”: basically, “April weather” marked by the drunkenness of healing, something like a free dance of thought.<sup>85</sup>

All of this might evoke the figure of some Prometheus unbound, or an Atlas finally liberated from his burden, dancing on the roads. But Nietzsche, as we know, is no thinker of forever conquered beatitudes. The great strength of his development consists in actually keeping anxiety alive, that is, the openness to strangeness, to extraneity, to extraterritoriality. If to recognize consists in considering each thing to be problematical, in seeking the truth in the unknown part, the foreign and displaced part, of each thing considered—which makes Nietzsche say that the truth itself must be sought “on moral ground”<sup>86</sup>—then this means that even if he is freed from his burden, Atlas will never be relieved of his suffering. It is important to understand knowledge in Nietzsche as assumed anxiety or the bipolar movement that a paragraph of *The Gay Science*, entitled “On the Aim of Science,” at times calls the appeal of pain and constellations of joy.<sup>87</sup> A painful jubilation, therefore, which is deployed in every book and right up to the last two paragraphs, whose respective conclusions are: “The Tragedy Begins” and “Dance?”<sup>88</sup>

That this notion of anxiety should be party to a problem of knowledge seemed, to many, like an epistemological and pathetic monstrosity. Yet it is clear that Aby Warburg appropriated this, as we see in his 1927 seminar on Jacob Burckhardt and the madness of Nietzsche.<sup>89</sup> Did Warburg himself not experience, between 1918 and 1924—body and soul, and aloud—the extent to which his own scholarly

vocation felt a state of constant anxiety between the overwhelming and painful *monstra* and the marvelous *astra* that thought made into constellations? “We philosophers,” wrote Nietzsche in his preface of 1886 to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, “if we should become sick, surrender a while to sickness, body and soul—and, as it were, shut our eyes to ourselves.”<sup>90</sup> And, two pages later:

Constantly, we have to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and, like mothers, endow them with all we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate and catastrophe. Life—that means for us, constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame—also everything that wounds us; we simply can do no other.<sup>91</sup>

All of this to conclude with words that might already have clarified the undertaking of the *Mnemosyne* atlas, at the moment when Warburg was returning from his stay in the Kreuzlingen clinic:

In the end, lest what is most important remain unsaid: from such abysses, from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns *newborn*, having shed one’s skin, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a tenderer tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before.<sup>92</sup>

It is by no coincidence that the mythological characters of Atlas and Prometheus should abound in *The Gay Science*, in that astonishing Titanomachy of knowledge. Prometheus, Nietzsche claimed, had in no way “stolen the light”: this vision of things was imposed only to justify, after the fact, his divine punishment. Prometheus did not steal the light, but rather he created it by his very desire, “his desire for light,” in the same way that he created as images, Nietzsche says, both men and gods who were all merely “the work of his own hands and had been mere clay in his hands.”<sup>93</sup> It appears to me that Atlas shows through in the paragraph of *The Gay Science* entitled “The Greatest Weight [*Das grösste Schwergewicht*],” which deals with the eternal return through the words of a “demon”—a demeaned god—who remains unnamed:

This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!<sup>94</sup>

And here, upon the evocation of an “eternal sanction,” the following paragraph begins, under the title “*Incipit tragoedia*,” which will evoke the perpetual anxiety of a joy given to decline, “like a bee that has gathered too much honey.”<sup>95</sup>

The gay science is therefore anxious. From this point of view, it seems that in every authentic gesture of knowledge, there will be both the risked joy of the one who steps over the boundary, explores foreign territories, goes beyond limits, sings of his wandering, and “loves his ignorance of the future,”<sup>96</sup> as well as the reminiscent suffering of the one who recognizes the tragic condition of his own activity of knowledge, ready to transform into a complaint his preliminary song: “Whoever does not know this sigh from firsthand experience does not know the passion of the search for knowledge.”<sup>97</sup> This is a way for Nietzsche to redefine entirely the relations, in the *logos* of knowledge, that are created between *ethos* and *pathos*, as though experience acquired in the knowledge of things were not without an experimentation on oneself (one’s own gaze, one’s own capacity to understand, one’s own relation to suffering): Thirsty for reason, “we are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment—hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs.”<sup>98</sup>

And this is how the man of the gay science appears, in the eyes of Nietzsche, alternatively as a volcano—“we are, all of us, growing volcanoes that approach the hour of their eruption”<sup>99</sup>—and as wild grass, a rhizome, or a tree that grows in every direction:

We are misidentified—because we ourselves keep growing, keep changing, we shed our old bark, we shed our skins every spring, we

keep becoming younger, fuller of future, taller, stronger, we push our roots ever more powerfully into the depths—into Evil—while at the same time we embrace the heavens more lovingly, more broadly, by imbibing their light ever more thirstily with all our twigs and leaves. Like trees we grow—this is hard to understand, as is all life—not in one place only but everywhere, not in one direction but equally upward and inward and downward.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the man of the gay science appears like a public fountain to which everyone can come to delve into the depths as well as the surface, into its obscurity as well as its clearness:

*And become bright again*—We, open-handed and rich in spirit, standing by the road like open wells with no intention to fend off anyone who feels like drawing from us—we unfortunately do not know how to defend ourselves where we want to; we have no way of preventing people from darkening us: the time in which we live throws into us what is most time-bound; its dirty birds drop their filth into us; boys their gewgaws; and exhausted wanderers who come to us for rest, their little and large miseries. But we shall do what we have always done: whatever one casts into us, we take down into our depths—for we are deep, we do not forget—*and become bright again*.<sup>101</sup>

But this generosity, this incessant movement, goes with an instability, a wandering that is no less fundamental for the man of gay science. Like Atlas, this man is a stateless person, rootless in space and time: “We who are homeless . . . we children of the future, how could we be at home in this today?”<sup>102</sup> This is a way for us to recognize the wandering that Heinrich Heine described earlier in his *Gods in Exile*, and that Nietzsche reiterates here when he compares the man of gay science to something like a specter out for a good time: “One reaches out for us but gets no hold of us. That is frightening. Or we enter through a closed door. Or after all lights have been extinguished. Or after we have died. The last is the trick of posthumous people par excellence [*posthumen Menschen*].”<sup>103</sup> How can we not think of Warburg who, from the depths of his madness, mistook himself for Kronos, and having returned to his library, came to define himself as a

“ghost that has returned” still chained to his burden of suffering, but invoking Mnemosyne—mother of the Muses—to bring his titanic project of Atlas to fruition?

### **“El sueño de la razón produce monstruos”**

If the *Mnemosyne* atlas can be considered a “legacy of our time,” at least in this delicate domain where knowledge and image work together, then we must at present acknowledge, in the anxious gay science as explained by Friedrich Nietzsche, something like the philosophical foundations of this legacy. Aby Warburg was by no means the only one to delve into the Nietzschean reversals of a theoretical energy that is favorable to inventing new visual objects of knowledge. Let us recall, for example, the positions of two contemporaries of Warburg who were also thinkers and practitioners of a genuine visual gay science.

The first is Sergei Eisenstein who, in *Film Forms: Essays in Film Theory*, written between 1935 and 1937, evokes cinematographic montage in terms of a *survival* or an emotional reviviscence, very close to that of the *Gods in Exile* of Heinrich Heine, as well as Aby Warburg’s *Nachleben*.<sup>104</sup> Then, a few pages later, he gives an implicitly Nietzschean commentary—the work he cites of the psychoanalyst Alfred Winterstein, *Der Ursprung der Tragödie*, being itself merely a gloss on Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie*—on montage at the point of Dionysian “birth.” Dionysus, writes Eisenstein, personified the “archetypal phenomenon [*Urphänomen*]” of montage to the extent that, broken into pieces, dismembered, and fragmented, it is no less transfigured into a rhythmic, “epiphanic” creature, a creature that is reborn in every cup and that dances in spite of the *agôn* (conflict), of the *pathos* (suffering), and of the *thrènos* (the lamentation) that it provokes and personifies through its history.<sup>105</sup>

The second is Georges Bataille, who sought to make the journal entitled *Documents* an actual atlas of images—one that was exactly contemporary to *Mnemosyne*—animated by an energy of hierarchical reversals typical of the Nietzschean gay science.<sup>106</sup> We know also that Georges Bataille was an avid reader and commenter of Nietzsche, often adopting his cheerful-tragic motifs, such as the “torturing joy”

by which a man would be capable—as Bataille says, quoting Nietzsche—of “dancing with the time that kills.”<sup>107</sup> All these references to *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Gay Science* encourage us not to isolate the theoretical and aesthetic disruptions in the 1920s and 1930s of a tenacious memory that haunts, as such, any history of Western thought. Let us remember, again as an example, how Michel Foucault ended his investigations into the history of madness (*Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*; English edition, *Madness and Civilization*) by situating in Sade and Goya the point of no return for this ongoing modernity: “Through Sade and Goya, the Western world received the possibility of transcending its reason in violence, and of recovering tragic experience beyond the promises of dialectic.”<sup>108</sup>

We will temporarily leave aside Sade and his catalogues of *Pathosformeln* (or perhaps we should say *Erosformeln*), and look for a moment at the crucial position of Francisco Goya in this history of the atlas—bearing in mind that I am not trying to tell its story but, instead, trying to construct its visual and theoretical archaeology. We saw earlier how the *poetic* form of the Warburgian atlas came from a genre that Goya himself called *Disparates*; we will try to understand, in part 3, how the political form of the atlas has certain similarities to a collection of historical *Disasters*. We must, for the moment, recall how knowledge through images can find its anthropological form through the tension—characteristic of Goya and deployed long before Nietzsche gave it a philosophical formulation—between the foibles, the caprices (*los caprichos*) of the imagination and the work of reason.

Plate 43 of Goya's *Caprichos*, entitled “The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters” (*El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*), is well known (fig. 29). The print—etching and aquatint—was created, like the others in the series, in 1799 for a printing of 300 copies, on the basis of drawings gathered principally in two albums, the *Album de Sanlúcar* (1796) and the *Album de Madrid* (1797–98). Goya made no fewer than 113 preparatory sketches, more often than not pen and sepia wash drawings, for the *Caprichos*.<sup>109</sup> Two drawings precede plate 43: The first seems to be a genuine hodgepodge, a *disparate* of diverse visions, both animal and human, subtle and caricatured (fig. 30); the second has the particularity of showing, in the top left, a great half-moon-shaped empty space and is furthermore annotated with three relatively profuse inscriptions on the table—as in the final en-



29. Francisco Goya, *Capricho 43* (1798), etching and aquatint, 18.1 × 12.1 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: DR.

graving—but also in both the larger and the smaller margins of the composition (fig. 31).<sup>110</sup>

These images exhale mystery and darkness: a perturbed space—above all in the engraving—of nocturnal weight; a general rustling of birds' or bats' wings; the mysterious gaze of a cat, no, rather of two



30. Francisco Goya, *Untitled* (1797), pen and sepia wash, 23 × 15.5 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: DR.





31. Francisco Goya, *Sueño 1* (1797), pen and sepia wash on paper, with annotations in pencil, 24.7 × 17.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: DR.

cats, watching from the half-light; finally, in front of us, the body of a man collapsed over his table. Two things, however, are clarified by Goya: on the one hand, *Capricho 43* seems to be a self-portrait; on the other hand, it looks like a philosophical conception of relations between imagination and reason. The first preparatory drawing shows part of the face of the man who has collapsed, and it is easy to recognize Goya himself, with his face appearing a second time just above, very clearly, in the middle of a crowd of grimacing masks, of animal snouts and other visages displayed (fig. 30). On the other side of this drawing, Goya, significantly, sketched his *Capricho 6*, entitled “Nobody Knows himself” (*Nadie se conoce*), which shows a strange group of characters wearing masks, a carnival scene challenging for anyone the hope of knowing others, and even of knowing oneself.<sup>111</sup>

Masks and faces, faceless masks or face masks: Goya carefully deals with both the simplicity of his gesture of making a self-portrait, and the complexity, or even the aporia, of all knowledge of oneself. In the second preparatory sketch, the artist sought to inscribe this incontestable precision: “The Author Dreaming” (*El autor soñando*) (fig. 31). Well, what is this dream made of? The composition of the image puts almost all space under the hold of this swarming night, which pushes back and curls up the dreamer into the corner of his desk. In the first preparatory sketch—more complete, more dialectic in a sense than the engraving itself—this night moves in every direction out from the dreamer’s head, from which a sort of aura emanates, producing a whole jumble of things in which what is closest (the artist’s face) meets what is most deformed (the caricatured heads), strangest (the animals), and farthest (the darkness itself). From a constitutive aporia of the subject (*Nadie se conoce*), it is a little state of things dreamt of that is deployed here, and it tells us how much these images are at once most intimate with, and most foreign from, the dreamer himself.

As is often the case with Goya, the figural concretions reveal an extremely simple poetic decision, which creates the basic situation—in this case, a certain way of placing the body in a space that is at the same time familiar (the work table) and fantastic (the animal night), exterior (the space of the studio) and interior (the visionary space). But such figural concretions are also the fruit of a vast culture that iconologists have been able to reconstruct for us. For example, in *Capricho 43* we can discern the conceptions of Francisco de Que-

vedo on dreams—seen already in the frontispiece of his *Obras*, in the 1699 or the 1726 editions—as well traces of the *Ars poetica* of Horace (translated in 1777 by Tomás Yriarte, and a work that Goya knew well), *Elegías morales* by Meléndez Valdés, *Sueños morales* by Torres Villarroel (1752), *Empresas políticas* by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, *Hieroglyphica* by Pietro Valeriano Bolzani, or *Alfabeto in sogno* by Giuseppe Mitelli, *Noches lúgubres* by José Cadalso, or even Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* . . .<sup>112</sup> The artist-dreamer of *Capricho 43* was even said to be an avatar of Don Quixote himself.<sup>113</sup>

Goya undoubtedly had the choice among the emblematic collections and iconological repertoires that, after Cesare Ripa, flourished throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The *Meditatio*, for example, was often represented as a hunched figure almost falling asleep or letting himself go with his imagination, perhaps to the point of melancholia. Folke Nordström showed the relations between *Capricho 43* and the frontispiece of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton,<sup>114</sup> which perhaps convinced Panofsky, in an appendix written in 1989 to his great study on melancholy, to note *in fine* a “melancholic attitude” in Goya's *Capricho 43*.<sup>115</sup> And this leaves us free to comment on the path taken from *Melencolia I* by Albrecht Dürer up to *Sueño de la razón* by Francisco Goya: The bat is still there, the instruments of work, too (a compass in Dürer, an engraving stylus in Goya), but the dog becomes a cat, and the geometric space becomes a jumble of fears in every sense. Everything that is shown, exposed, or “posed” in Dürer—in both the physical and moral sense—in Goya explodes, becomes conflicting, bursts apart, or is excessively crushed.

This excess, analyzed by André Malraux in terms of “irony,”<sup>116</sup> actually owes its principle to the omnipresence of the grotesque and popular figures of belief—but also of wisdom—in Goya's work.<sup>117</sup> The *Caprichos* equally owe a lot to Giambattista Tiepolo and to his series of *Capricci* (1740–42) or of *Scherzi di fantasia* (1743–57) with the plate of the frontispiece showing the same nocturnal birds as in *Sueño de la razón*.<sup>118</sup> As was shown by an important exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna in 1996, the “caprice” played—from Arcimboldo and Jacques Callot right up to Tiepolo and Goya—a fundamental role in the theory and practice of figurative arts in the modern period.<sup>119</sup> Between the burst of laughter and the abyss of anxiety, the surface of a mind game and the depth of a philosophical reflec-

tion, the figures of Goya's *Caprichos* mark the apogee of this tradition and, at the same time, a point of no return. Taken with the *Disparates* and the *Disasters of War* (*Desastres de la guerra*), this work makes us enter fully into an epoch to which Nietzsche, Freud, and Warburg still belong, an epoch that no longer unilaterally agrees with the powers of reason, but worries constantly about the knotted and discordant potencies of the imagination and reason, of the *monstra* and the *astra*, of darkness and lightness.

One must, therefore, look at *Sueño de la razón* as a *dialectical image*, as Werner Hofmann did on many occasions—for example, when he examined the emblematic structure of the *Caprichos* and its nonprescriptive moral content, which is comparable to an anthropological investigation of “the illnesses of reason.”<sup>120</sup> If the individual *Caprichos*—like Goya's engravings, paintings, or drawings in general—resemble intense dramaturgies of *chiaroscuro* first of all, to which the technique of aquatint gave a potent tool,<sup>121</sup> it is because Goya was a man of the Enlightenment engaged in the anxious gay science of the Dark, the shadows, or the monsters, of reason.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, we continue to discover in the *Caprichos* something like a dialectical mainspring where the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the Romanticism of the dream meet or constantly exchange, announcing, in the “dissonant man” analyzed by Caroline Jacot Grapa, a tensive and somber subjectivity that Romanticism would forevermore put into play.<sup>123</sup>

All of this can be felt and experienced directly when we look at *Capricho 43*. The darkness is omnipresent and dangerous, and yet the wing of the large owl above the body acts almost as a semaphore, a light signal, while the inscription in the foreground, in white, can be read very clearly (fig. 29). The darkness is omnipresent also because we see the painter, with his professional gaze, no longer seeing anything at all, collapsed over his table, his face in his arms. Only his back is clear, as though it were lighting up, as though it were *seeing* the nocturnal apparitions surrounding him. The “inner eye” of the dream visions in this image would thus give figurability to the back hunched over the desk, to the reverse side, the *back* of this man. It is a “vision from behind the head,” in a way, even from “over the shoulders.” As for the animals in the drama, all are creatures of the night: bats, owls, cats. And more precisely *hemeralopic* (day-blind) creatures that Goya represents conspicuously—all those, at least, in the fore-

ground, and even the cat that is curling itself up against the artist's lower back, with eyes wide open.

But look at the body again: The upper part is hunched up, the head is hidden by the round shoulders, and it is arched, serpentine, almost contorted, evoking thus the *sforzata* figure of a man held—imprisoned, or enslaved—by the conflicting forces that overtake him, even if they are inside him. The whole swarming of the visionary figures that occupies the greatest part of the image seems to emanate from this back—I think here, spontaneously, of an expression by Mallarmé that I read once before, “*arrière-ressemblances* [ulterior resemblances]”—or else that restrain this back, weighing dangerously on it. It is necessary to add that, in the two preparatory sketches as well as in the engraving itself, a figural element always comes back, as though it were absolutely necessary: it is a great black spot, a weight of darkness, I might say, and it seems to accentuate or to force the arching of the artist's back.

It is perhaps necessary to understand, regarding this image of burden, that where the Titan Atlas had to bear on his shoulders the weight of the exterior world as a punishment for his daring, the painter Goya recognizes here that he must bear on his back the weight or the great dark spot of an entire interior world—a strange, foreign one—as though the visions themselves were the punishment, the price to pay for a lucidity of the subject regarding his own monsters. The dream images would thus need to be thought of as imprints of a fate, or the marks of a genuine injury: In the *Caprichos*—and it will be worse again in the *Desastres*—*Traum* and *Trauma* work together.<sup>124</sup> Is that the ultimate lesson that an artist, capable of claiming together the potencies of reason and imagination, can give? Not quite. For a decisive element is missing in this dialectic, an element that *Capricho 43* represents, however, with perfect clarity.

That element is the table—a whole architecture of plates assembled in the first preparatory drawing, a simple cubic volume in the final engraving, which is more allegorical—at which the artist depicts himself asleep. The table, as such, is an integral part of the act of creating a self-portrait: It appears as part of the studio, one of the painter's tools, on the same level as the stylus stolen by the owl, at the top left of the image. It is a work table, precise and framed, which is violently contrasted here with the unfathomable dream space that

overhangs it. Between the two, the body of the artist acts as an interface, a conversion operator between these two orders of reality that are the work, on the one hand (artistic work that is crystallized on this very same engraved plate, a thing that we normally look at by placing it on a table), and the symptom, on the other hand (dream work that is dispersed in the psychic space, between memory and forgetting, like in the innervations of our whole body). The symptom is private disorder, chaos, swarming, and unmanageable apparition; the work is order, publishable series, and graphic clarification. Except that here the work's object is the symptom itself, or rather the dialectic between work and symptom thought by Goya like a sort of Titanomachy between *razón* and its *monstruos*. The monsters of reason appear only behind our backs, so to speak—which is a way of recalling, for example, the fact that we forget the majority that inhabit our dreams). But the object of Goya's art was a kind of “monstration,” to show the monsters, to show them publicly, to make them figure. To grasp this, it was necessary first of all to adopt a dialectical philosophy of the relations, in one image, between reason and its monsters.

## **An Anthropology from the Point of View of the Image**

Goya's *Caprichos*—the whole series, with the numerous paintings or drawings that are close to it—can no doubt be viewed as an atlas of the monsters that engender the dream or the sleep of reason. In the same year that *Sueño de la razón* was created (1797), Immanuel Kant wrote that “truthfulness is a duty that must be regarded as the basis of all duties founded on contract. . . . To be truthful (honest) in all declarations is, therefore, a sacred and unconditionally commanding law of reason that admits of no expediency whatsoever.”<sup>125</sup> Did Goya not have to transgress the appropriate to engrave his *Caprichos*? In 1799, as the series was ready to be put on sale, the artist apparently had to take it off the market after only two days, out of fear of censure by the Inquisition.<sup>126</sup>

Only the truth makes people angry, as we say frequently. There is no doubt that the *Caprichos*, in spite of the innumerable “fantasies” it contains, is not a work of “truthfulness” in the Kantian sense of the term. All the great series engraved by Goya—the *Caprichos*, the *Dis-*

*parates*, and the *Desastres*, not to mention the *Tauromaquia* itself—could then be considered so many attempts toward an “anthropology from the point of view of the image,” comparable to that *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* that Immanuel Kant published in 1798: an extraordinary book—one that Michel Foucault wished to translate—in which certain great conceptual constructions stated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* were literally put to the test, observed with the naked eye, worried, at times experienced and, in any case, *experimented* in the bodies, the gestures, and the images of everyone.

The Kantian *Anthropology* begins with a eulogy of the representation of oneself, inasmuch as that power “raises [man] infinitely above all other living beings on earth.”<sup>127</sup> To this, which remains very general, Goya had already responded in his *Sueño de la razón* that one cannot draw an authentic portrait of oneself without letting in the horde of animals, animalities, inhumanities, or strangenesses that constitute us by constituting our fears. Kant himself did not neglect to notice this kind of problem when, examining the “observation of oneself,” he almost came to introduce the question of the “representations that we have without being conscious of them”: “*obscure* representations,” he wrote, representations whose field is, in reality, “much wider” than that of all the “*clear* representations” made available to us. “More often than not, we are the playthings of obscure representations,” he admits, notably when desire—and we should add anxiety or memory itself—is involved.<sup>128</sup>

In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, then, Kant logically questioned the different forms of the faculty of sensible invention, as well as the potencies of the imagination.<sup>129</sup> He reflected on this in the symmetrical terms of memory and of prediction, in a paragraph entitled “On the Faculty of Visualizing the Past and the Future by Means of the Power of Imagination.”<sup>130</sup> He worried about the same thing that Goya risked, which is that it is “dangerous to conduct experiments with the mind and to make it ill to a certain degree in order to observe it and investigate its nature by the appearances that may be found there,” the principal dangers having been reviewed by the philosopher under the heading “change of humor” and “melancholic dreaming,” before “mental confusion” and “extravagance.”<sup>131</sup> But, to the one who admitted that truthfulness is so “imperative” that it cannot be “limited by any propriety,” he agreed not to reduce *unreason*

to a mere *lack of reason*: “Unreason (which is something positive, not mere lack of reason) is, just like reason, a mere form into which objects can be fitted, and both reason and unreason are therefore dependent on the universal.”<sup>132</sup>

It is this exactly that Goya threw literally onto the page of his first preparatory sketch for the *Sueño de la razón* (fig. 30). Here, some figures from his fears come and shake things up in obviously peculiar and “worked-through” ways—numerous other specters inhabited him—but the allegorical situation allows the imaginary tumult to arrive at that “pure form” that Kant spoke of, something that “reaches the heights of the universal” through, notably, the use of sepia wash. This suggests a distancing (grayness of the memory-images) at the same time as it unifies the image like a space that is inseparably exterior (an objective, situated vision of the artist at his work table) and interior (a vision that cannot be situated, of animals, masks, faces floating everywhere in every direction).

The second preparatory sketch corresponds, for its part, to a moment that is very different from Goya’s elaboration (fig. 31): the abundance of the annotations suggests that this drawing results from a global theoretical decision, while the first drawing corresponded instead to a moment of local phenomenological experimentation on the emergence of some “monsters” in the “sleep of reason.” First of all, at the top of the page, Goya wrote *Sueño 10*, or “First Dream.” It was a strategic decision: Goya believed then that this image—which had been preceded by many others—could serve as the frontispiece of the whole series of the *Caprichos*; and this may explain the large amount of empty space, like a space reserved for an eventual title. (We know that, in the end, Goya preferred to come back to the more canonical solution of an “exterior” self-portrait showing his authority, his position as author, far from the fragile and “interior” image of a man crushed and haunted that we see in *Capricho 43*.)

Then comes the text inscribed on the desk stand. Nothing to do, once again, with the phrase—the proposition, the philosophical argument—that we would soon read in the engraving. And the artist, in line with tradition, gives his signature or mark of authority: “Drawn and engraved by Francisco Goya, in the year 1797” (*Dibujado y grabado por F<sup>co</sup> de Goya, año 1797*). But he precedes this inscription with two programmatic words, both ambitious and enigmatic: “Universal language



[*Ydioma universal*].” What, then, was Goya’s aim in these words? Do they refer to the “sign language” destined for people who, like him, were deaf?<sup>133</sup> An internal consideration would encourage us rather to look on the side of the elements that are *in praesentia*, that is, the image itself, but also the commentary inscribed by Goya just underneath: “The author dreaming. His intention is just to banish certain vulgar prejudices, and to perpetuate, in this work of caprices, the firm testimony of truth” (*El Autor soñando. Su yntento solo es desterrar bulgaridades perjudiciales, y perpetuar con esta obra de caprichos, el testimonio solido de la verdad*). To this commentary, we must add those that appear, respectively, in the manuscripts of the Prado and the National Library of France: “Fantasy, abandoned by reason, produces impossible monsters: united with it, it is the mother of the arts and the origin of its marvels” (*La fantasía abandonada de la razón, produce monstruos imposibles: unida con ella, es madre de las artes y origen de sus maravillas*); “Opening page of this work: when men do not hear the cry of reason, everything turns into vision” (*Portada para esta obra: cuando los hombres no oyen el grito de la razón, todo se vuelve visiones*).<sup>134</sup> Finally, it is worth rereading the anonymous advertisement for the *Caprichos*—in which Goya’s own vocabulary appears in every phrase—published in the *Diario de Madrid* on 6 and 19 February 1799:

Since the artist is convinced that the censure of human errors and vices (though they may seem to be the province of Eloquence and Poetry) may also be the object of Painting, he has chosen as subjects adequate for his work, from the multitude of follies and blunders common in every civil society, as well as from the vulgar prejudices and lies authorized by custom, ignorance or interest, those that he considered the most suitable matter for ridicule as well as for exercising the artificer’s fancy. Since the majority of the objects represented in this work are ideal, it may not be too daring to expect that their defects will perhaps meet with forgiveness on the part of the connoisseurs as they will realize that the artist has neither followed the examples of others, nor been able to copy from nature. And if imitating Nature is as difficult as it is admirable when one succeeds in doing so, some esteem must be shown towards him who, holding aloof from her, has had to put before the eyes forms and attitudes that so far have existed only in the human mind, obscured and confused by lack of

illustration, or excited by the unruliness of passions. . . . Painting (like Poetry) chooses from the universal what it considers suitable to its own ends: it reunites in a single fantastic personage circumstances and characteristics that nature has divided among many. From such a combination, ingeniously arranged, results the kind of successful imitation for which a good artificer deserves the title of inventor and not that of servile copyist.<sup>135</sup>

All these texts, I believe, clearly show Goya's own "anxious gay science": gaiety revealing a staggering decision or a reversal of values that is often ironic, even grotesque, in the invention of his images; knowledge revealing a radical conception of the artist's activity as an act of philosophical "truthfulness"; anxiety revealing the fact that, to assume all this, Goya had to walk the razor-thin line, just missing, at every moment, falling into the contradictions of his own vocabulary. At the heart of these contradictions, there is the image, of course, and the imagination that is its productive faculty. For example, in the text of the second preparatory sketch for *Capricho 43*, we read that the author "is dreaming" while he claims to drive out the falseness of the vulgar "dreams" of belief; we read that he claims to bring a "firm testimony of truth," but would do so through a series of unbridled "caprices." In the manuscript in the National Library in France, Goya—a deaf man—denounces all those who "do not hear the cry of reason"; he—a man of images—who transforms each thing into a visual thing. Finally, in the advertisement in the *Diario de Madrid*, he stands up against "the human mind obscured and confused"—he who, in his *Caprichos*, proposes only obscure and confused images that the iconographers have even now not yet finished scrutinizing for their mysteries.

But these apparent contradictions in Goya are merely the counterpart to an anxiety capable of taking a dialectical position, as shown by his remarkable conception of the imagination (*fantasía*) and, hence, by the artist's activity itself. The imagination would in a way be Goya's *pharmakon*: it is that "universal language" which can be used for everything, for better or for worse, for the worst of the *monstra* and for the best of the *astra*. When the imagination is left to itself, that is the worst, for then it "produces impossible monsters" and allows the proliferation of the "follies and blunders" of a "civil society" aban-

doned to “ignorance or interest.” How should the critique be undertaken? To suppress it is exactly what the Inquisition sought to do: It is unjust, ineffective, and it is one obscurantism against another. In any case, from an anthropological point of view, nobody could “suppress” the images or the imagination with which man is entirely filled. Consequently, it is necessary to invest this dangerous ground and to convoke the imagination with reason, its false enemy. Art will then name the place where this double convocation is made possible: “United with reason, [imagination] is the mother of the arts.” This—a crucial element of Goya’s reasoning—is how the object of painting itself can be the “critique” of human “blunders.” A critique in the Kantian sense and one that makes painting, in Goya’s eyes, a philosophical activity that seeks the “universal” (let us note Goya’s political sharpness when, in order to justify himself in the *Diario de Madrid*, he used the word for that which he feared above anything else, *censura* by the Inquisition).

So, one does not revoke the imagination: One must carry it—like Atlas carrying the sky to become its scholar par excellence—and carry it over onto a work table or a plate for engraving. This is done by a reasoned choice, a “combination” that already marks out the most important figurative “artifice” as a montage of diverse and confused things that, “ingeniously arranged,” allow a painted or engraved image to touch the universal. Goya’s “monsters” have absolutely nothing to do with any personal, sentimental, or frivolous outpouring that might suggest a poor reading of the word *fantasía*; they are the work of an artist who understood his work as an “anthropology from the point of view of the image” and, therefore, a fundamental reflection on the potencies of the imagination in man, a reflection that borrows its method from its object, the imagination thought of as a tool—an apparatus, technically elaborated, philosophically constructed—of an actual critical knowledge of the body and the human mind.

Thus, Goya conceives art as a genuine philosophical critique of the world and particularly of this “civil society” that he evokes in the *Diario de Madrid*. To address such a problem, one must act dialectically, on two fronts at the same time: For his critical activity, the artist must proceed by means of accurate framings of the reality that he observes, and from this *verdad* that he wants to bear witness to; for his aesthetic activity, he takes the liberty, the *fantasía*, to proceed by

means of montages between the most disparate things. We can note, therefore, that Goya often proceeds to pathetic framings from what he observes in order to better comment upon it: To take some examples linked to the corporeal motif—or to the “formula of *pathos*”—that interests us here, we can note the extent to which Goya makes use of the motifs where we see a character crumpling under a burden. It suffices, for that, to “frame”—to isolate in a road, and on a drawing page—a porter at work (fig. 32). But it is also necessary to employ his critical *fantasia* by inventing allegorical “montages” where we can see, among other things, a farmer working the soil with a clergyman on his shoulders (fig. 33) or a woman folding under the weight of her husband like a donkey under that of his own master (fig. 34).<sup>136</sup>

These allegorical montages are often as brutal as the satirical figures created from the viewpoint of political propaganda (a major theme, we should remember, in Warburg’s work while he was creating his atlas of images). They are similar, from this point of view, to the grating images by William Hogarth and, in general, to the allegorical caricatures that flourished everywhere in Europe starting in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>137</sup> But there is also, in Goya, all of that which generally does not exist in such images, which is a psychic intensity that unsurprisingly was recognized and admired by the French Romantics, above all Théophile Gautier who, in 1838, commented on the *Caprichos* and saw in Goya a “first-rate artist” despite an “eccentric . . . manner of painting,” beyond any “fieriness”:

The individuality of this artist is so strong and so definite that we find it difficult even to give an approximate idea. He is not a caricaturist like Hogarth, Bamburry or Cruikshank; Hogarth is serious, phlegmatic, exact and meticulous like a novel by Richardson, always allowing the moral intention to be seen; Bamburry and Cruikshank, so remarkable for their cunning verve, their comical exaggeration, have nothing in common with the author of the *capricci* [*sic*]; Callot would be closer; Callot, half Spanish, half Bohemian; but Callot is distinct, clear, sharp, precise, faithful to the truth, despite the affectedness of his forms and the boastful extravagance of his finishes; his most peculiar mischief is rigorously possible, his etchings are full of light, where the search for detail prevents effects or chiaroscuro, which are obtained only through sacrifice. Goya’s compositions are deep nights



32. Francisco Goya, *The Porter* (1812–23), brush and sepia wash on paper, 20.5 × 14 cm. Private collection. Photo: DR.



33. Francisco Goya, *Will You Never Know What You Are Carrying on Your Back?* (1820–24), ink on paper, 20 × 14.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: DR.



34. Francisco Goya, *A Bad Husband* (1824–28), black crayon on paper, 19.2 × 15.1 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: DR.

in which an abrupt ray of light draws pale silhouettes and strange phantoms. . . . We have said that Goya is a caricaturist, for lack of a better word. It is caricature in the style of Hoffmann, where fantasy is always mixed with the critique and which often ventures into what is gloomy and even terrible. . . . Goya's caricatures hold, they say, some political allusions, but . . . one must look hard for them through the thick veil which covers them in shade. . . . What is the aesthetic and

moral reach of this work? We do not know. Goya seems to have given his opinion above in one of his drawings, where we see a man with his head on his arms and above and around whom fly owls of all kinds . . . The caption of this image reads—*El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*. It is true, but that is harsh.<sup>138</sup>

Charles Baudelaire, of course, had to come across Goya's *Disparates* and *Caprichos*. After the Salon Caricatural of 1846, clearly oriented toward a social critique—as we read in the collection's subtitle, *Critique en vers et contre tous*, or "Critique in Verse and against Everyone"<sup>139</sup>—Baudelaire would publish in October 1857 a long article entitled "Some Foreign Caricaturists" in which, after Hogarth and Cruikshank, appears the figure of Goya, this "peculiar man who opened up new horizons in the comic": horizon of the "fierce comic and . . . above all the fantastic comic."<sup>140</sup> It is a paradoxical comic where the laughter is fixed to the point of dread, "something that resembles these periodic or chronic dreams which regularly assail our sleep"<sup>141</sup>—an allusion, I would like to think, to the *Sueño de la razón* itself:

This is what distinguishes the true artist, a lasting and vital something, even in those fugitive pieces attached, so to speak, to daily happenings, called caricatures; that, I repeat, is what distinguishes the historical caricaturists from the artistic caricaturists, the fugitive comic from the eternal comic. Goya is always a great artist, often terrifying. To the gaiety and joviality, to the Spanish satire of the good old days of Cervantes, he adds a much more modern attitude of mind, or at least one that has been much more sought-after in modern days, the love of the intangible, the feeling for violent contrasts, the love of the terrifying phenomena of nature and of human physiognomies strangely animalized by circumstances . . . [through] all the wild extravagances of dreams, all the hyperboles of hallucination. . . . All the hideousness, all the moral filth, all the vices conceivable to human minds, are writ large on these two faces, which, in accordance with a frequent habit and an inexplicable technique of the artist, are half-way between man and beast. . . . The great virtue of Goya consists in creating a monstrous kind of verisimilitude. His monsters are born viable, harmonious. No one has dared go further than he in making the absurd appear possible. The contortions, the bestial faces, the dia-



bolical grimaces, all remain imbued with humanity, the critic would find difficulty in condemning them, such are the logic and the harmonious proportions of their beings; in short, the seam, the juncture between the real and the fantastic is impossible to detect; it is a vague frontier, which even the most subtle analyst could not trace, so transcendent and natural at one and the same time is the art displayed.<sup>142</sup>

In these lines, Baudelaire insists on the constant paradox in Goya's compositions, always given to the fantasy of contrasts: what is "comic" is "terrifying" in his work, what is "satire" is "frightening," what is "bestial face" is "humanity" par excellence . . . But such paradoxes would be nothing without the fundamental necessity that sustains them and which, Baudelaire suggests, can be understood only in the gaze of an authentic knowledge of the laws of natural history, when Goya reveals that he is capable of showing us "viable" or "plausible" monsters. What does this mean, if not to say that the great artist distinguishes himself by his capacity to conjoin the "transcendent" and the "natural," the "fantastic" and the "real"? And do we not find here, formulated exactly, Baudelaire's definition of the *imagination*, which, beyond any gratuitous or personal fantasy, becomes capable of bringing to light the "suture lines" or the "meeting points" between things that everything would seem to keep opposed—laughter and anxiety, humanity and animality, the exterior face and the interior specter, that perception of the "intimate and secret relations of things"<sup>143</sup> that the scholar himself, and not only the poet, cannot do without? What Baudelaire condenses magnificently, regarding Goya, when he suggests that we see, in those swarming figures, something like rigorous "samples of chaos."<sup>144</sup>

## **Samples of Chaos, or the Poetics of Phenomena**

It seems necessary, after these vast questionings, to turn toward the one who, in the fold between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, wished "to sample the chaos" of the world on the basis of a double position assumed by the poet and the scholar, a position supported by a theory of the imagination that was also a theory of knowledge, a philosophy of the "suture lines," the "meeting points," or the "inti-

mate and secret relations of things” — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, of course. Goethe, who sought to complete Kant’s critique of reason with a critique of the senses intended not to separate the artist’s activity — moved by his passion for phenomena, even for appearances — from the speculative sciences and disciplines:

Kant has drawn our attention to the fact that there is such a thing as a Critique of Reason, and that this, the highest faculty possessed by man, has cause to keep watch over itself. Let everyone judge for himself what great advantages the voice of Kant has brought him. I, for my part, would similarly like to urge that a Critique of the Senses should be worked out, if art . . . is in any way to recover and to proceed and progress at a pleasing and lively pace.<sup>145</sup>

Unilateral confidence in the place of judgment was, in Goethe’s opinion, a trap into which the senses would fall less easily: “The senses don’t deceive; judgement deceives,”<sup>146</sup> he even dared to write. Knowledge is, of course, necessary, but it remains ineffective without thought, which is itself ineffective, says Goethe, when it is incarnate, cut off from the gaze: “Thinking is more interesting than knowing, but not more interesting than contemplating.”<sup>147</sup> The only authentic knowledge, therefore, is that which is connected to the subject and to its capacity for experience<sup>148</sup> — even to its capacity for invention, imagination, that *phantasia* understood by Goethe in the Aristotelian sense of the term (when Aristotle claimed that we cannot think, even conceptually, without images). That is why art and science must not be in opposition to one another. On the contrary, says Goethe, “*style* [in the domain of art] rests on the deepest foundations of knowledge, on the essence of objects to the extent that we are able to know it in the form of visible and tangible figures.”<sup>149</sup>

Goethe did not seek merely to invent beautiful poetical, novelistic, or theatrical forms: More generally, he endeavored to forge a form of knowledge, a heuristic style that would be effective in the field of beauty as well as in that of truth. Danièle Cohn spoke of this “Goethe-form” from the perspective of these incidences, as much on a philosophy of knowledge like that of Ernst Cassirer as on a theory of art, a *Kunstwissenschaft* like that of Heinrich Wölfflin.<sup>150</sup> One must not forget — on the basis of Cohn’s conclusions regarding poetic *pathos* in

Goethe and his aesthetic of intensification<sup>151</sup>—that the heuristic style of Goethe was also one of the fundamental sources for Aby Warburg in his project concerning a vast *Kulturwissenschaft* founded on a historical atlas of the “formulae of *pathos*.”<sup>152</sup>

We could say, in order to sketch a frame of intelligibility for this question, that Goethe devoted himself, before Warburg, to examining each thing in its dual perspective of sampling and of chaos. Chaos is what comes from the world to us *en masse*, what falls on top of us with a disconcerting disparity: It is the *monstra* of the world, the proliferating and “demonic” aspect that Goethe speaks of, sometimes, in reference to a cultural context marked by the Enlightenment and its philosophy of nature torn between pantheism and sciences of observation.<sup>153</sup> The sample is what gives us a chance, in front of the multitude of monsters, to perceive the *astra* of knowledge, of the universal, and of theoretical vision. And this is how Goethe never stopped, as Jean Lacoste has explained, being “attentive to the multiple manifestations of order and disorder, to the conflict between duration and becoming, to the conciliation of permanence and of metamorphosis, to the fight between darkness and light, [in short], to the multiform play of polarities.”<sup>154</sup> From which, for example, comes Goethe’s genuine interest in the way that Lavater had undertaken the sampling of the chaos of human passions in his works on physiognomy.<sup>155</sup>

To sample chaos means at the same time to recognize the dispersion of the world and to become involved, in spite of all, in its collection. To carry out this dialectical task, Goethe—who did not, however, like Hegel’s solutions very much, finding them too speculative for his taste—had to forge a great operating hypothesis, which we could consider both brilliant and shaky, on the relations between the multiplicity of phenomena and their fundamental unity. Goethe attempted, therefore, throughout his heuristic procedures, to “employ” the multiple, that is to say, at the same time to make it blossom and to “implicate”<sup>156</sup> it in a certain notion of the universal:

What is the Universal [*das Allgemeine*]?

The single case [*der einzelne Fall*].

What is the Particular [*das Besondere*]?

Millions of cases [*millionen Fälle*].<sup>157</sup>

What does Goethe mean in these four lines? That the universal cannot be limited to the general idea, the abstract law, or the common denominator of the particular cases gathered. On the contrary, it is multiplied in the particular cases, in each particular case: each phenomenon of nature, each work done by man. This is why a particular case must never be isolated from the “millions of cases” that surround it in the chaos of the world. The anxious gay science of Goethe, therefore, has nothing to do with an attempt to reduce the variations to the invariant and to becoming for eternity. On the contrary, it is necessary to lean over each particular case, to respect its intrinsic difference, but, then, to displace one’s gaze, to put a thousand new cases on the table—like the thousand images of which the *Mnemosyne* atlas will be made up—in order to recognize the extrinsic differences that can, according to the contexts, be conflicting polarities or elective affinities. So, from the philosophical point of view, “the general and the particular coincide; the particular *is* the general made manifest under different conditions. [But at the same time] no phenomenon is explicable in and by itself, only many of them surveyed together, methodically arranged, can in the end amount to something which might be valid for a theory.”<sup>158</sup> This is why “existence always and at the same time looks to us both separate and interlocked. If you pursue this analogy too closely, everything coincides identically; if you avoid it, all is scattered into infinity.”<sup>159</sup>

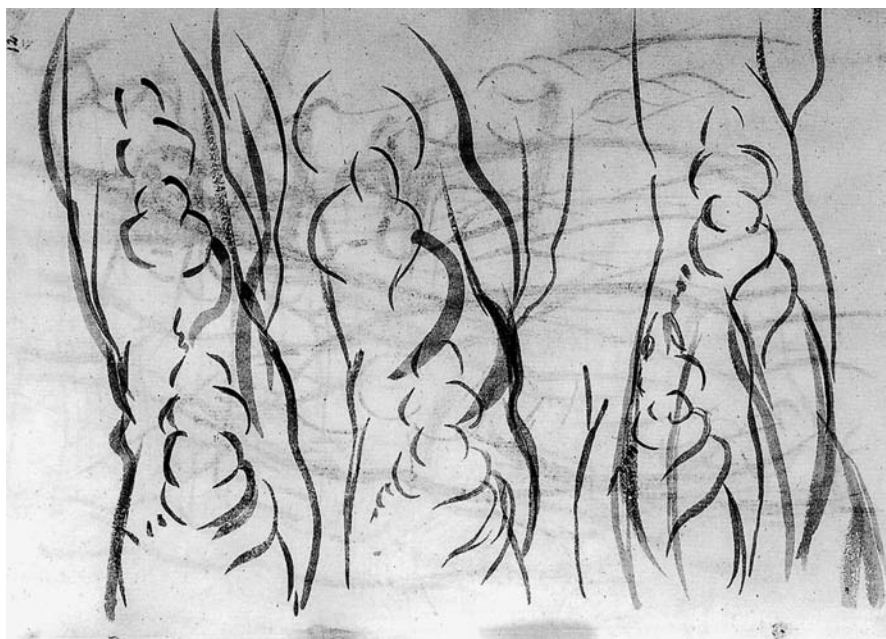
Between these two theoretical risks that face each other, the indifferent identity and the dispersion left, right, and center, Goethe’s position would no longer be speculative but rather resolutely concrete, heuristic, operating, and full of tact or “tenderness” (according to Goethe’s expression *eine zarte Empirie*, which Walter Benjamin would later reuse for his own purposes). Goethe would, therefore, observe with patience, draw (that is, pair his observations), and, finally, collect (that is, pair the results of his observations). His scholarly work is considerable.<sup>160</sup> From 1830, Wilhelm von Humboldt detected in this as much experimental precision as “poetic drive” (*Dichtungstrieb*), which Jean Lacoste—using Goethe’s vocabulary—would sum up with the expression “gay science.”<sup>161</sup> A gay science founded at once on a critique of classical rationalism and on the rejection of a purely empiricist attitude—an attitude in which certain sensible commen-

tators would detect the premises of an authentic phenomenological position regarding the world.<sup>162</sup>

Whether it concerned archaeology (the reconstruction of the temple of Zeus in Pozzuoli),<sup>163</sup> or osteology (the discovery of the intermaxillary bone),<sup>164</sup> botany and zoology (the metamorphosis of plants and insects),<sup>165</sup> optics (the famous anti-Newtonian theory of colors),<sup>166</sup> mineralogy (the observations on the crumbing of granite),<sup>167</sup> or meteorology (the study of clouds),<sup>168</sup> in every case Goethe was fully engaged in these phenomena, with all of the “empirical tenderness of the ‘amateur scholar,’” as he liked to define himself. *Ins Enge bringen*, he wrote in *Poetry and Truth*: “to go straight to the interesting fact,” “to push the essential question to its limit” in every part of the world observed.<sup>169</sup> This is what had to be done in the face of the splendor and chaos of the world: to frame (to isolate in order to observe better from the inside) every fertile phenomenon. And, for this, it was necessary also to take the pencil, the pen, and the paintbrush to cover sketchbooks and drawing pages, which would become so many testimonies to this poetic precision that Goethe showed before the diversity of the sensible world.<sup>170</sup>

Drawing, for him, was not unconnected to a certain position in the aesthetic debates of his time.<sup>171</sup> It is not by chance that the trip to Italy constitutes one of the periods during which Goethe drew with the most intensity.<sup>172</sup> When he attempted, for example, to capture in watercolor the evanescence of clouds, he situated himself in a whole current of landscape representation, which—between the observation of the naturalist and the Romantic *Stimmung*—made the cloud into a pictorial object of the greatest importance: We can think of Alexander Cozens, Luke Howard, Michael Wutky; of Johann Georg von Dillis, Johan Christian Claussen Dahl, Carl Blechen; not to mention Caspar David Friedrich, Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, or John Constable.<sup>173</sup> Or when Goethe tried to frame the musculature of a knee—only to immediately multiply it by three possible variants (fig. 35)—we can immediately see an interest in artistic anatomy, where the observation of the organ itself goes hand in hand with the attentive copying of ancient marble sculptures admired in Italy.<sup>174</sup>

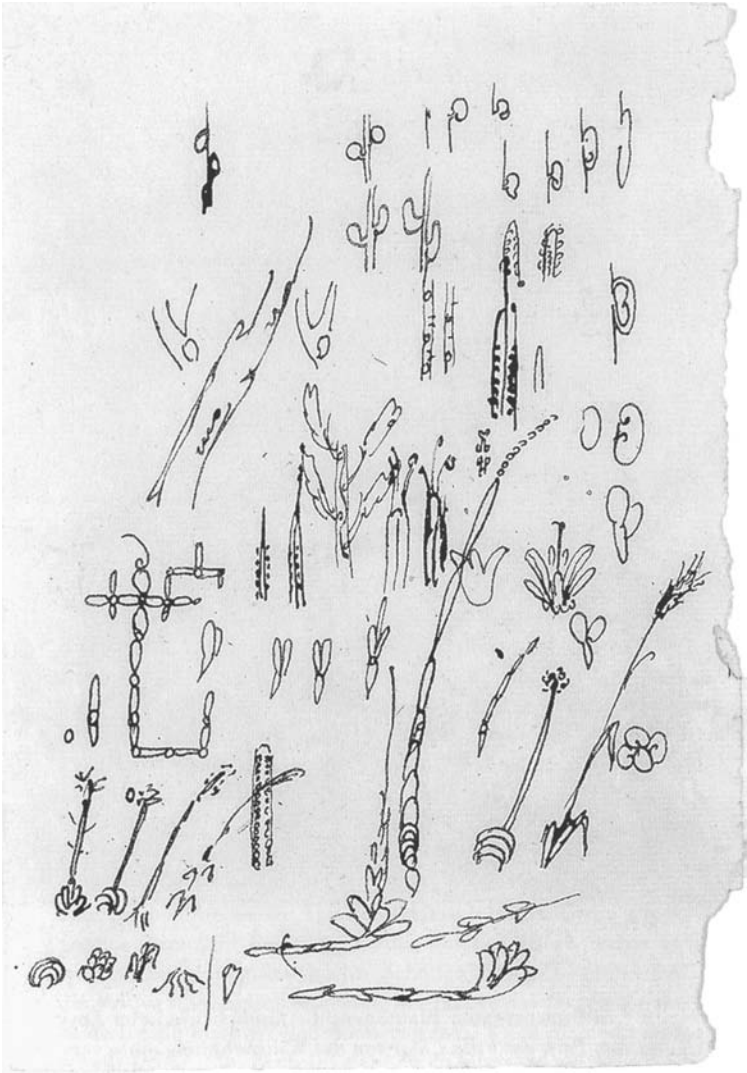
This is how drawing was an “artistic gesture” for Goethe only inasmuch as it concerned first respecting the “scientific” conditions of experimental observation: Every time, or almost every time, art his-



35. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Study of the Knee* (1788), ink on paper, 21 × 15.1 cm. Weimar, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv. Photo: DR.

tory and natural history together support the same graphic decision destined to sample phenomena, to gather, as precisely as possible, the fascinating diversity of the world. This is why the central notion of Goethe's "visual gay science" is less concerned with a tradition of aesthetic debates in a search for the criteria for the beauty of art, than with a phenomenological attitude before the sensible world in general. That notion is morphology, and it is what we sense at work in the drawings where, for example, a flower will not be looked at as that lovely thing to put in a vase for a still life, but as a fascinating organism that must be understood at the same time according to its antecedent (the shoot, the bud) and its consequent (its ramification) (fig. 36).

The gay science that Goethe sought, in his theoretical reflections as well as in his experimental practices—inquiring on the spot, observing, provoking phenomena, drawing them, producing their variations—was nothing other than a "general science of forms" capable



36. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Study of Thumbs, Flowers, and Branches* (1787), ink on paper, 15 × 11.7 cm. Weimar, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv. Photo: DR.

of ignoring neither their multiplicity nor the rules of their reciprocal transformation, that is, of their metamorphoses. It had, as Gerry Webster wrote, less to do with “fighting against Proteus”<sup>175</sup> than with inventing knowledge of the protean nature, a science that never tires of confronting the “millions of cases,” that is, the millions of particular forms: a “promethean” task, as Jean Lacoste has shown.<sup>176</sup> It is not an overhanging and authoritarian task—reducing the diverse to a rule of subsumption—but rather an implicated, generous task, the task of an artist, almost mad in its desire to embrace the whole symphony, the whole concert of forms, according to that “secret law of the choir” of which, at a given moment, the poem “The Metamorphosis of Plants” speaks.<sup>177</sup> To listen out for the “music” of the world is what Nietzsche demands in *The Gay Science*,<sup>178</sup> and it is what Goethe did already when he observed everything according to the diastolic (expansion, dissociation) and systolic (contraction, unification) pulsations of its constantly metamorphosing forms.<sup>179</sup>

We know how much Goethe’s notion of metamorphosis might have interested certain contemporary scholars, like the zoologist Adolf Portmann or the mathematician René Thom.<sup>180</sup> The latter noted the great fruitfulness of a concept of transformation, including the *pregnance* of the origin<sup>181</sup>—that is, the active survival of primary states in every form, however evolved, however sophisticated it might be. Well before Focillon, therefore, Goethe pushed as far as possible the hypothesis concerning a life of forms endowed with this *vis formae* or “formative potency” that shook the whole neoclassical vision—form as ideal stasis—with its “economic” and “dynamic” point of view, as Goethe explicitly stated.<sup>182</sup> From such a perspective, form could not be reduced to the mere visible aspect of things, even if geometrized. Not only does each phenomenon suppose “millions of cases” that are closely related, but also each case implies that the form is operating on several levels of potency and actualization.

This is how a sculpture would not be considered by Goethe a more or less perfect “form,” but rather a work of forms that are latent and manifest, potential and acting. Hence the magisterial commentary developed by Goethe in 1798 before the *Laocoön* of the Vatican (we might wonder what Goethe’s analysis of the *Farnese Atlas* might have given):



When in fact a work ought to move before the eyes, a fugitive moment should be pitched upon; no part of the whole ought to be found before in this position and, in a little time after, every part should be obliged to quit that position; it is by this means that the work be always animated for millions of spectators. . . . The subject chosen is one of the happiest that can be imagined. Men struggling with dangerous animals, and moreover with animals which act, not as powerful masses, but as divided forces, which do not menace on one side alone, which do not require a concentrated resistance, but which, according to their extended organization, are capable of paralysing, joined to the great movement, already spreads over the *ensemble* a certain degree of repose and unity. The artist has been able to indicate, by degrees, the efforts of the serpents: one only infolds; the other is irritated, and wounds his adversary. . . . The three figures have a double action, so that they are occupied in a very serious manner. The youngest of the sons would extricate himself by raising his right arm; and he pushes back the head of the serpent with his left hand; he would alleviate the present evil, and prevent a greater one; this is the highest degree of activity which he can now exert in his constrained state. The father makes efforts to disembarass himself from the serpents, and the body would, at the same time, avoid the bite which it has just received. The movement of the father inspires the eldest son with horror, and he endeavours to extricate himself from the serpent, which, as yet, has only infolded him slightly.<sup>183</sup>

Every form would therefore be the doubly oriented, dialectical work of a manifest aspect and of its latent solicitations. Every stasis should be thought according to the dynamics of transient states that are crystallized every now and again. What is the gesture? A “double action.” The present? A potential of the time in which antecedent and consequent, memory and protension, act together. The presence? Almost a Titanomachy of each instant: a fight with efficient absences. Another fascinating example of this way of apprehending forms is shown to us by Goethe’s long-term interest—the observations that he wrote down in 1785—in a pile of stones of the “rocky labyrinth” in Luisenburg. Goethe did a drawing,<sup>184</sup> then had it engraved to illustrate his commentaries. In it he explicitly assumed his own “potential of imagination” (*Einsbildungskraft*) to deduce, from the pile of gran-

ite blocks before his eyes, the whole structure of the anterior form of which the present form was only the ruined remains. His drawing therefore carries, in gray, the absent forms that make it possible to explain the apparent chaos of the present forms (fig. 37).<sup>185</sup> Beyond a typically Romantic fascination for this chaos of rocks, it was necessary for everything to be rearranged like a drama of forces and forms, a dialectics of potencies and actions, of invisible latencies and sensible aspects.<sup>186</sup>

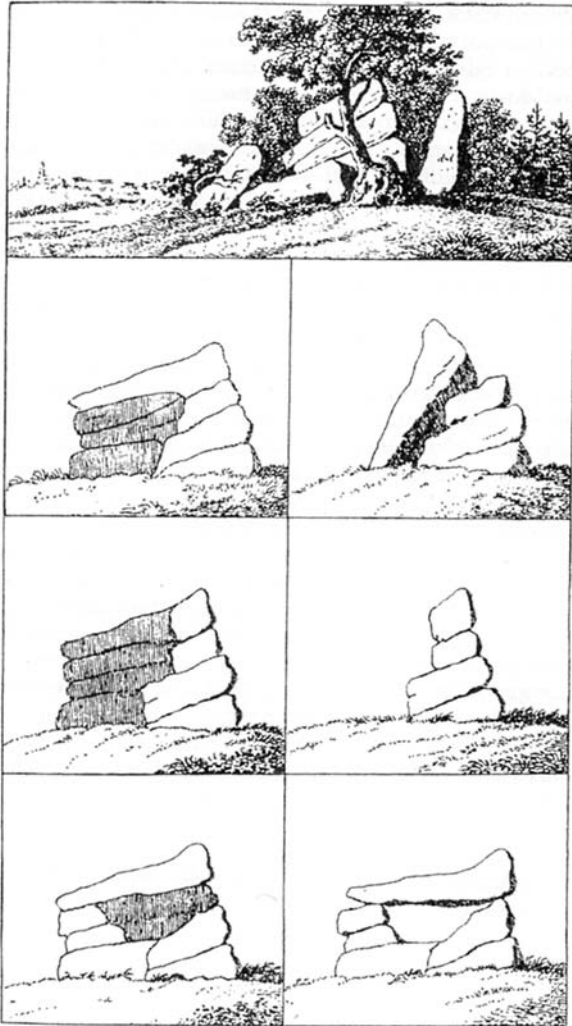
To draw, then, is to pair one's observation, but also to make one's imagination intervene; it is the capacity to rearrange all the particular images, or framings, into constellations, into re-montages—reassemblings and re-viewings—of reality. To proceed, consequently, with a trans-territorial operation on the domains observed, an anachronistic operation on the presents observed. This is how Goethe looked at each form, not simply as the result of a place or a history, but as the superposition of several spatialities and several heterogeneous temporalities. As Ernst Cassirer observed very well in the context of Goethe's zoology and biology:

The theory of metamorphosis has nothing to do with the historic sequence of the appearance of life. It is separate from any "theory of descent" not only in its content but also in the posing of the question and the method. Goethe's concept of "genesis" is dynamic, but it is not historical; it links distant *forms* with each other by exposing their incessant mediation, but it does not seek to create any genealogical tree of the species.<sup>187</sup>

This is another way of saying that such a method aimed above all at a synoptic arrangement of forms capable of bringing to light, in their differences as well as their affinities, the very principle of their metamorphoses.

## **Points of Origin and Links of Affinity**

We know that Goethe arranged the space of his own house—as did Aby Warburg later—as a work tool in which each problem, each theme explored, was the object of a careful collection.<sup>188</sup> In the end,

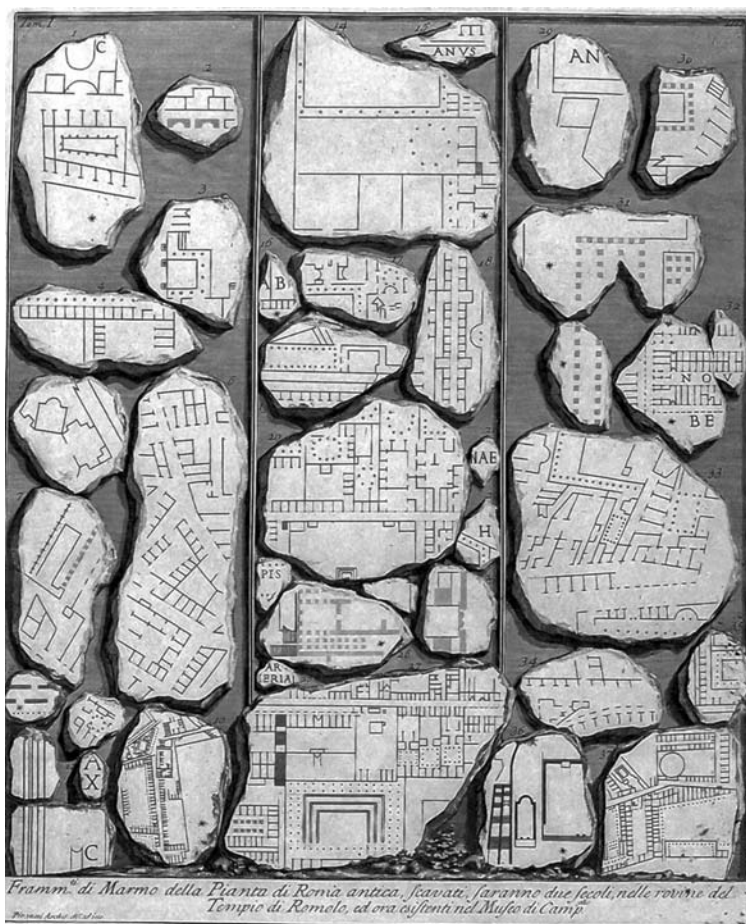


37. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Rocky Chaos of Luisenburg" (1785), etching after a drawing for the article "Die Luisenburg bei Alexanders-Bad." From J. W. von Goethe, (1785) 1989. Photo: DR.

it all made up a strange “collection of collections”: a collection to the potential of *x*, we might say. Art historians necessarily studied Goethe’s “artistic” collections first of all: his antique bronze sculptures, his cast collection, his medals, his portraits, his Greek vases, his majolica, his engravings from the Renaissance, his drawings by Rembrandts or Rubens.<sup>189</sup> Johannes Grave recently insisted on the “formative virtue” of these collections, their *Bildungsprozess*, their fruitfulness from the point of view of an “emancipation of the gaze,” which cannot, however, be separated from the academic debates in which Goethe certainly took a position.<sup>190</sup> Such collections became, in the hands of the poet, efficient tools for formulating his conception of a “totality of art” (*Ganze der Kunst*) from the peculiar samples gathered in the house in Weimar.<sup>191</sup>

Such would be the classical way—and the legitimate way, it goes without saying—of considering the Goethean epistemic and aesthetic space. But we can also sense, looking at the “collection of collections” of the Goethes Haus, something like a turmoil of classifications: a profusion of transversal movements whose effect involves putting back in the wrong order each part of a collection when it is placed in relation to a part of another collection. We already have the impression of a labyrinth, one that is almost Borgesian, when we look at the *lapidaria* of the eighteenth century, in which the remains of the same archaeological site were gathered, which is what the engravings of Piranesi show in a sometimes vertiginous way (fig. 38).<sup>192</sup> This impression is even more striking if we consider that, in the same space of the Goethes Haus, Romantic landscapes were found alongside vegetal roots in their jars, an engraving after *The Transfiguration* by Raphael alongside a mere wicker basket, a drawing by Rembrandt alongside a child’s alphabet primer, a *Virgin* by Schongauer alongside a painted fan, a *Triumph* by Mantegna alongside popular figures in garish colors, a copy of an antique alongside a child’s toy, the *Ulysses* of John Flaxman with a box of needles, an automaton, or drawers full of stones (fig. 39).

It is because the Goethean “collection of collections” disassembled here what it assembled elsewhere. Moved by a great morphological hypothesis, it was created to make links between forms where the objects themselves were dissimilar in their function or social status.



38. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Fragments of the Marble Plan of Ancient Rome* (1756), copper engraving, 46 × 38 cm. From *Le antichità romane* (Rome: Bouchard & Gravier, 1756). Author photo.

From his arrival in Weimar in 1775 until his death in 1832, Goethe's collection, which until then was to be found in two little carrier bags, grew by almost forty thousand objects. After fifty-seven years of collecting, he left manuscripts which today fill 341 cases, 17800 stones, more than 9000 engravings, around 4500 moldings of gemstones, 8000 books, as well as numerous paintings, sculptures and collections of natural history.<sup>193</sup>

And this is not even to mention the objects of all kinds that interested the poet for one reason or another.

Thus ended, as Carrie Asman writes, “a crest trail between the sublime and the inept which stand close to each other in a narrow gap,”<sup>194</sup> and which end up giving each of these boxes, each of these drawers and shelves, the allure of a general declassing in search of other affinities, other ways of classifying, other ways of constructing resemblances. For example, “the inclusion of torn curtains [kept by Goethe] in the list [of his collection], which clearly breaks apart the context of the cabinet of art and marvels,” announces—according to Carrie Asman—“the advent of an historical gaze that would apprehend things like signs of a critique of the period’s culture.”<sup>195</sup> The inventory of Goethe’s treasures taken in 1848 and 1849 by Christian Schuchard, of which I include an extract here, will certainly evoke the lists of Borges or those “atlases of the impossible” that made Michel Foucault laugh so much, and work:



39. Goethe’s mineralogical collection. Weimar, Goethes Haus am Frauenplan.  
Photo: DR.

81. Fragments of Germanic funeral urns, with a stone pearl. Found near Olbersleben, in the grand duchy of Weimar.
82. Battle axe, in the form of an angle, cut from a stone, possibly serpentine, beautiful and well-defined form.
83. Another, in the form of an angle, short, with a round hole.
84. Four different rough stones, in the form of ancient stone tools, and a round perforated stone.
85. Two pieces of architectonic ornaments, from a very hard and rough stucco. On one of them, the upper part of an animal head. Medieval German.
86. Two large convex tiles, and one very large ridge tile finished with a pointed angle.
87. A piece of painted tissue in black, 4 cm<sup>2</sup>, which the silkworms of the *Phal. Pavonia media*, under the directions of Wenzel Heeger in Berchtoldsdorf near Vienna, have instantly woven widthwise.
88. A piece of Chinese indigo of the best variety.
89. A piece of the hull of a large vessel from the East Indies, which was completely destroyed by mollusks.
90. Two birds made with feathers applied, and 9 bird feathers, multicolored, partly eaten by worms. In wooden frames and under glass.
91. A large and a small wasps' nest, the first in a cardboard box with a glass cover.
92. An oblong-shaped bird's nest, made with delicate blades of grass.
93. A monstrous egg.
94. White marl from wild Kirchli, in the district of Appenzell.
95. An edible Indian bird's nest, broken.
96. Wool samples in a cardboard box. Also, the work by Sturm, On Sheep's Wool, Iéna, 1812.
97. Two dozen buttons in limestone.
98. Four pieces of bezoar from gazelle.
99. A piece of copper which probably melted and poured onto the ground during a fire or a similar event.
100. A piece of *pietra fongaja* from Apulia.
101. An English fighting cock. Lead pencil drawing, in a black frame under glass.
102. A mahogany box, the interior containing several compartments covered in blue sheeting on each side. For drying out plants.

103. A dried snake.
104. A writing pen, incrustated with salt.
105. A hand and a finger of a mummy, from the lead cave of Bremen, and a piece of another bone from a mummy.
106. Three plaster busts: Homer, a modern masculine bust, and another with breastplate armor.
107. *Moses saved from the waters*, mediocre oil painting on wooden canvas, 16 cm<sup>2</sup>.
108. A round ivory goblet, slightly damaged at the base, around one foot high, without figural ornamentation.
109. Ten death masks: grand duke Carl August von Weimar, Dante, Cromwell, etc. Also a plaster form for one of them.
110. A minuscule piece of a cake from the town of Kazan which was sent to a Cossack of the Don by his mother during the French war. Letter and booty travelled through France and Germany before finally ending up at their destination in Creutzburg near Eisenach.
111. A ball of glass with a sealed opening, black interior with crystallizations.<sup>196</sup>

It would be tempting, but useless, to interpret Goethe's very sundry collections as the result of a gratuitous, personal, dilettantish, or superstitious "fancy." Instead, we should see this astonishing collection as a fundamental cosmopolitan gesture: These objects have crossed all boundaries<sup>197</sup>—including thresholds, or hierarchies, of value—and Goethe brings them together for a "gay science" of the disparate, determined throughout by the epistemic potencies of the imagination and of morphological intuition. Goethe himself invented, half-jokingly and half-seriously, a whole typology of collections in which he denounced "copyists" and asked the "imaginative types" to make themselves "characteristicians":<sup>198</sup> that is to say, morphologists linking imagination, knowledge, and reason. Do we not need imagination in order to place a vulgar piece of black painted tissue of four square centimeters next to a bust of Homer? Do we not need knowledge to see in that object a creation due to the "silkworms of the *Phalena Pavonia media*"? Is a certain morphological intelligence not needed to understand how and why those silkworms would systematically "weave widthwise" the silk of this fragment?



Like all the other objects in Goethe's collection, the minuscule piece of tissue was at the same time, in the eyes of the poet-scholar, an almost-nothing and an almost-everything. Infinitely modest as a case among "millions of cases" that it had to be confronted with: the result of the work of a few silkworms on four square centimeters, nothing more. But infinitely worthy of attention as a phenomenon: the result of a procedure that is both complete and complex, a "total fact" already making it possible, if we give it the attention it deserves, to understand fully what a "form" is, what a "formation" is, a "creation," a "metamorphosis" . . . Four square centimeters of silk? It's certainly very little. Yet it's a world in itself. It is merely a tiny particular point in the gigantic fabric of life, but it is also, in its framework, an example in which nothing is missing, since in it occurs the link between the "small" and the "whole", the local and the global, between morphology of the singular and the morphology of the universal.

For a long time readers of Goethe have seen as the "pivot of his scientific theories" and even the "secret of his aesthetics"<sup>199</sup> this approach to the case as a phenomenon and the understanding of the phenomenon itself—inasmuch as its manifestation is fecund—as an "archetypal phenomenon" (*Urphänomen*). This was the tool that allowed Goethe to declass the idealist approach when it seemed inapt, due to its abstract and overhanging position, for entering into the multiple experience (*Erfahrung*) of the world, where the subject is put to the test by the exuberant splendor—which sometimes causes anxiety—of phenomenon. Symmetrically, Goethe needed a conceptual tool that made it possible to step over the trivial empiricism of certain naturalists incapable of bringing the origin (*Ursprung*) to the surface from four square centimeters of their field of observation. There, too, Goethe did not avoid constructing a heterodox dialectics that ostensibly turned its back on the grand alternatives of the philosophical tradition (universal and singular, idealism and realism, and so forth). *Urphänomen* was, in a way, his magic word: his own way of forcing every dogmatic barrier between seeing and knowing, between the knowledge of sensible forms and the science of intelligible forms.

The *Urphänomen* is in a way the phenomenon (*Phänomen*) considered, not as a secondary effect of an obscure *noumenon* or a far-off supra-sensible reality, but as a primary, first, integral, and impassable *act* of the origin as such (*Ursprung*). It is the phenomenon seen

as an absolutely decisive, irreducible, actual, vivacious, and visible “jump” (*Sprung*); what is made to appear as a result of its “jump” is no less than the bottom of time, the primordial potential (*Ur-*) of all forms and of all formations. It has been remarked that Goethe, by employing this term, fell into a conceptual contradiction, since the origin is normally hidden, deep, far away, when the phenomenon is visible only at the surface of things, very close, too close to us.<sup>200</sup> But we could also state that the *Urphänomen* allowed Goethe to critique this textbook opposition by making the origin a *surfacing* thing, visible at the surface: the immediate swirl of things, their symptom, their “whirlpool,” and not their far-off “source,” as Walter Benjamin brilliantly remarked in his “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.<sup>201</sup>

Goethe himself stated clearly that the “archetypal phenomena” exhibit their time in their very form, their origin in their manifestation, their morphogenesis in their sensible configuration:

Nothing appreciable by the sense lies beyond them, on the contrary, they are perfectly fit to be considered as a fixed point to which we first ascended, step by step, and from which we may, in like manner, descend to the commonest case of every-day experience.<sup>202</sup>

In other words, a whole morphogenetic theory of the production of living things transpires in these four square centimeters of woven silk conserved in one of the innumerable cardboard boxes in the house in Weimar. And it is then that Goethe affirms that

everything factual is already theory: to understand this would be the greatest achievement. The blueness of the sky reveals the basic law of chromatics. Don’t go looking for anything beyond phenomena: they are themselves what they teach, the doctrine . . . when we watch something coming into being, we imagine it has always been there.<sup>203</sup>

But this synoptic potential of the “archetypal phenomenon”—where everything can be seen at the surface: the manifestation and its law, the phenomenon and its origin—in no way means that things are “simple” or “pure,” free of conflict and contradiction. The very terms of the concept forged by Goethe suppose a dialectical potency. “The

blueness of the sky reveals the basic law of chromatics,” he says; but it is also because, half of the time, the sky is black above our heads (at night) or heavy with gray clouds (when it rains). And so it is not by chance that Goethe was particularly attentive in trying to release the “archetypal phenomenon” from any ideal “purity” or “simplicity”: “Snow is a fictitious cleanliness. . . . Dirt glitters when the sun happens to shine.”<sup>204</sup> Why does Goethe give the magnet as a characteristic example of the “archetypal phenomenon”?<sup>205</sup> Why is the experience of “archetypal phenomena” described through situations that speak of bedazzlement in front of the true, or even of *anxiety* in front of the evident?<sup>206</sup> This is because such pieces of evidence are “whirlpools” in the river of becoming; they are “swirls” in the order of the world, “symptoms” in the normal run of things: “There are stumbling blocks of a kind to trip up every traveller. . . . The poet, however, points to the significant places along the road.”<sup>207</sup>

The only “archetypal phenomenon,” therefore, however crystalline it might be, is one that would be linked to all the others beyond the boundaries of the difference that it nonetheless manifests: “I view all phenomena as independent units and try to isolate each from the other by sheer force; then I view them as correlatives and they combine to form vital structures.”<sup>208</sup> This means that “archetypal phenomena” truly reveal their “vital structures,” as Goethe says, only through their differential relations, their resemblances (or affinities) and their dissimilarities (or peculiarities), which are always played against each other in a dialectical way:

Pure and simple theory is no use except in that it makes us believe in the interconnection of phenomena. . . . No phenomenon is explicable in and by itself; only many of them surveyed together, methodically arranged, can in the end amount to something which might be valid for a theory. . . . Knowing is based on discerning what is to be differentiated, scientific knowledge on what is not to be differentiated.<sup>209</sup>

These two movements are equally necessary, the first isolating the intrinsic fecundity of the phenomenon, the second linking the phenomena to each other in order to better understand their “structures of life.”

In this double necessity lies the explanation for many of Goethe's interests. For example, regarding his position alongside Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in the "quarrel of the analogues," which set the latter against Cuvier's purely "distinctive" methods.<sup>210</sup> Or in his way of affirming, in the field of aesthetics, the combined difference and affinity of art with the world: "There is no way of surely avoiding the world than by art, and it is by art that you form the surest link with it."<sup>211</sup> "Beauty is a manifestation of secret natural laws which without this appearance would have remained eternally hidden from us," says Goethe also.<sup>212</sup> This, in his opinion, is what made the artists or the poets the "water diviners" of phenomena and of problems that nobody could have seen without them.<sup>213</sup> At the same time, the image appeared to him like that interface of affinity and difference, where the "idea remains infinitely operative and unattainable," linked to us in the same action, and yet unfathomable, separated from us, as the "live and immediate revelation [that is, linked] of the unfathomable [that is, separated]."<sup>214</sup>

Differences and affinities, therefore, drive the great playing of the world: the playing of objects placed in relation to one another (for example, the piece of fabric with the bust of Homer, in Goethe's collection), that of organisms in relation to one another (for example, the silkworm with the geometrid, in the *Metamorphosis of Insects*), and, of course, that of subjects in relation to one another (for example, Eduard with Otilie, in Goethe's novel *Elective Affinities*).<sup>215</sup> Differences and affinities also determine the world of the relations that we, as subjects, entertain with the objects that surround us: "There is in the object a certain unknown law which corresponds to a certain unknown law in the subject."<sup>216</sup> The *elective affinities* would, therefore, refer, at the same time, to that "force of law"—that ontological structure—which links us to the world, and to the mystery that, in the face of it, leaves us perpetually on the breach of recognition and non-knowledge. In its first meaning, according to Danièle Cohn,

the affinity describes the attraction, the movement that brings it closer, the improbable and profound union. At the opposite extreme of a visible and brutally mimetic resemblance, it shows another, one that is intimate, which was kept hidden. From the shadow in which

it is found, it invites continuities which link foreign orders to one another. As a linking principle, it possesses the mythical force to entrench the possibility that an understanding of the world exists.<sup>217</sup>

It is, therefore, a profound as well as improbable union. But why is it “improbable”? Because it acts in the underside, the dormancies, or the latencies of historical reality. Because only our imagination is capable of establishing it, which is to say a lot, since nothing of what the imagination makes appear can be considered to be “established” once and for all. So it is “improbable.” But “profound”: the meticulous investigation by Laurent Van Eynde on “Goethe, reader of Kant,” made it possible to measure all that the poet of the *Elective Affinities* took from the Kantian arguments on the same level as an “ontological meaning of the imagination.”<sup>218</sup> In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, notably, Kant questioned “sensitivity’s productive faculty of affinity.” Phantasm and phantasmagoria can no doubt invent forms (while normal in dreams, they are, says Kant, “pathological” when they appear when one is awake).<sup>219</sup> The *affinities* refer to this plane of much more fundamental relations where the imagination can rejoin understanding, when the “matter” of images manages to find a “theme upon which the manifold is strung”: It is such a precious operation that Kant defines affinity as “the union of the manifold [*die Bereinigung des Mannigfaltigen*: the arrangement of the diverse] in virtue of its derivation from one ground,” and no less.<sup>220</sup>

It is then that differences and affinities become engaged in the same movement, which owes its name (*affinitas*) to the most fascinating chemical process there is:

intellectual combination is analogous to an interaction of two specifically different physical substances intimately acting upon each other and striving for unity, where this *union* brings about a third entity that has properties which can only be produced by the union of two heterogeneous elements. Despite their dissimilarity, understanding and sensibility themselves form a close union for bringing about our cognition, as if one had its origin in the other, or both originated from a common origin; but this cannot be, or at least we cannot conceive how dissimilar things could sprout forth from one and the same root.<sup>221</sup>

Suddenly, with this remarkable epistemic model of affinity, everything goes exactly against the grain of what Kant's thinking is normally brought to, or even reduced to, and that is the model of the schema: Here, however, "the imagination is the activity that transgresses the barriers where over-simplicity homogenizes the sensible and the intellectual," as Fernando Gil commented remarkably.<sup>222</sup>

By privileging the relation of affinity, Goethe inscribed himself in a breach of Kantian dogma, one that was opened, in reality, by Kant himself. This is why the poet situates himself, finally, at the same time in the relation and the gap regarding the great philosopher of the Enlightenment, as Ernst Cassirer stated so clearly.<sup>223</sup> Affinity was an answer to the scheme of the Kantian doctrine, as it replied in its own way—which Tzvetan Todorov calls "dialogic"<sup>224</sup>—to the canonical, Hegelian form of philosophical dialectics.<sup>225</sup> To come to this original, conceptual solution, the patience of a long philosophical confrontation—evident, for example, in the extraordinary correspondence of Goethe with Schiller<sup>226</sup>—and the impertinence, so to speak, of a poetic decision that would launch the vertiginous bridge between chemical *affinitas* and morphological observation of natural phenomena,<sup>227</sup> on the one hand, and, on the other, a work on language in its entirety oriented toward a poetic observation of human passions.<sup>228</sup>

This no doubt explains the astonishing critical fortune of *Elective Affinities* and, more generally, of the imaginative knowledge or "visual gay science" claimed by Goethe.<sup>229</sup> Why should we be surprised that Aby Warburg appropriated this claim, torn between the demands of the Enlightenment (*astra*) and the recognition of the "monsters" of reason (*monstra*)? In a short text published at the end of World War I—in other words, at the very moment of his own Titanomachy or, better still, psychomachy—Warburg publicly expressed his fear ("Leider ist zu befürchten [alas, it is to be feared]") that the world of human culture should be reduced to the brutal antitheses or the "either-or" (*Entweder-Oder*) or to the false solutions of indecisive syntheses suggested by a dictum like "truth lies between the two."<sup>230</sup> He needed to turn to Goethe, then, to call upon the great principle of *Elective Affinities*, but also to turn to the morphological organization that would soon guide the *Mnemosyne Bilderatlas*, that collection of visual affinities created to make an "iconology of intervals": "That

which is found between the two, is the problem [and not the solution, the truth found]: impenetrable perhaps, but also, perhaps, accessible [*in der Mitte bleibt das Problem liegen, unerforschlich vielleicht, vielleicht auch zugänglich*].”<sup>231</sup>

In the same period, Aby Warburg was working on a text that only appeared two years later, in 1920, and that opened up all of this “iconology of intervals” to a fundamentally political question, evidenced by, for example, the last plates of the *Mnemosyne* atlas.<sup>232</sup> This text is literally “sustained” by two Goethean citations that form an epigraph at the beginning, and a kind of “moral” at the end. The first quotation, from *Faust*, suggests that everything appears from the incessant “migrations” (*Wanderungen*) of space and time: from the East to Greece, and from Greece to the modern West, for example.<sup>233</sup> The second quotation, which is very long, is taken from *Theory of Colours*: It is given as a warning of the dangers of any irrationalism, when science itself is led astray “into the region of the imagination and of sensuality [*in die Region der Phantasie und Sinnlichkeit*],” which is a way, here, of naming the astrological “superstitions” (*Aberglauben*) of our modern period.<sup>234</sup>

Warburg called on a poet, in fact, in his plea for an iconological “gay science.” He could just as easily have turned to the Goya of *Sueño de la razón* since it was a matter, once again, of convoking the imagination itself as critic of images: of convoking notably, according to the Kantian terminology taken up by Goethe, the resources of *Einbildungskraft* against the productions of the *Phantasie*. It seems to me particularly important that, in these same lines, Warburg recalled that our experience of images, even if they are “monstrous” images, had—as we see in the engraving by Goya—to be taken charge of through genuine experimentation on the “work table” (*Arbeitstisch*) of the thinker, the artist, or the art historian. This is what justifies an undertaking like the *Mnemosyne* atlas: that the “monsters” of the *Phantasie* become at the same time recognized and critiqued on the “work table,” or montage table, of a researcher capable of making images “join together in the laboratory [*Laboratorium*] of an iconological history of civilizations [*kulturwissenschaftlicher Bildgeschichte*].”<sup>235</sup>

## Atlas and the Wandering Jew, or the Age of Poverty

As often occurs, the theoretical motifs sketched by Aby Warburg in his erudite articles—and feverishly explored in every direction in the labyrinth of his manuscripts—were, exactly in the same period, presented by Walter Benjamin, right up to their ultimate philosophical consequences. Just as Warburg had done with his article in 1920, Benjamin followed the Goethean motifs like a pathway to elaborate his own conceptions of history and of criticism. *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*, defended by Benjamin in June 1919 for his doctoral dissertation and published the following year, opens with a Goethean maxim:

Before anything else . . . the analyst should look for, or rather aim to know if he is really dealing with a mysterious synthesis or if what he is focusing on is not merely an aggregate, a juxtaposition . . . or how it might be possible to modify all of that.<sup>236</sup>

Benjamin's work ended, no doubt, by placing the Goethean aesthetic theory in perspective.<sup>237</sup> But the question asked at the start is no less a persistent leitmotif in Benjamin, who sought equally to force the aporias of the *episteme* and of the *poièsis*, of order and of the *disparis*, of the universal and the singular, by forging a notion of dialectics that is as “poetic” and unorthodox as that of Goethe in his time. Where Goethe, with elective affinities, invented a rich pathway that was recruited neither by Kantian doctrine nor by understanding, nor by the rigors of Hegelian construction, Benjamin invented a notion of the dialectical image that was not submitted to the neo-Kantianism of Hermann Cohen for example, or to the severity of Heideggerian solutions. It was, indeed, an imaginative “gay science” that Benjamin aimed for, and it was Goethe to whom he turned once more—according to the work cited in 1920 by Aby Warburg, entitled *Theory of Colours*—in the opening to his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*:

Neither in knowledge nor in reflection can anything whole be put together, since in the former the internal is missing and in the latter the external; and so we must necessarily think of science as art if we expect to derive any kind of wholeness from it. Nor should we look for



this in the general, the excessive, but, since art is always wholly represented in every individual work of art, so science ought to reveal itself completely in every individual object treated.<sup>238</sup>

It is enough to read the few pages that follow this epigraph to understand what Benjamin's idea of *Ursprung* owes to Goethe's notion of *Urphänomen*; Benjamin had the opportunity to read the philosophical commentary on it by Elisabeth Rotten, published in 1913.<sup>239</sup> What the author of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* could take from the notion of "archetypal phenomenon" was, first of all, that authentic knowledge is constituted on a double front of singularities ("micrologies") and of configurations (connections, affinities, "constellations"). This supposes a style of knowing opposed to any positivist and engaged classification, in what we call here an atlas, that is, a dynamic montage of heterogeneities: "a form which, in the remotest extremes and the apparent excesses of the process of development, reveals the configuration of the idea—the sum of all possible meaningful juxtapositions of such opposites."<sup>240</sup> In the end Benjamin would see in his own cardinal notion of "dialectical image" a certain transposition of the Goethean "archetypal phenomenon" in the domain of history: "The dialectical image is that form of the historical object which satisfies Goethe's requirements for the object of analysis: to exhibit a genuine synthesis. It is the archetypal phenomenon of history."<sup>241</sup>

This is how, in spite of the abysses that sometimes separate our modernity, the Goethean notions have renewed use-value in the context of the "cultural sciences," which, in Warburg or Benjamin—but also in Simmel and Freud, for example—redefine entirely their founding methods.<sup>242</sup> Why should one be surprised, then, that Walter Benjamin, the contemporary of Proust and Joyce, of Eugène Atget and August Sander, of Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, should have devoted so many intense pages to a commentary on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*? Why should we be surprised that, beyond the whole biographical or psychological explanation, he saw in these "affinities" the very place where the points—or rather, whirlpools—of origin were played out, as well as the links of configurations that arranged them in montages of heterogeneity, where the whole "truth content" of a work or an epoch was played out?<sup>243</sup>

By displacing the Goethean notion of "archetypal phenomenon"

toward the images of history—and the history of images just as much—Walter Benjamin shifted the whole serene neoclassical position of the poet toward a more fundamental anxiety than the historical context of terrible European conflicts had, fatally, provoked. It was no longer the time for marvelous travels in Italy, but instead for hate between peoples and, soon, for the murder and exile of the most far-seeing Europeans. The melancholy that appears in Benjamin's commentary on the *Elective Affinities* is not only due to the fact that Jula Cohn—to whom the text is dedicated—was compared, by the writer, with Ottilie in Goethe's novel.<sup>244</sup> In the central image of the star falling from the sky, Benjamin saw this moment as a "caesura of the work and in which . . . everything pauses,"<sup>245</sup> and which corresponds to what was going to be, sometime later, his own definition of montage: "Hope shot across the sky above their heads like a falling star," wrote Goethe.<sup>246</sup>

From this "micrological" or "archetypal" situation, Benjamin became aware, in a very Warburgian manner, of the prevalence of the "demonic" element in *Elective Affinities*, where melancholy and anxiety before death—a visceral *pathos*—calls upon all the sidereal constructions, the conjectures and "superstitions" of astrology, thus constituting the "fundamental base to which the fear of life adds innumerable harmonics."<sup>247</sup> It is necessary to understand that the "elective affinities" bring us, ineluctably, between the *monstra* and the *astra*, toward what I have called an *anxious gay science*: knowledge of the heterogeneous, inasmuch as it "elects" its home in its affinity with the other, object or subject. Knowledge of the heterogeneous, inasmuch as it makes us "elect" the dissimilar as object of knowing (a piece of silk woven by silkworms with a bust of Homer, for example) or as love object (to love beyond boundaries, "cosmopolitically", as Benjamin was able to do throughout his life). The elective affinity would thus be, before anything else, to love one's dissimilar and to want to know it through "constellations," montages, or atlases interposed (as Warburg did too, continuously, throughout his life, from Renaissance paganism to Hopi Indians).

Yet, upon this beautiful risk of the heterogeneous and of heterotopia, elective affinity imposes its counterpart of suffering and of ineluctable pathos. The affinity transgresses boundaries but does not abolish them. Hence the ultimate commentary by Benjamin on

Goethe's novel, the very last phrase of his long study: "Only for the sake of the hopeless ones have we been given hope [*Nur um der Hoffnungslosen willen ist uns die Hoffnung gegeben*]." <sup>248</sup> How can we not think, here, of the striking description of *Hope*, in *One-Way Street*, where Benjamin, regarding the relief by Andrea Pisano that shows it—and which returns to the image by Giotto, which Warburg, in turn, placed on the very last plate of his *Mnemosyne* atlas <sup>249</sup>—saw the tragic paradox: "Sitting, she helplessly extends her arms toward a fruit that remains beyond her reach. And yet she is winged. Nothing is more true." <sup>250</sup> We can assume that this dialectical image directly anticipates the modern version of the "angel of history," which appears in Benjamin's last known text and which was suggested to him by Paul Klee's work entitled *Angelus Novus*. <sup>251</sup> It is also, in its own way, a mythological image, and it could form, from this point of view, the exact counterpart to the figure of Atlas, that fallen Titan who, bent under the weight of the world, is powerless to free himself from it, while at the same time he allegorizes the deepest knowledge of it.

What, then—and how—does this figure of Atlas become in the time of Aby Warburg and of Walter Benjamin? What does the anxious gay science consist of, for these men who read all the wise writings of antiquity, but whom the Great War and the rise of fascism were suddenly to fill with terror? How should the modern period, even the "postmodern" period that we live in, confront the question of the *monstra* and the *astra*? What is an image of thought, what is a thought of the image, in the period of these "storms of steel" that neither Kant nor Goya, nor Goethe nor Nietzsche, ever knew? We could start from this simple observation: The burden of Atlas was, in the time of Warburg and Benjamin, much harder to bear than it ever had been. The suffering of Atlas was no longer that of a Titan still capable of speaking with the gods on Olympus, but that of a little man undeceived of any transcendence: a man obliged to "organize his pessimism" <sup>252</sup> facing history. The modern Atlas is no longer the one who attempts to cast the *astra* against the *monstra* of his dark dreams: It is the one who observes the potencies of the monsters at the very heart of power and reason, as Freud suggested in 1929 in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, <sup>253</sup> or as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer developed it during World War II, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. <sup>254</sup>

It is significant, in my opinion, in this context of an "uprooted

thinking” common to those Jewish intellectuals forced into exile,<sup>255</sup> that Walter Benjamin should have sought to present Goethe as an author who could not be reclaimed by the Nazis<sup>256</sup> at the same time as saying that he wanted to transpose the “pagan context” of the natural *Urphänomene* to the “Jewish contexts of history.”<sup>257</sup> And hadn’t Goethe himself planned to write, in parallel to his poem on Prometheus, a long parable on the figure of the Wandering Jew?<sup>258</sup> Yet Benjamin was aware of the popular Hasidic figures of the time of Goethe called *Lamedvovniks*, the “hidden righteous men”: These are wise men or scholars—but a wandering homeless man, in this context, can very well be a wise man and a scholar—who carry on their shoulders a mysterious suffering, which, unknown to them, is no less than the burden of the world itself. “The righteous man is the foundation of the world,” we read in the Book of Proverbs, in a time when the Titan Atlas was expected, by the Greeks, to take on this task. The Talmudic treatise *Berakhoth* even stated that the righteous must be considered “living even after their death,”<sup>259</sup> like the “posthumous men” of our anxious gay science.

Transmitted at the beginning of the twentieth century by the works of Martin Buber on Hasidism, and used by Ernst Bloch in the perspective of a transgressive wisdom, before being studied as a theological motif by Gershom Scholem,<sup>260</sup> the figure of the hidden righteous man could be read, in the work of a thinker like Benjamin, as a variant of Atlas revisited by Heinrich Heine or Franz Kafka. This figure declassifies the heroism of the Titan, proclaims that the pivot of the world—where it weighs and makes suffer, where it should be observed—is found in each modest piece of the world tenderly looked at. The *Urphänomen* is everywhere—Goethe was right—but even in the most minor things, the most tenuous symptoms, and the most miserable miracles. The collector and the historian are no longer those aristocrats or those fortunated bourgeois men who can confide to a secretary the task of making out the inventory of their treasures. They wander along the roads, wander aimlessly, and are destitute. But, from their poverty, everything appears good to them for making out the sampling of chaos.

Benjamin proposed, for the materialist historian, the paradigm of the rag-and-bone man such as we can see him appear—and almost disappear—under the jumble of his own finds, in an admirable



40. Eugène Atget, *Rag-and-Bone Man in the 17th Arrondissement in Paris* (1913), photograph. Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris–Fonds Atget.

photograph by Atget (fig. 40).<sup>261</sup> The *Sammler* of Weimar has become the *Lumpensammler* of the great urban metropolises. In other words, what falls to our modern Atlas will, then, be the exuberance of the world apprehended from the point of view of poverty. In the same year that Hitler rose to power, Walter Benjamin questioned the place of such a poverty in the context of this “new kind of barbarism [*eine Art*

*von neuem Barbarentum*].”<sup>262</sup> How can this be described and characterized? Benjamin began by giving a typically Warburgian reply: The “tremendous development of technology” at work in modern wars would, curiously, but logically, give rise to a “revival of astrology” and of all the *monstra* of irrationalism: “The ghastly and chaotic renaissance in which so many people have placed their hopes.”<sup>263</sup> The *astra* of thought, in turn, are subjugated to an order of reason that ignored the constellations and sought only to know positivist and functionalist classifications, reflections of social hierarchies.

Atlas, in such a world, thereby becomes the pariah par excellence. He is no longer the Titan given a home by the gods in the westernmost point of the West, but is now the Wandering Jew who continuously runs from east to west along the paths of exile, chased by the police, crossing borders, worried at the customs. It was not by chance that positivist psychopathology should have considered wandering not only as a social danger, but also as a mental illness denoted by the nosological concepts of “travelling neurotics” or “neurasthenic vagabonds.”<sup>264</sup> In his clinical lesson of 19 February 1889, Jean Martin Charcot had christened such behavior of exile and poverty the Wandering-Jew syndrome,<sup>265</sup> a name that his disciple Henry Meige hastened to make into a pathological category in itself:

It is always the same story; it is, more or less, always the same figure. Every year in the clinic we see poor devils miserably dressed. Their faces, emaciated, deeply wrinkled and sad, disappear behind an immense beard which is never combed. With a lamentable tone, they tell a story full of painful travels, and if you do not interrupt them, it seems as though they will never stop. Born far away, somewhere in Poland or deep inside Germany, misery and illness has followed them everywhere since their childhood. They have fled their native country to escape from one or the other; but nowhere have they found enough work, nor the remedy they desire. And it is after travelling through place after place on foot, under rain and wind, through the cold and in the very worst destitution, they end up at the Salpêtrière. . . . Nearly all of these Israelites are intense neurotics, making out the list of their sufferings, and lingering over the reading of the obsessive sensations that they have meticulously analyzed and kept in notes: tenacious headaches, painful digestion, persistent insomnia, erratic back

pains. . . . Let us not forget they are Jews, and that it is in the character of their race to move from place to place with extreme facility. . . . Furthermore, being Israelites, they are particularly exposed to all the different manifestations of neurosis. . . . They all seem to have come from a same source located in Germany, Poland, and Austria. They all prefer to speak German rather than other languages. And yet they are all polyglots like their ancestor, the wandering Jew.<sup>266</sup>

How can we not see, in such prose, the “ghastly and chaotic renaissance” of the *monstra* in an order of discourse that claimed to offer all the guarantees of experimental reason? Is it not, as Benjamin strongly claimed, that “experience has fallen in value”<sup>267</sup> in this way of inventing a subjective illness where it is the social ill that is seen in these vagabonds, these nameless, homeless people, without documentation, without hope (*Hoffnungslosen*), and whose clinical photographs sometimes show, beyond the extreme destitution, the load or weight of a whole life piled upon their shoulders? The modern Atlas is indeed the poor man, the surveyor of a cruel world whose masters do not want to know anything and place between them screens of false *astra* (technique) and true *monstra* (mythologies revisited by celebrity stars, sports champions, and dictators).<sup>268</sup>

For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly; strategic experience has been contravened by positional warfare; economic experience, by the inflation; physical experience, by hunger; moral experiences, by the ruling powers. . . . We have become impoverished. We have given up one portion of the human heritage after another, and have often left it at the pawnbroker’s for a hundredth of its true value, in exchange for the small change of “the contemporary.” The economic crisis is at the door, and behind it is the shadow of the approaching war.<sup>269</sup>

To this poverty of experience, Walter Benjamin proposes a reply in spite of all: It is, in a way, the reply of Atlas to the gods of Olympus, the reply of the world experienced as a burden, to the world experienced as a banquet. It consists in engaging oneself, resolutely, in an experience of poverty: in constituting the sampling of historical modern chaos from its residues, even its rubbish. Why did Benjamin give such

importance to the two techniques of photography and cinema? Less, perhaps, in order to give a diagnosis regarding the fate of art and the aura than to refer to the medium of any modern atlas as knowledge of the world observed from the perspective of poverty. In his article “Experience and Poverty,” it is Bertolt Brecht in literature, Adolf Loos in architecture, and Paul Klee in painting who are cited first as examples of a necessary artistic decision “to start from scratch; to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further.”<sup>270</sup> But our capacity for “survival” (*Überleben*) in this historical situation demands a greater and greater redeployment of our capacities for witnessing and exhibiting experience.

This is why the extraordinary photographic documentation created by Eugène Atget was exemplary for Walter Benjamin (fig. 40). Atget was on the side of the poor and the *Namenlosen*; he was one of those who “has to adapt—beginning anew and with few resources. They rely on the men who have adopted the cause of the absolutely new and have founded it on insight and renunciation.”<sup>271</sup> Atget didn’t hesitate to renounce (every “artistic” position) for the purpose of such a discernment (of the historical situation). He showed, according to Benjamin, “unparalleled absorption” and “extreme precision,” so that the images manage—which is the task of every knowledge, of every gay science—to “remove the makeup from reality.”<sup>272</sup> In Atget, as we can read in the essay on technical reproducibility, “photographic records begin to be evidence in the historical trial. This constitutes their hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of reception. Free-floating contemplation is no longer appropriate to them. They unsettle the viewer [*Sie beunruhigen den Betrachter*].”<sup>273</sup>

So this would be the anxious gay science of these great “documentary” photographers that Benjamin admired so much: Karl Blossfeldt, whose *Urformen der Kunst*, inspired by the Goethean sampling of plants in search of the *Urpflanze*, Benjamin commented on so enthusiastically;<sup>274</sup> Germaine Krull, whose photographs of Parisian arcades he collected;<sup>275</sup> and, of course, August Sander, whose immense collection *Antlitz der Zeit* constituted an astonishing atlas—“more than a book of images, an exercise book”, wrote Benjamin—of German society at that time.<sup>276</sup> Where Ernst Benckard, in his collection of photographs entitled *Das ewige Antlitz*, was content with uniting a timeless good society of famous Germans under their kind of funeral masks—





41. August Sander, *Coal Carrier, Berlin* (1929), photograph, 60 × 43 cm. Cologne, Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur. © 2018 Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



42. August Sander, *Maneuver* (1926), photograph, 23.6 × 16.9 cm. Cologne, Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur. © 2018 Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur - August Sander Archiv, Cologne / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

a work that inspired Martin Heidegger to articulate his ontology of the image<sup>277</sup>—Walter Benjamin saw in Sander’s atlas an “exhibit for the trial of history,” a community of living and suffering bodies that we sometimes see, literally, folding under the burden of the social world (figs. 41–42). As with the work that Walker Evans and James Agee were soon to do in an Alabama devastated by the economic crisis of the day,<sup>278</sup> a whole age of the modern atlas was thus opened up, to practice the painful sampling of the chaos of history.

# **III. Disasters**

“The Dislocation of the World:  
That Is the Subject of Art”



## Tragedy of Culture and Modern “Psychomachias”

We could legitimately see the *Mnemosyne* atlas as a tool for gathering, or for “sampling” by means of interposed images, the great chaos of history. It would be a matter of creating, with the atlas’s black plates studded with figures of all kinds, planes of intelligibility capable of creating certain “sections of chaos” in order to make a kind of archaeology or “cultural geology” that would aim to make the historical immanence of images sensible. And like a rebound or a ricochet, it would be a matter of making new concepts and new ways of thinking of social and cultural temporality burst forth. I am using the words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari only to index, once again, the philosophical potential and audacity—that “superior empiricism”—of Warburg’s project: “It is always a matter of defeating chaos by a secant plane that crosses it,” wrote Deleuze and Guattari, stating that “it is as if one were casting a net, but the fisherman always risks being swept away and finding himself in the open sea.”<sup>1</sup> This is a way of repeating the potential and suffering inherent in Warburg’s gesture: his vocation for the *astra* (concepts) always brought back to the proximity of the *monstra* (chaos). On their turning point, or rather through both of them, we find, therefore, the operating “section plates” that the *Mnemosyne* atlas’s piercing collection offers us.

Caught in the pincers between his philosophical ambition, which is never formulated to its culmination—forging a *Kulturwissenschaft* in order to forge again an entire historical discipline, or even every human science—and the intrinsic modesty of his attention to singular cases, to the details of philological erudition, Warburg’s project can really only be understood through what it aims for, without ever grasping it or fully constructing it. The *Mnemosyne* atlas stands between two horizons that its author evoked or invoked, by almost never naming them. Further up the line, we find the horizon of the Enlightenment and its Romantic turning point: It is Goya, or Baudelaire speaking about Goya from the perspective of a “sampling of chaos”;<sup>2</sup> and it is Goethe, finally, whose notion of affinity opened up

so many ways to rethink the practices of observing, anthologizing, cross-checking, collecting of the atlas. Further down the line, among Warburg's contemporaries who were—more or less—unknown to him, we have, for example, August Sander for his atlas of the “faces of our time”;<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin for his “dialectical images;” or Sigmund Freud for his magisterial way of envisaging the potency of the *monstra*. Everyone—and others still in that period—made sections of chaos, *visual sections* like so many “planes of consistency,” where the temporal immanence is exhibited, albeit enigmatically, on each plate of the *Mnemosyne* atlas.

To sample chaos, to make sections to retrieve from it—as though with a fisherman's net or in the exhumation undertaken by an archaeologist—packets of images, and to make all of this visible on planes or on plates of visual consistency: This is something that can be understood in three ways, which Francisco Goya inscribed, by means of his admirable series of engravings, on the pediment of our entire modernity: *Disparates*, *Caprichos*, *Desastres*. The *Disparates* are a way of naming the art of sampling the “*dispars*,” the chaos in space: Warburg undoubtedly does this—even in its playful dimension, its *Witz* dimension—when he dares to bring together on the same plate a sarcophagus and an aerial photograph, a dancing nymph and a dying old man, a small bronze coin and a triumphal arch, a bust of a child and a *southern* arranged for sacrifices, a biblical scene and an anatomy lesson, the monument to Hindenburg and an advertisement for toilet paper.<sup>4</sup> And here, no doubt, it has to do with knowledge through montages, with that nonstandard knowledge that was recommended—practiced and theorized—in the same period by Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades* or by Georges Bataille in his journal *Documents*.<sup>5</sup>

The *Mnemosyne* atlas could also be leafed through as a collection of *Caprichos*, explicitly presented like an art of sampling the chaos in the psyche or in collective imaginations. There are almost as many “monsters of reason” in Warburg's atlas as there are in Goya's series: fearsome divinities of the ancient oriental religions, Titanomachies and psychomachies, feminine creatures with several breasts, monstrous serpents, hybrid creatures of the Zodiac, deformed beings dancing together, cruel and proliferating metamorphoses, sadistic eroticism, dizzying falls, grotesque heads, and, everywhere, those multiform personifications of the nightmare of reason.<sup>6</sup> Did Walter Benjamin

not also find that the work of the surrealists took the *monstra* very seriously, and that they sought, in their own way—and in the same period—to make out the improbable inventory of the movements of the soul inscribed in the very movements of desire and of the body?<sup>7</sup> The theoretical lesson common to these authors, who are nonetheless so different from one another, is no doubt that all knowledge of the disparate brings into play the very structure—and the montage character—of the images of thought.

We finally discover that the *Mnemosyne* atlas works like a collection of *Desastres*: the play of the *astra* and the *monstra* takes account of the cruelest and most violent aspects of human history. The samples of spatial—or figural—chaos bear witness to a psychic chaos, which is itself an integral part of its historical or political incarnations. For knowledge gained by assembling in the form of montages, or by re-assembling, always engages a reflection on a related process of the disassembling of time in the tragic history of society. And this can be seen directly in the last plates of *Mnemosyne*, where Warburg arranged the contemporary photographic documents of the Lateran Accords, passed between the dictator Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI (figs. 43–44).<sup>8</sup> Of course, in these montages, it is a question of cultural survivals: These operate like transversal sections in the long duration of the relations between power and image (for example, the throne of Saint Peter, visible in plate 79, subtly refers to the effigy of the sovereign already visible in plate 1), but also in the long duration of the theologico-political paradigm (the Eucharist, which is the principal theme of plate 79, refers also, in its own way, to the divinatory livers in plate 1, as both the mysterious and mystical supports of belief and of power) (figs. 3 and 44).

But it is also a question, in this cultural symptomatology, of political prophecy: The last plate in *Mnemosyne* displays all the signs of a long—and recent—history of anti-Semitism, of political propaganda, and of the upheavals in the year 1929, which saw Hitler's *Mein Kampf* reach record sales in Hamburg and elsewhere in Germany.<sup>9</sup> Here we are, once again—and in spite of the objects, the different styles—in the vicinity of those anxious contemporaries of Warburg: Walter Benjamin (for his magisterial thesis regarding an “organization of pessimism” through images themselves),<sup>10</sup> Kurt Tucholsky and John Heartfield (for the striking political montages in their work

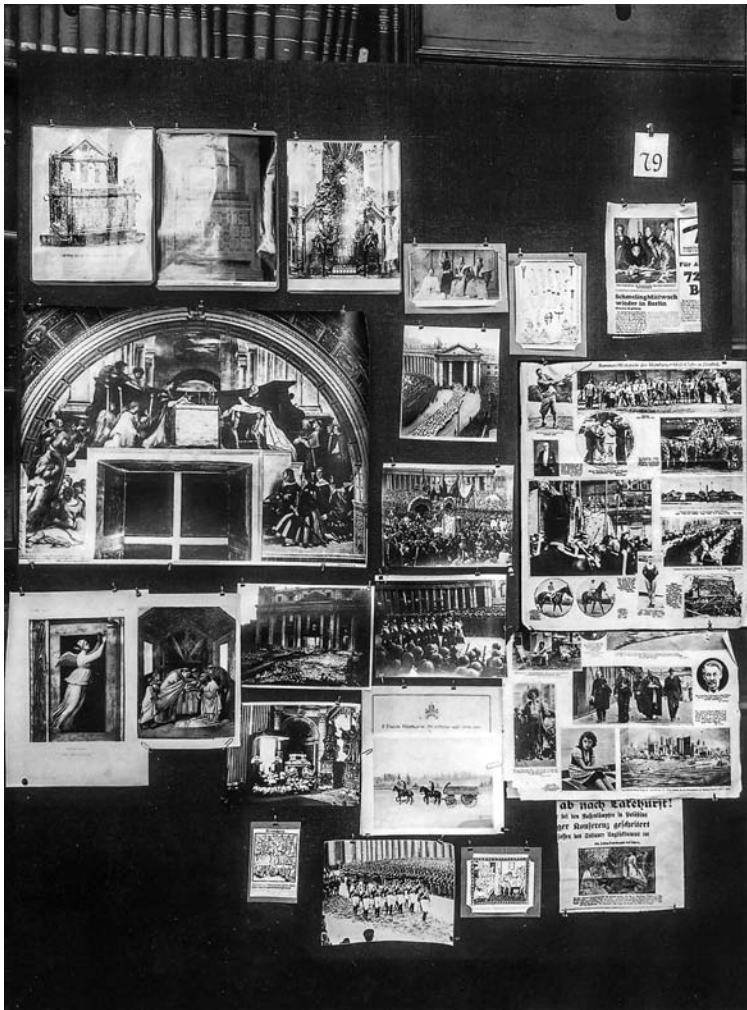




43. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 78. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

entitled *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, a *Bilderbuch* published while Warburg was creating the last plates of his atlas),<sup>11</sup> and Bertolt Brecht (who composed, from the communist point of view, several atlases of images on the tragedies of contemporary history).<sup>12</sup>

It is no coincidence that Brecht, too, convoked a long cultural duration—from Homer or Aeschylus to Voltaire or Goethe—in order to substantiate a striking formula that was so dear to him: a true for-



44. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 79. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

mula of the disaster according to which war, and the “dislocation of the world” in general (*die Welt aus den Fugen*: the world out of joint), would constitute, at the root of it, the very “subject of art” (*das Thema der Kunst*):

The dislocation of the world: that is the subject of art. It is impossible to affirm that, without disorder, there would be no art, nor that there could be one: we know of no world that is not disorder. No matter what the universities whisper to us regarding Greek harmony, the world of Aeschylus was full of combat and terror, and so were those of Shakespeare and of Homer, of Dante and of Cervantes, of Voltaire and of Goethe. However pacifistic it was said to be, it speaks of wars, and when art makes peace with the world, it always signed it with a world at war.<sup>13</sup>

A world at war? Should we not read the history of art first of all as a history of forms? Warburg’s atlas did not neglect this point of view and can even be looked at as a collection of tables for gathering the visual parceling of the world, its infinite variability or formal invention: *Disparates* of circular forms and frontal walls, fluid movements and tabular arrangements, horizontal confrontations and vertical falls.<sup>14</sup> But Warburg, the founder of an anthropology of images and of an iconology of their “intervals,” referred any formal singularity to the play—or the conflict—of corporeal, psychic, and cultural movements. Hence the importance of those gestures and of those *Pathosformeln* whose constellations are displayed by the atlas like so many *Caprichos* or “psychomachies,” those potencies of the imagination at the crossroads between madness and reason, *pathos* and *ethos*.<sup>15</sup> This is why the history of images, according to Warburg, must be thought of as a history of a tragedy that is always brought back between the worst of the *monstra* and the best of the *astra*, suffering and *sophrosynè*, the dislocation of the world and the effort of reconstruction, of reassembling, to make a “section in chaos”—that is, to use Warburg’s words, a “thought space” (*Denkraum*).

Therefore, every form is—explicitly or not, secretly or not—an answer to a war, to a historical pain, and to its lot of pathos.<sup>16</sup> The treasury of forms is always, however cruel the conjunction might be, a “treasury of sufferings” (*Leidschatz*).<sup>17</sup> Hence the anxious nature, and

even the melancholic rooting, of the “nameless science” invented by the great historian of images.<sup>18</sup> Hence, too, the essential affinity that links Aby Warburg’s undertaking with that of Walter Benjamin, who did not hesitate to speak of history as history of the sufferings of the world, or the “Passion of the world” (*Geschichte als Leidensgeschichte der Welt*).<sup>19</sup> We would have to retrieve many more aspects in order to establish the scale and depth of this affinity<sup>20</sup> and to restore Warburg’s work, not only in the context of the German “science of the mind,” but also in this atypical constellation of “heterodox Jewish thinkers”<sup>21</sup> to which, discretely, he fully belongs.

In a moving and precise testimony, Klaus Berger described Warburg as a man who, in spite of his proverbial humor and his constant puns, saw everything from the perspective—or on the “plane of consistency”—of pain: “He never said: this is right, this is wrong. He said: this is veiled by suffering.”<sup>22</sup> His whole theory of *Pathosformeln* was founded on a thought—either ancient or Nietzschean—about tragedy; his whole theory of memory aimed for a “psycho-historical” thinking about the conflicts between the *monstra* and the *astra*.<sup>23</sup> In his magnificent funeral eulogy for Aby Warburg, given in 1929, Ernst Cassirer perfectly expressed how his friend sought to understand forms by means of forces—or “configuring energies”—which were in turn seen in the eye of their own cyclones, “in the center of the storm and of the whirlwind of life itself,” that is, of the disaster where time constantly tries to swallow us up:

He did not firstly cast his eyes upon works of art, but he felt and saw the great configuring energies behind the works. . . . Where others had seen determined and delimited forms, self-contained forms, he saw moving forces; he saw what he called the great *forms of pathos* that Antiquity had created and left as a lasting patrimony to humanity. . . . But this capacity was not only the gift of the researcher, nor that of the artist. He delved here into his own, most deeply felt experience. In himself, he had experienced and learned what he was capable of grasping and interpreting, from the center of his own being and his own life. “Early on he read the harsh words—he was familiar with suffering, familiar with death.” But from the heart of this suffering there came the force and the incomparable particularity of the gaze. Rarely has a researcher more deeply dissolved his deepest suffering into a

gaze and thereby liberated it. . . . Warburg was not a scientist and a researcher in the impassive sense in which he might have contemplated, from on high, the playing out of life, or delighted aesthetically in the mirror of art. He always remained in the center of the storm and the whirlwind of life itself; he penetrated into its ultimate and deepest tragic problems.<sup>24</sup>

In these lines, Cassirer obviously refers to two crucial episodes—inseparable, as we shall see—in the life of Aby Warburg. That suffering or that “most deeply felt experience” is nothing but Warburg’s own madness, which kept him enclosed, howling and powerless, between the walls of the Kreuzlingen sanatorium; after he leaves the sanatorium, the *Mnemosyne* project figures as a psychological rescue operation and a return to the path of his thought in its entirety. Cassirer was one of the very few to visit Warburg in his asylum on 10 April 1924. He knew, therefore, what he was talking about in his speech in 1929: he knew of the interior conflict, the visceral war that the art historian had to lead against his most intimate *monstra*.

Nor did Cassirer forget the context or the historical heart in which the conflict took place. That Warburg kept himself “always in the center of the storm” means also that his *monstra*, however deep, were not simply matters of subjectivity, but matters for historicity and “culture.” There might not have been a “visceral war”—a psychologically induced one—without the world war, the social war, the obsidional war, the sort of sidereal war that, between 1914 and 1918, Warburg experienced intensely to the point of madness, from “the center of the storm and the whirlwind.” It is no coincidence that right in the midst of World War II, in 1942, Ernst Cassirer devoted himself to a study—almost like a will—of the notion of the “tragedy of culture”: In this text, the evocations of Hegel, of Goethe, or of Georg Simmel’s classic text<sup>25</sup> converge naturally in the direction of the anthropology of images and of beliefs, so dear to Warburg, and the point of view that could then serve as a reference to any reflection on the tragic fate of culture in the epoch of the dislocation of the world.<sup>26</sup>

In *Persönliche Erinnerungen an Aby Warburg* (Personal Recollections of Aby Warburg), Carl Georg Heise insisted on the scholar’s “in-describable suffering,” beginning in 1914, in the face of what he called the *Weltkatastrophe*, the “catastrophe of the world.”<sup>27</sup> The war was lit-



45. Multiple sepulture of Saint-Rémy-la-Calonne (Meuse) with the bodies of soldiers killed in 1914. Photo: DR.

erally suffered by Aby Warburg—and, in this sense, “carried” fully on his shoulders as a pagan Atlas or the Hebrew “righteous man” would do—after several conflicting dimensions whose combined psychic play would end up breaking him, in 1918. The world war appeared, first of all, as a tragedy for culture: with it came a reign of pure violence, of excessive, radicalized conflict. Nine million dead and twenty-one thousand injured—crippled, disfigured—surrounded, in 1918, the historian of the *Nachleben* (fig. 45). “Brutalized” societies (according to historian George Mosse’s expression), “simplified” men (according to an expression of Frédéric Rousseau), reason sacrificed to the rationalizations of killing (according to Daniel Pick’s or Alan Kramer’s analyses): The Great War opened up what Wolfgang Sofsky would call the era of terror of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup>

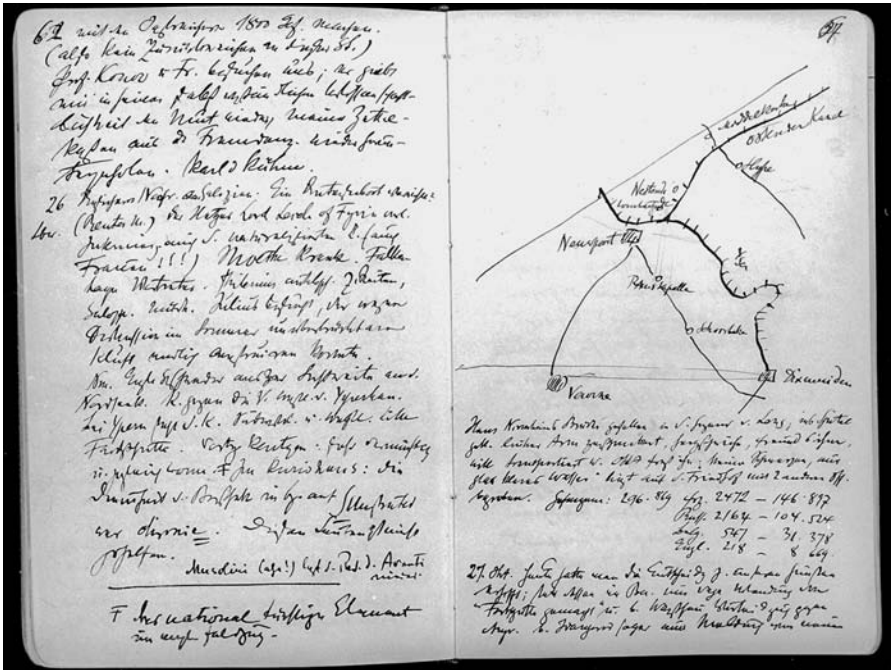
It is likely that Aby Warburg grasped, as he always did in art history, the events of the war themselves from the perspective of a terrifyingly long duration, that of a “European civil war”—which Enzo Traverso would reconceptualize well beyond the hypotheses of Ernst Nolte<sup>29</sup>—in which the *monstra* would not stop threatening all human life and culture. That the scholar, from the heart of his delirium, sometimes imagined that he was responsible for this war should not

be interpreted solely in relation to his madness: Warburg, the man of culture, was equally in the center of a family of bankers who participated directly in the goals of the German economic war, at the same time acting, already, on the global monetary level.<sup>30</sup>

That is why World War I, that tragedy for culture, was equally, in Aby Warburg's eyes, a tragedy in culture: a tragedy that touched the heart of what the historian had always attempted to understand, to the point of founding the discipline of *Kulturwissenschaft*. We can imagine, for example, the upheaval that Warburg must have felt at the unilateral adoption of the word *Kultur* by German military propaganda, which sought to contrast it, from 1914, with the word *Zivilisation* which was intended to mean—against the “eternal values” of Germanic *Kultur*—the enemy world, the Anglo-French world of technical and economic utilitarianism. We ought to imagine how a theorist of culture seen as a perpetual crossing of boundaries—the spatial and temporal “migrations” (*Wanderungen*) that dominate Warburg's analyses—might have observed the aggressive closing of any boundary, the launching of trench warfare, the immobilization of the front lines that, sometimes, he recorded with anxiety and feverishness in his notebooks (fig. 46).

A specific study should be undertaken to put into perspective Warburg's emotional and intellectual response to the events of the Great War—the effect of the disaster on his *pathos* as well as his *logos*—in the context of a “cultural history” of this period.<sup>31</sup> The 1914–18 war, as we know, was also a *Kulturkrieg* and a *Bilderkrieg* mobilizing entire civil societies,<sup>32</sup> and first of all what we normally call the “cultural elites.” A great number of intellectuals joined the two fronts of the conflict, more often than not with the latest patriotic and nationalist energy, an energy to which even Warburg himself contributed.<sup>33</sup> In the great “European crisis,” which Pierre Renouvin was one of the first to diagnose,<sup>34</sup> we must mention first of all that “crisis of the mind” evoked in 1919 by Paul Valéry.<sup>35</sup>

It is quite probable that Warburg, in such a context, sensed that a new and radical *psychomachy* was breaking out in the Europe of 1914: a conflict, once again—but more cruel and brutal than ever—of the *astra* and the *monstra*; except that, now, the *monstra* had extended their home to the sky itself (aerial combat, gas bombs), not to mention the sky of ideas (nationalism, propaganda). Such is the



46. Aby Warburg, *Front Lines of Franco-German Fighting* (1914), ink drawing. From *Notizbücher*, 26 October 1914, 66–67. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

ineluctable movement of a “crisis of culture” that World War II was to make even more evident in the ruthless analysis that certain Jewish thinkers of the following generation were to give, such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, or Leo Strauss.<sup>36</sup> This is how, in the first days of the Great War, the hour struck for the “last days of reason.”<sup>37</sup>

The scale of this “psychomachy” is measured, for example, by the prodigious quantity of publications, testimonies, reflections, and narratives devoted to the war as it was actually happening—to the extent that we speak of storms of paper set off in the cultural space like a linguistic double for the storms of steel that raged on the front lines themselves.<sup>38</sup> Books, newspapers, notices, tracts, posters, letters—but also paintings, medals, postcards, photographs, music, and cinema—reveal, at that time, an extraordinary activity of representa-



tion and of storytelling. The critic Julius Rab, who produced several anthologies during the war, estimated fifty thousand “war poems” were sent every morning to the German newspapers. Toward the end of the first year of the conflict, some two hundred volumes of *Kriegslyrik* had been published in Germany.<sup>39</sup> And that is little when we look at the production of “war stories” in which the entire spectrum of styles—from factual testimony to the most grandiose lyrical reconstructions, including the novel, of course—was to be found.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, the intrinsic content of this “psychomachy” seems to be more difficult to formulate. We can, nevertheless, by following the fundamental idea proposed by Warburg concerning a “methodological broadening of the boundaries,”<sup>41</sup> consider that a “parallel war” was happening in Europe regarding the very question of the “boundaries of thought.” Numerous writers and intellectuals sought to reclose the boundaries and to join the fighting in the trenches, the entrenchment of the point of view, the historiographical front lines: This was a way to carry out a politics of the enemy as we see it at work in the stories of Ernst Jünger, for example, when he glorifies the “immemorial warriors,” justifies the combat as an “inner experience” and the advent of a “new world,” and celebrates the “dark magic” of a creative war of a whole “deployment of technical energies” that force us into a “total mobilization” guided by the “spirit of heroism.”<sup>42</sup> By continuing to affirm—much later—that the “essential thing is the saving of a particular *nomos*, a mode of being that affirms itself in culture and that we protect in combat,”<sup>43</sup> Jünger would highlight even more his proximity to the ideas of Carl Schmitt on sovereignty and on a “*nomos* of the earth” to be defended from any invasion, any contamination, any enemy.<sup>44</sup> In his preface to the first edition of *The Decline of the West*, dated December 1917, Oswald Spengler wished, in a similar vein, that his book “might not be entirely unworthy of the military sacrifices of Germany.”<sup>45</sup>

Aby Warburg, as far as I know, never publicly spoke about such position-taking. He attempted, rather, through the publication of a *Rivista illustrata*—which produced only two issues, in 1914 and 1915—to extend his hand to his friends of Italian thinking and also the enemies of Germany at war.<sup>46</sup> His suffering in the face of the conflict, however, never went beyond the refusal, the defense of the mutineers, or the pacifistic position.<sup>47</sup> But we could find some Warburgian in-

fluences in the vehement reflections of someone like Karl Kraus—the anti-Jünger par excellence—on the Great War, which was carried on, according to him, with a dangerous mixture of ancient *pathos* and new technologies: “How do we make war? By directing ancient sentiments with technology.”<sup>48</sup> Against poets who “comply with war” and accept that it “reduces death to mere chance,” Kraus even called upon the gods in exile for the states, all taken up with the military-economic strategies, to cease one day killing the world and the world of culture together:<sup>49</sup>

What mythological confusion is this? Since when has Mars become the god of commerce and Mercury the god of war? . . . I understand sacrificing cotton for one’s life. But the other way round? People who adore fetishes will never go so low as to think that the commodity has a soul. . . . Each state is at war with its own culture. Instead of being at war with its own unculture. . . . What is undertaken for the profit of the state is often achieved at the cost of the world.<sup>50</sup>

From 1909, Karl Kraus had combined the motifs of “progress” and “apocalypse”<sup>51</sup>—long before his well-known position in 1930 and 1933 regarding *The Last Days of Mankind* and the rise of Nazism.<sup>52</sup> Against the politics of the enemy carried on by all European nationalisms seeking to “close the boundaries,” he embodied, among others, the path toward a genuine *cosmopolitics* devoted to “giving up all rights of customs” (I am citing here a well-known phrase by Warburg illustrating his methodology of the “broadening of the boundaries”). Once more, it is Walter Benjamin who gave the most rigorous and abundant formulations regarding this position: At the same time as he publicly defended Karl Kraus, Benjamin showed the fascist component of the writings of Jünger, the “glorification of war [carried on as] an unbridled transposition of the theses of art for art’s sake.”<sup>53</sup>

The author of *One-Way Street* did not confuse the scale of the European “psychomachy” with its real content: In spite of the deluge of “war narratives” published everywhere, he was able to diagnose a real crisis of the narrative, corresponding at the same time to a crisis of history—the dismantled, disassembled world of the Great War—and that of positivist historicity, that epistemic model through which the new times could no longer be understood and deciphered. In “Experi-

ence and Poverty,” Benjamin dared to say—against all patriotism and heroism—that in 1918 “people returned from the front in silence . . . not richer but poorer in communicable experience.”<sup>54</sup> In “The Crisis of The Novel,” he suggested, after the example of Alfred Döblin, that we can see in documentary montage an alternative to the dead ends of the traditional narrative, including a war narrative with epic ambitions.<sup>55</sup> In “The Storyteller” he returned to the crisis of the narrative born of the experience of the Great War, while invoking the way of immemorial survivals—essentially popular, “poor,” so to speak—in the art of storytelling.<sup>56</sup> This is a way of calling upon Mnemosyne (memory) across the tragedies of culture before which Clio (history) could only become “sick”—sick of modern “barbarities”—according to the grand prosopopeia written in 1917 by Charles Péguy.<sup>57</sup>

### **Explosions of Positivism, or the “Crisis of European Sciences”**

The *Mnemosyne* atlas of images would therefore be a response, the opening invented by Aby Warburg, facing the methodological compartmentalization of positivism, as well as the political enclosing of cultural nationalisms aggravated in the Great War. It is a modern response to the very aporias of modernity. Yet, this response remained for a long time illegible to us, notably because the silence of Erwin Panofsky and the discourse of Ernst Gombrich—a discourse upheld over a long period, from the “intellectual biography” of 1970 to the last conference in 1999—together, did everything to neutralize the theoretical daring inherent to Warburg’s great project. And to neutralize this project, all the tricks of historiography were needed in order to “push it back,” to keep it obstinately at the center of an obsolete nineteenth century, with “sources”—Charles Darwin, Robert Vischer, Tito Vignoli, Hermann Usener, Karl Lamprecht, August Schmarsow, Carl Justi—to back this up.<sup>58</sup>

But rivers are defined, of course, by the fact that they leave their sources. And what about Nietzsche and Freud, those transversal “sources,” those great models of complexity, those “thinkers against their time” whose positions Warburg shared?<sup>59</sup> And is it not clear that from 1914, it was no longer possible for anyone to stick blindly in

the fold of a nineteenth century petrified in its certitudes regarding human progress? If Darwin, from 1888, had indeed appeared to Warburg like a genuine theoretical trigger—materialist and morphologist, attentive to his models of evolution of the missing links that carried survivals<sup>60</sup>—the historian of images should assume, during the Great War, that *völkisch*, ethno-cultural, and racist exploitation in which Darwinism was the object of the discourse of pan-German tribunes.<sup>61</sup>

In reality, the problem of the adherence of *Mnemosyne* to a given period—be it “positivist” or “modern,” even “postmodern” as certain Anglo-Saxon critics have claimed, naively—seems, quite simply, to be wrongly set out. If Warburg’s atlas is entitled *Mnemosyne*, following the example of the inscription engraved on the front of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek of Hamburg, it is first because it convoked, in spite of its novelties and its audacity, a whole memory of the atlas in which it would be pointless to isolate a unilaterally pertinent “epoch.” I have already attempted to show how *Mnemosyne* took its very form from some of its oldest objects of study, be it the “Piacenza Liver” or the Ghirlandaio cycles of frescoes in Florence.<sup>62</sup> *Mnemosyne* appears fundamentally like a “memory of images” made possible through an art of memory, an art as old as the images themselves. There is divinatory technique in *Mnemosyne*, just as there are swarming figures characteristic of ancient sarcophagi, formal contrasts in the style of Donatello, compartmentalization of space in the style of Michelangelo, arrangements of series in the style of Rembrandt’s (or Goya’s) engravings. And yet, Dziga Vertov, László Moholy-Nagy, the Bauhaus albums, the montages of Georges Bataille or those of Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* are never far away from (apart from being contemporary with) the black plates of Warburg’s atlas.

*Mnemosyne* assembles, therefore, and recomposes anew a whole memory of what we could call the image tables such as the Western tradition has produced over a long period, from astrological constellations of antiquity to the photographic plates of Étienne-Jules Marey, and to the photographic—and even cinematographic—atlasses of the 1920s and 1930s. *Mnemosyne* is certainly not a potpourri of heterogeneous models that are often incompatible, but rather a very broad reflection, the recovery of a hidden tradition where images were called upon to elaborate the frames of intelligibility of different kinds of

knowledge. It is true that today this tradition is less hidden, more “legible” than it could have been in 1929—the very existence of *Mnemosyne* was not extraneous to that new legibility of “image tables” in the long term.

It is, above all, a movement made up of the history of sciences and the history of art—consequently, of epistemology and aesthetics—which allowed the remarkable development of studies of these objects of visual knowledge that are atlases of images. Sociologists of science recognized first of all that there was no production of knowledge without the organization of a place for that production: an operating space, but also a space of power or of subjection; a space of proof, but also a rhetorical or aesthetic space.<sup>63</sup> Following Michel de Certeau’s reflections on the “redistributions of space” necessary for the constitution of any science, beginning with historical science,<sup>64</sup> Christian Jacob recently outlined, in the context of a large project on the places of knowledge, the “cartographical” conditions of an epistemology regulated on the concrete observation of the procedures, both sensible and intelligible, that science implements:

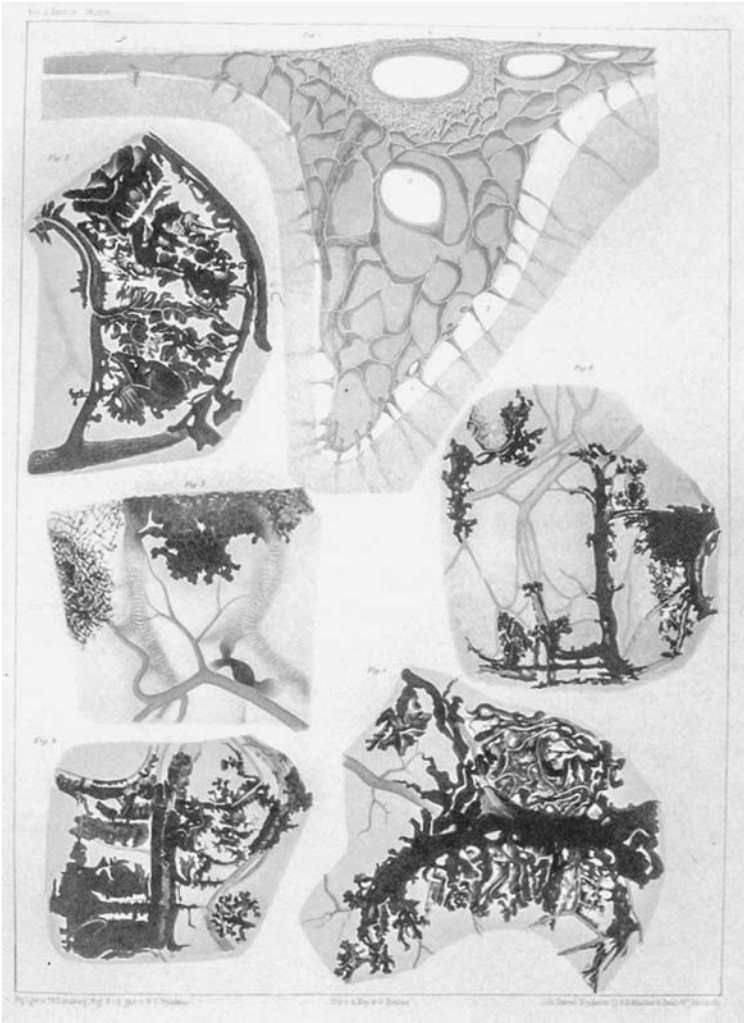
Cartography, therefore, of a space on several levels. Not in the way that a traditional map of the world shows every place to be pinned onto the grid of a geometry that reduces the differences in favor of figures and measurements, as though to satisfy the omniscient desire for an absolute gaze, but rather on the model of a field notebook of a group of travelers trying to make out a route while a passage opened up through spaces grasped in their foreignness: a cartography of vanishing lines and lines of force, of coherences, of crossroads, of reference points, but also of the obstacles and paths which cut across.<sup>65</sup>

The long work of Bruno Latour on the material and social conditions of the production of knowledge already involved this cartographical manner—but a cartography thought in the age of Michel Foucault and of Jorge Luis Borges—of imagining science from the perspective of its “things obtained” rather than its “givens,” its latent “networks” rather than its manifest discourses.<sup>66</sup> From there, the boundaries between what we call science and art (so long as we understand *art* to include the extension of what we say—for example, the Greek *techné*) become particularly porous, to the point that it seems pos-

sible to locate in the scientific imagination the singularities or the polarities of a stylistic kind, and why not the polarity of the Dionysian and the Apollonian.<sup>67</sup> A scientific atlas is not always organized for the greatest clarity of its classifications (or of its classicism). The erratism for which Warburg's *Bilderatlas* has often been reproached appears also, and far more often than one would imagine, in the natural sciences (fig. 47). Thus, we remember that an atlas of images never merely illustrates knowledge; it constructs it and even, sometimes, manages to deconstruct it.

The historians of the sciences were right, no doubt, to see in the atlas of images undertakings that were often conceived of with their diffusion in mind, their vulgarization, their "popularization," or their pedagogy.<sup>68</sup> The *Mnemosyne* atlas must, to a certain point, be included in this rule since it has the appearance of a compendium or a memorandum of exemplary images linked by certain rules of intelligibility. The images are strange, no doubt, and the rules at times fairly obscure. It is nonetheless the very principle that had organized, for example, the plates of the very popular *Systematischer Bilder-Atlas* of Johann Georg Heck, published in 1844 with the enticing subtitle *Ikographische Enzyklopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste* (Iconographic Encyclopedia of the Sciences and Arts) (fig. 48).<sup>69</sup> Yet the *Mnemosyne* project remains inseparable from a series of exhibitions through which Warburg intended to clarify his theories, or even to broaden his audience. Just as Fritz Saxl was installing in the Hamburg planetarium an exhibition on astrology that had been planned by his late master,<sup>70</sup> the Deutsches Museum in Berlin was in the process of setting up a compilation of images—of which there remains an album that evokes *Mnemosyne*—entitled *Technik und Bild*.<sup>71</sup>

But the argument of "popularized" images reveals its own limits when it is used to maintain, more or less explicitly, the secular hierarchy—which is idealistic—of intelligible knowledge and of its sensible "illustrations." By opening up a photographic laboratory at the Salpêtrière, Charcot must have thought that he would "illustrate" his clinical concept of hysteria, which had been formulated beforehand; we see, on the contrary, that the concept itself was *formed* and transformed—constructed and reconstructed, rigged, staged—in the very production of the images.<sup>72</sup> And we surmise also that the chronophotographic atlases of Étienne-Jules Marey do something quite dif-

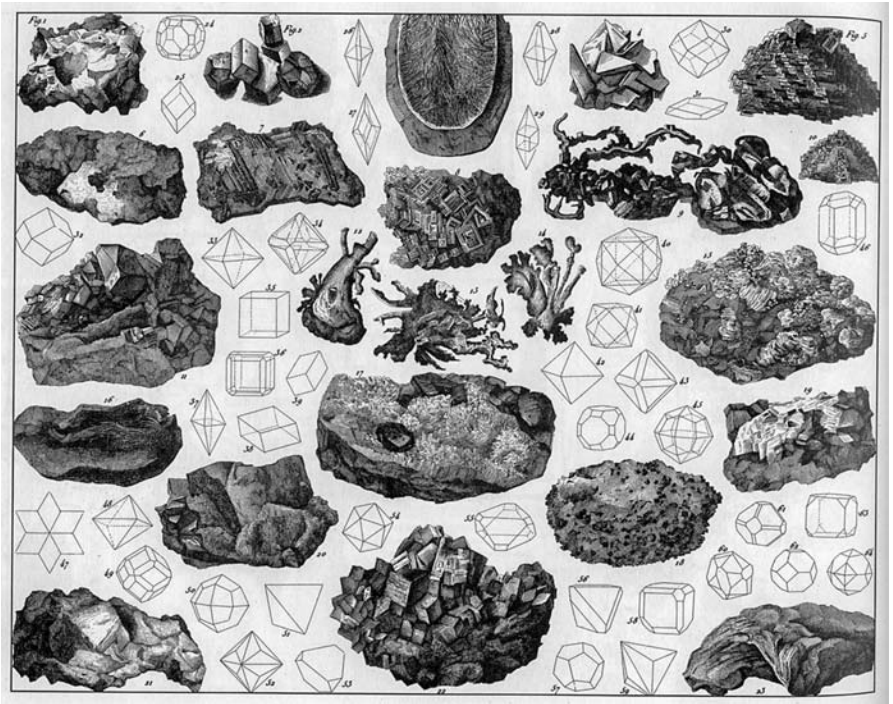


47. Axel Key and Gustaf Retzius, *Studien in der Anatomie des Nervensystems und des Bindegewebes* (Stockholm: Samson & Wallin, 1875), 1: pl. 8. Author photo.

ferent—and much more—than what their author could say about them.<sup>73</sup> There is no reason to oppose “science” itself (unitary, total, ideal) and its “illustration” (disseminated, fragmentary, trivial): All knowledge needs a medium for its presentation. As such, the “popular” *Bilder-Atlas* of Johann Georg Heck is no less rigorous than the

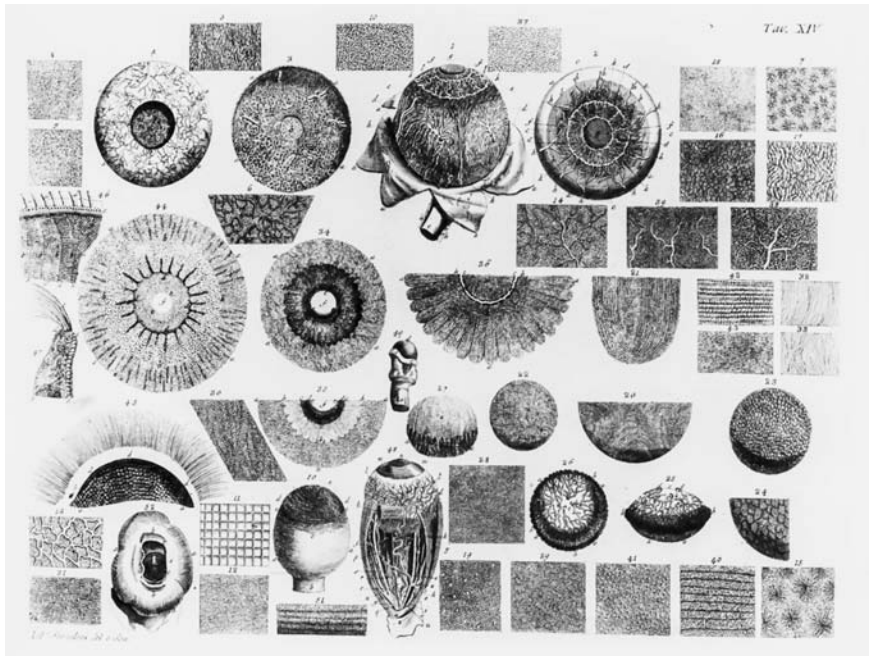
“specialized” anatomical *Tavole* of Paolo Mascagni whose mode of representation it perpetuates (figs. 48–49).<sup>74</sup>

The atlas of images appears, therefore, to be an object as paradoxical as it is necessary for modern science, and it is difficult to know whether this object is extrinsic or intrinsic to science: This comes down to naming its primary function, which is to “cross the boundaries” of intelligibility and of the sensible. That is no doubt the reason why the atlas proliferates in places of thought that can be at times central to the formation of scientific concepts and peripheral to the activity of research itself. While I was compiling the bibliography in preparation for writing this text, in February 2009, the computerized catalogue of the British Library gave 35,812 references for the keyword *atlas*. Today, as I write this page—it is 22 July 2010—it gives 36,821 references, that is, one thousand more. The National Library of France gives 51,138 notices, a number destined, of course, to increase



48. Mineralogical plate. From J. G. Heck, (1844) 2001. Author photo.





49. Paolo Mascagni, *Tavole di alcune parti organiche del corpo umano, degli animali e dei vegetali esposte nel Prodomo della Grande Anatomia* (Florence: Giovanni Marenig, 1819), pl. 14. Author photo.

indefinitely. We should not be surprised, then, that scientific illustration—and I will leave aside for the moment the immense continent of cartographical publications—should be the object of so many studies.<sup>75</sup> As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have shown, the very notion of scientific objectivity has not only a history, but also a visual history. Having inherited the ideas of Ludwik Fleck and his pioneering study of nonevident conditions of objectivity as a practical and theoretical construction of the “scientific fact,”<sup>76</sup> Daston and Galison gave a crucial place of importance to atlases of images and to the concomitant question of the presentability of knowledge—whether that place is assumed by scholars or not, it is problematic in any case—in the history of scientific objectivity.<sup>77</sup>

In response to this new awareness among epistemologists concerning the visual aspects of science, there is a marked interest, among art historians, in the epistemic content of images in general.

Beyond the Anglo-Saxon iconographical studies that came from the great tradition of Panofsky—that of the artist and the scholar of the Renaissance<sup>78</sup>—it is in Germany today that we find the most profound studies of this kind of problem. It is no coincidence: A new generation of German historians—starting from, notably, the works of Horst Bredekamp in a temporal arc that stretches from the Renaissance to our contemporary period<sup>79</sup>—saw themselves explicitly in the tradition of Aby Warburg for extending the questioning of *Mnemosyne* toward a scientific iconology—which amounts to recognizing in images, and above all in their modalities of representation, of co-existence, of montage, a constitutive role in the production of knowledge.<sup>80</sup>

But once this historiographical sketch is set out, we must return to the conditions that witnessed the development of the *Mnemosyne* project. Warburg's atlas might not have seen the light of day—or at least, not in the problematic, anxious, irresolute, and yet audacious form that it has—without a general phenomenon of explosion that the outbreak of the Great War put, crudely as well as cruelly, before everyone's eyes, with its lot of massive destruction and radical challenges to questions, and of redefinitions and cultural reconstructions of which the Weimar period appears emblematic. The word *explosion* was first used, in the French language of the Renaissance, to refer to “the sudden and unexpected invasion of symptoms.”<sup>81</sup> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Furetière defined it as “the action of exploding with force.” It is a violent break of system that, at the same time, supposes a more or less “exploding” manifestation and a more or less total destruction, the “explosion” of a world. It is, in any case, a good way to name a peak—and a paradox—of visibility.

In the images of explosions that invade every iconography of World War I, like so many new forms for the secular iconographic genre of the “Disasters of War,” the moments captured by the camera very often arouse such a peak or paradox of visibility: They emphasize to the extreme the form that must soon be destroyed. Thus, the steeple of a church that explodes under the bombs—in an image produced by the German army in 1917—remains for an instant suspended at the height of its form, its magnificent aspect, by the cloud of tiles that cover it like an aura, just before everything collapses (fig. 50). This image could no doubt serve as an allegory for a whole series of “ex-



50. Anonymous German, *Explosion of the Church of Saint-Martin-sur-Cojeul* (1917).  
Photo: DR.

plosions” that, in the epistemic and aesthetic system of *Mnemosyne*, define its general context as much as the condition of possibility.

One must, first of all, take account of a series of cultural phenomena that are typical of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where we can observe something like an explosion of presentability of knowledge. In that period, indeed, the ways of scientific presentation “explode,” which amounts to saying that they proliferate, on the one hand, and, on the other, they already follow the path of their own destruction or deconstruction. There is, of course, the shimmering of a thousand and one ways of exhibiting science, the richness and the inexhaustible inventiveness of which has been shown by Barbara Stafford, among others.<sup>82</sup> We can still remember the *Wunderkammern* of the mannerist and baroque age, but we invent at the same time new “graphic methods,” more rigorous techniques for the visualization of quantities.<sup>83</sup>

It is the age of tables and nomenclatures—for example, in chemistry and in all the life sciences—of which François Dagognet has shown the conceptual efficiency.<sup>84</sup> But this efficiency resulted also in

a practice of images that sought to be not only organizing, but also abbreviatory.<sup>85</sup> In the confidence of positivism, which he grants unilaterally to these uses, Dagognet consequently ignores the genuine conflicts, even the “explosions,” that cross them, conflicts that Michel Foucault—ostensibly ignored in Dagognet’s books—sought to highlight. We could, from this point of view, read *Les mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*) as a great history of the classical “tableau” and its “explosion” in the nineteenth century. The tableau has defined, since the classical age, “the space opened up in representation by an analysis which is anticipating the possibility of naming; it is the possibility of seeing what one will be able to say.”<sup>86</sup> It is also a possibility of seeing what holds to the closing of a frame and the exclusions outside of the frame, so that the “area of visibility in which observation is able to assume its powers is thus only what is left after these exclusions.”<sup>87</sup>

But what is gained in clarity, in framings and in *mêmetés*, is lost in polysemy, in openings and in differences: “To establish the great, unflawed table of species, genera, and classes” is not without a strategy of the continuous and of the “smallest difference.”<sup>88</sup> The conflict, therefore, already underlies this appearance of systematicity without remains. The differences will soon speak for themselves, and “that table is now about to be destroyed in turn”:<sup>89</sup> It will become dislocated in places, it will even explode under the pressure of new “epistemological arrangements” signaling the “limits of representation” in “the age of history.”<sup>90</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Michel Foucault concludes, “the unity of the mathesis was fractured,” and the epistemological field breaks apart, or rather explodes in different directions.<sup>91</sup>

The “tables/tableaux” will persist, of course—there exists a whole scientific literature under this heading—notably in the nosological will to establish “clinical tableaux,” concerning which Foucault, precisely, led the critique.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the clinical table of the “great complete and regular attack of hysteria” established by Charcot and given form by his assistant Paul Richer, appears no less fixed and limiting, univocal and timeless, than the academicism of artistic representation taught at the *École des Beaux-Arts* by the same Paul Richer.<sup>93</sup> It fell to Freud to deconstruct the first tableau, as it did to Degas, Rodin, or the surrealists to explode the second tableau. The plates of the *Mnemosyne* atlas devoted to the Dionysian *pathos* of nymphs or furious maenads

could certainly evoke the iconography created by Charcot; but, where the clinician saw chronological unilateral sequences in pathological gestures, typical manifestations, the historian of images—closer in this than Sigmund Freud—saw the temporal swirls of psychical and cultural conflicts, repetitions of repressions or deferred actions.<sup>94</sup>

We are forced to recognize that, in these debates on the visual notion of “tableau,” it is above all competing temporal models that are inevitably put to work at the center of each object, and of each question. The nineteenth century, as we know, is the “age of history”: a concept of history that Reinhart Koselleck showed to be, from the end of the eighteenth century, the great “modern regulating concept.”<sup>95</sup> The old reign of natural history was succeeded by what Wolf Lepenies calls the “historicizing of nature.”<sup>96</sup> In short, we witness something like an explosion of historicity, its exploding manifestation, but equally its crisis. On the one hand, the point of view of history explodes all statistical certainties born from simple spatial cuttings of nature. A crucial moment of this epistemic system would be, for example, in the eighteenth century, the emergence of the “historical atlases” that sought to temporalize their own cartographical distributions.<sup>97</sup> In the field of life sciences, the notion of “development” makes room, slowly, for the notion of “evolution” whose intrinsic complexities and enigmatic missing links Charles Darwin would problematize—with the help of images, as Horst Bredekamp and Julia Voss have shown<sup>98</sup> It is the time in which the sciences of the earth and of prehistory tended to visualize history in sections of all kinds, in stratified cartographies, in glances of space and time.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, the point of view of history introduces a whole series of complexities that undermine, from within, the models of evolution themselves. It is then that the discontinuities threaten to explode the tableau:

For history in its classical form, the discontinuous was both the given and the unthinkable: the raw material of history, which presented itself in the form of dispersed events—decisions, accidents, initiatives, discoveries; the material, which, through analysis, had to be re-arranged, reduced, effaced in order to reveal the continuity of events. Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian’s task to remove from history. It has now become one of the

basic elements of historical analysis. . . . One of the most essential features of the new history is probably this displacement of the discontinuous: its transference from the obstacle to the work itself; its integration into the discourse of the historian, where it no longer plays the role of an external condition that must be reduced, but that of a working concept; and therefore the inversion of signs by which it is no longer the negative of the historical reading (its underside, its failure, the limit of its power), but the positive element that determines its object and validates its analysis.<sup>100</sup>

To reach this point, to recognize the “supporting” function of the discontinuities and to manage to deploy—argumentatively or visually—“the space of [that] dispersion,”<sup>101</sup> would have taken years, decades of clashes and internal explosion in the age of positivism itself. Before the discontinuities “explode” before our eyes on the plates of the *Mnemosyne* atlas, a whole epoch of theoretical conflicts had to pass, in which, for example, Darwinism was used abusively or was in the grip of hierarchical hardenings that pushed its fundamental lesson (the evolutions of everyone) to the side of racism (the “non-evolution” of some) or of eugenics (the elimination of the “un-evolved”).<sup>102</sup>

It is striking to see that at the heart of these great debates, in which the models of historicity were at stake, the processes of “proofs” or of revealing the “evidence” of scientific facts were systematically confined to a very precise visual technique. This technique is photography, of course. Its role appears to be crucial, as it accompanies, finally, the great explosion of objectivity that would mark at the same time the apogee and the collapse of positivism. This third “explosion” in the epistemic systems would unite the two preceding ones, since it would disrupt all its models of historicity by modifying the conditions of presentability of knowledge.

First of all, we will call the most visible aspect of this process the explosion-*burst* of photography in the nineteenth century: This technique, indeed, made its entry by bursting into what Jonathan Crary called the “techniques of the observer.”<sup>103</sup> Albert Londe, the director of the photographic service at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, affirmed in 1896, solemnly, that “the photographic plate is the true retina of the scholar.”<sup>104</sup> This expression had been preceded by many decades

of—technical and conceptual—efforts to introduce the use of photography into the heart of experimental processes of positivist science, for example, the manuals by Eugène Trutat on the application of photography to the natural sciences or to archaeology.<sup>105</sup> It is then that photography journals began to thrive, as well as iconographic atlases applied to all the fields of scientific research.<sup>106</sup> Biology, anatomy, and medicine, notably, made use of all possible images, right up to the decomposition of movement, and the exploration of the most “invisible” zones through microphotography, x-rays, or spectroscopy.<sup>107</sup>

It is no accident that it is in the human sciences that the burst reaches its limits—or, more often, is unaware that the limits have been reached—until the bursting of all certainties and all models of intelligibility occurs. Duchenne de Boulogne sought to show, by means of an experimental apparatus, how the human face lets loose—through the muscles—its different passions; but his atlas “composed of 84 photographed physiological figures” shows us also faces tied to the technical apparatus that immobilizes them in front of the lens.<sup>108</sup> Charcot, for his part, claimed to show, in his *Photographic Iconography*, how an attack of hysteria freed itself even in its most incoherent, most disordered gestures; but, since the camera was put in danger by the violence of the movements produced, it is a female prisoner in her straitjacket that we are finally shown.<sup>109</sup>

Where the innumerable atlases of “anthropological” photographs claim to show us human variety, what we can see in their images is no less the oppressive order of colonialism.<sup>110</sup> Where Francis Galton claimed to offer the composite images of a given society, it is the unified synthesis of “types”—the mean of all possible intervals—that is allegedly presented to our eyes.<sup>111</sup> Where Alphonse Bertillon and Cesare Lombroso, among the numerous adherents to anthropometry in the nineteenth century, proposed immense atlases on the dissemination and the combination of physical types and singular faces, it is the confinement, through interposed nomenclatures, that appears on the horizon of all those photographic inventories conceived like so many identification sheets for flushing out predisposition to crime, recurring offenses, or moral “degeneration.”<sup>112</sup>

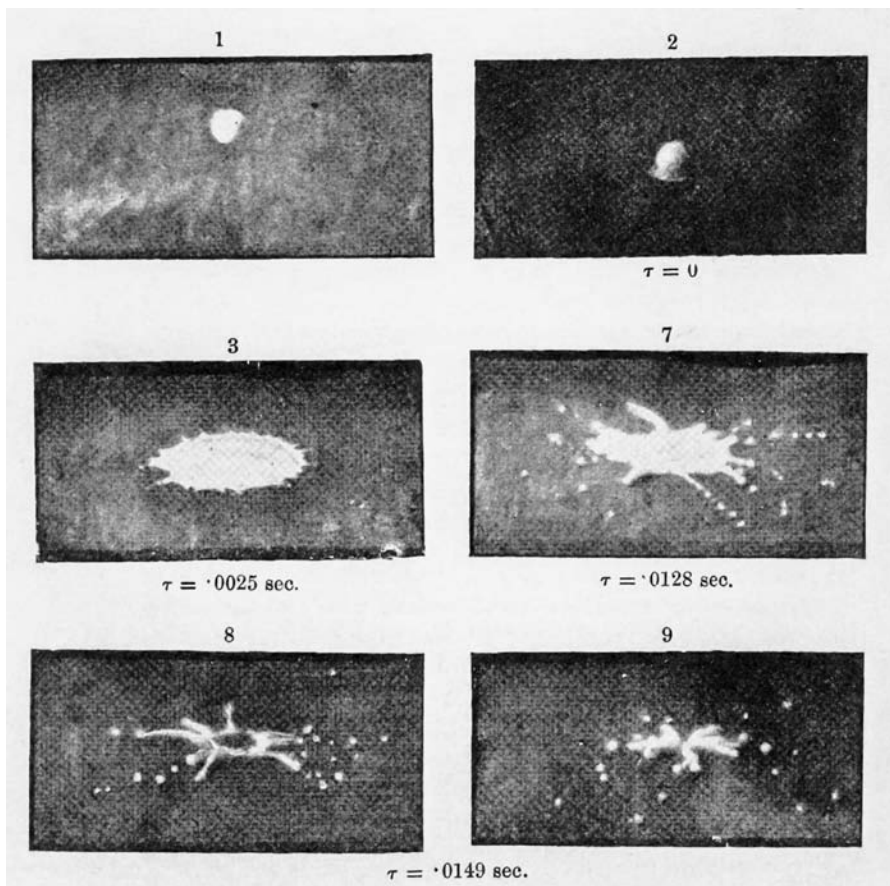
Thus, when Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison define the iconographic atlases of the nineteenth century as actual “dictionaries of the sciences of the eye,”<sup>113</sup> they merely adopt, rather than critique, the

manifest discourse of the positivist scholars, without noting the fundamental aporia—or the unattainable ideal—that makes up the very idea of a “dictionary of images.” It is one thing to note that in almost every image the legible and the visible are intertwined, and even determine each other according to the ways that, elsewhere, are often the most complex; it is another thing to claim to establish—according to the ideology of positivist atlases—dictionaries of images, that is, exhaustive visual inventories organized according to an alphabetical principle. (It suffices to consult Google Images to measure the extent of this illusion, of this “systemic incoherence.”)

Daston and Galison gave a remarkable analysis of the bursting to which photography subjected the desire for regularity inherent to scientific observation, for example, by commenting on the nice case of “drops” (*The Splash of a Drop*) in Arthur Worthington (fig. 51).<sup>114</sup> But this analysis seeks to be prolonged in an epistemological critique—supposing a second *bursting*—of photography itself as an instrument of the positive sciences and of their atlases of images. We could define positivism according to its own ambitions: that every object of thought—of philosophical thought in particular—be always founded on scientific data. But we must also note that the “data” of sciences is, as Bruno Latour has said, not a given but rather only “obtained.”<sup>115</sup> Consequently, science “gives” nothing to us that can be considered as a *given*, that is, as an intangible base and as acquired forever: It merely takes back and gives back, constructs and reconstructs, ceaselessly, its own results. To believe in the “givens” of science is to sacrifice—according to the definition of positivism that Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer proposed—to “the myth of what exists.”<sup>116</sup>

This reasoning works *a priori* for photography as a visual instrument of scientific atlases. Nothing, in a photograph, is “given” once and for all (which, of course, does not delegitimize). What a photographic image “gives” us, it takes back and conceals somewhere else, even if only outside the frame. The “scholar’s retina” would be nothing other than another scientific myth, unless we specify everything that the retina does not see (areas blind to myopia, from strabismus to blindness) or sees too much (from phosphenes to fantasies). It is no surprise that, in these conditions, the positivist creed created—as though from the inside—so many beliefs, so many phantoms, so many imaginary specters.<sup>117</sup>





51. Arthur Worthington, *The Splash of a Drop and Allied Phenomena* (1894). From *Proceedings of the Royal Institution* 14 (1893-95): facing p. 302. Author photo.

It is here that historians of images—as well as the adherents to a *Kulturwissenschaft*, even artists themselves—were more circumspect and clear-sighted than all the optimists of progress and other ideologists of the “scholar’s retina.” From 1925, László Moholy-Nagy challenged, in *Malerei Fotografie Film*, the unilaterality of encyclopedic pretensions in the use of photography: “One hundred years of photography and two decades of film have wonderfully enriched us and we can state that we see the world with totally different eyes. Yet, the

overall result today is hardly more than encyclopedic visual achievement.”<sup>118</sup> In an article in 1929 entitled “Sharp or Blurred,” he questioned the claim that “the camera doesn’t lie.”<sup>119</sup> And he concludes: “The central problem is not that of ‘objectivity’ or of ‘subjectivity’: it is rather a question here of possibilities” offered, opened by a heuristic use—either inventive or experimental—of photography.<sup>120</sup> And Moholy-Nagy gives an example—beyond the optical manipulations that he is well known for—of the possibilities opened by the differential “series” of any unitary economy of the “tableau.”<sup>121</sup>

In parallel, Walter Benjamin (who often cited Moholy-Nagy), in his famous “Little History of Photography,” constructed an extremely dialectical and critical vision of the “total visual fact” that is photography. Far from the simplifications that this text has often been accused of, we see that every observation calls upon its retort, every motif its counter-motif: There is no “technology” without “magic,” no “industrialization” without the “diabolical” content of the image;<sup>122</sup> there is no philosophical detail without “fetishism,” no objective value without the “unconscious.”<sup>123</sup> Photography knows how to “remove the makeup from reality,” but it knows how to “suck the aura out of reality,” too;<sup>124</sup> it places us in front of “what is unique,” but it concerns equally its possibilities of “reproduction.”<sup>125</sup> It runs from the most precise “empiricism” to the “surrealist” vision of the objective world.<sup>126</sup> Finally, it is obliged to acknowledge its own political limits (“a photo of the Krupp factories of the A.E.G reveals almost nothing of these institutions,” as Bertolt Brecht remarked), while showing it is capable of “giving free play to the politically educated eye.”<sup>127</sup>

Here we are at the opposite extreme of any positivist dream of photographic objectivity (in the manner of Albert Londe) as well as any ontology of the image that would denounce technology (in the manner of Martin Heidegger). What Benjamin proposes in these pages—and in many more—is a radical critique of all substantialism tied to images, to fields of knowledge, and to times. It is, indeed, in the practice of the medium and in its heuristic possibilities that we should situate any judgment upon it, as well as on the reality of what it shows and the historicity in which it moves. Here, as elsewhere, Benjamin developed his aesthetic reflections to the limits of an actual “epistemo-critical” thinking, as he said himself.<sup>128</sup> A thinking that is

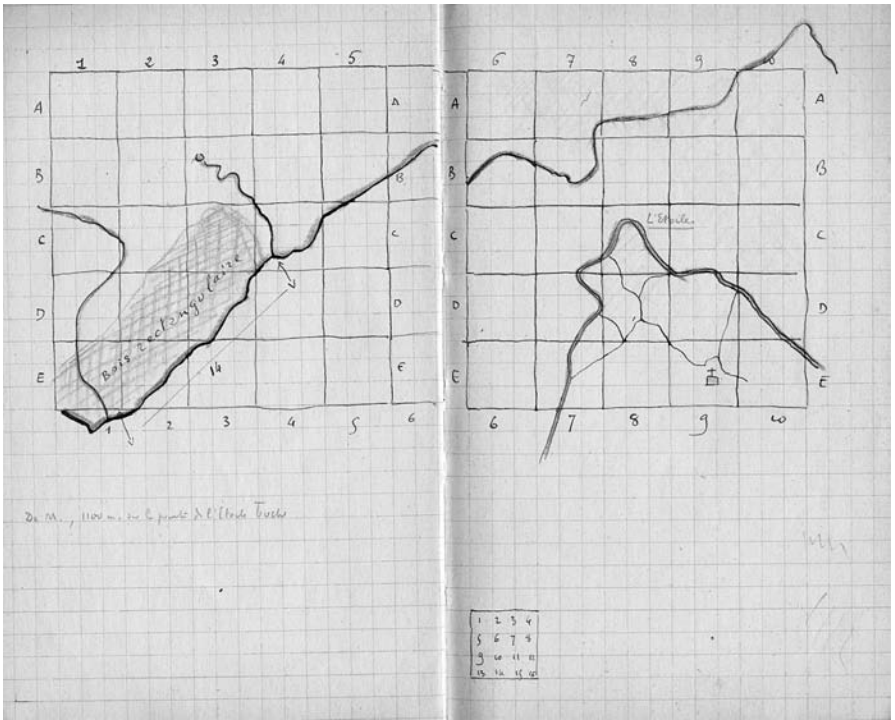
then able to replace time (or better still: the times) at the heart of each image, while replacing the image—the “dialectical images”—at the heart of each historical moment.<sup>129</sup>

The *Mnemosyne* project reveals precisely this kind of method. The new possibilities that it opens up in the use of photographic images—the differential series beyond any comprehensive iconographic “*tableau*,” the montage of singularities beyond any unified list, the atlas beyond any dictionary—seem to be so many practical responses to this great “crisis of European sciences,” of which Edmund Husserl was soon to give an implacable diagnosis against the whole age of positivism, whether in the natural sciences or in the “sciences of the mind.”<sup>130</sup> But what should we do when, suddenly, the world explodes, when it decomposes on every level of experience and of thought? What kind of a response can an image—or rather, a montage of images—bring to the great dismantling of the world?

### **Warburg Facing the War: *Notizkästen 115-18***

World War I left no one the chance to remain indifferent or to remain unscathed. Everyone in Europe, in one way or another, was exposed to this war. No one came back unchanged. Everyone, at one moment or another, asked the question of which direction to take—how to maintain a horizon of thought, of project, of desire—in such a situation. When Walter Benjamin insisted on the tragic obstacles opposing the possibility of experience by a war that was stamped with the seal of the unthinkable—“experience fell in value”—it was to invoke immediately the obviously difficult task it is to “start from scratch; to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further.”<sup>131</sup> And to use memory so that in the midst of the destruction, a desire to think might be possible.<sup>132</sup>

Some people were plunged into the heart of the battles. This was the case for the ethnologist Robert Hertz, student and friend of Marcel Mauss, who died at the front in the Meuse in April 1915, not without having, by means of intervening missives, left enlightened traces of his vigilant thinking.<sup>133</sup> It was also the case for the two great founders of the *École des Annales*, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. Lucien Febvre fought on the fronts of Ourcq, in Reims and in Douau-



52. Lucien Febvre, *Carnet de guerre* (1914–18), ink and colored pencils on paper, 16 × 25 cm. Henri Febvre Collection. Photo: DR.

mont; he was the theoretician and the initiator of a method of combat called “cross firing”; he never stopped, throughout the war, filling his notebooks, making maps of the front lines, drawing what he saw around him, collecting photographs (fig. 52).<sup>134</sup> He never really integrated this experience of the war into his ulterior analyses, except, perhaps, in half-words—and, by no accident, in 1943—in his text entitled “Living through History.”<sup>135</sup>

Marc Bloch in turn elaborated on his experiences of the trenches by writing numerous texts, by drawing, and by taking photographs, which he accumulated throughout the war: plans, lists, stories collected day by day, and portraits of friends, visions of devastated nature, reports of operations, all this taking shape in one documentation snatched with urgency (fig. 53).<sup>136</sup> From 1914, Marc Bloch fully held his place as a historian—that is, as a critic of facts and discourses—



53. Marc Bloch, *Carnet de guerre* (1914–18), photographs glued to card, 20 × 23 cm. Yves Bloch Collection. Author photo.

by publishing a text entitled “Historical Critique of Testimony,” developed in 1921 in the “Reflections of a Historian on the False News of the War.”<sup>137</sup> It was already a question, in these analyses, of everything that, in parallel, made up the heart of the Warburgian problem: that is, a “historical psychology” capable of discerning reason (Warburg might have said: the *astra*) of the “powers of the imagination” (the *monstra*) in times of war, as well as that “collective memory” that Marc Bloch spoke of, not from Warburg, whose work he undoubtedly did not know about, but from his compatriot and friend Maurice Halbwachs.<sup>138</sup> The parallel between the attitudes of Marc Bloch and Aby Warburg facing the war has already been well analyzed by Ulrich Raulff.<sup>139</sup> It would be worth continuing this analysis in the future regarding the more fundamental question of the method, for example, the question of cultural comparativism and the historical content of images in which Bloch shared an interest—without ever, it must be said, systematically developing it—with the school of Aby Warburg.<sup>140</sup>

The author of *Mnemosyne*, it is true, never directly experienced the noise of bombs and the daily horror of the trenches. But he exposed himself, body and soul, to the war: From the beginning of the conflict, he completely reorganized the functioning of his research, of his library, in order to understand the great “psychomachy” of the *monstra* and the *astra* at play on a fundamental plane that only a “psycho-history,” in his view, could account for. As Reinhart Koselleck has shown, any “mutation of experience” implies a “change of method” in the work of the historian.<sup>141</sup> My own hypothesis, as we have seen, is that this change—with considerable epistemological consequences—was embodied in the *Mnemosyne* atlas and in the theoretical orientations that its invention brought to light.

It is as a man of the Enlightenment that Aby Warburg first of all wanted to respond to the irrational fury of the world conflict. While the family bank—installed in the little town of Warburg, then in Hamburg, since the sixteenth century—logically participated in the German war effort, he had to think painfully about the “recension of the Jews” (*Judenzählung*) ordered in October 1916 by certain officers of the army in order to bring to light the so-called underrepresentation of Jewish combatants on the front.<sup>142</sup> He thought, however, that the *astra* could fight efficiently with the *monstra* on the very ground of culture and of ideas. This is why he devoted so much energy to founding, with the ethnologist Georg Thilenius and the linguist Giulio Panconcelli-Calzia, a *Rivista illustrata* intended to maintain the European intellectual tissue so as, notably, not to cut off the German intellectuals from their Italian colleagues.<sup>143</sup> We can read in this, notably, a short note signed by Wilhelm von Bode, the director of the Berlin museums, on the duty of protecting works of art in enemy territory, or a factual account concerning religious persecutions on the Russian front.<sup>144</sup>

Faced with a war that he considered, on the anthropological level—and even on the metaphysical level—an *Urkatastrophe*, an “archetypal catastrophe,” Aby Warburg thus tried to place his work on the level of a fight with ideas: a fight against certain ideas (those that set man against man, those that seek to close the boundaries, to dig the trenches, to set up the front lines), or to help certain ideas (to open the boundaries methodologically, to recognize the porosity of cultures, to claim the perpetual “migration” of mind). This is what would justify,

in particular, his enthusiasm for the idea of a League of Nations and for the efforts toward reconciliation between Germany and France. When, in 1926, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann received the Nobel Prize for Peace in the name of this highly difficult reconciliation, Aby Warburg undertook the publication of a postal stamp—a cross-border image—with a significant title: *Idea vincit*.<sup>145</sup> This formulation at the time of *Mnemosyne*—that is, from 1928 to 1929—was to be found also in the manuscript for the *Grundbegriffe*: “The idea overcomes—everything is possible [*Idea vincit—alles ist möglich*].”<sup>146</sup>

But the founder of modern iconology knew well that any cultural “psychomachy” is embodied in images that confront one another (this would be a political way to express the concept, which is crucial to Warburg, of “polarity”): images that, successively, translate and betray ideas, make them in turn accessible and incomprehensible, simplified or placed in *mises en abymes*. This is why the “fight with ideas” involved a fight with images: a fight against certain images (propaganda, lies, anti-Semitism), or to help other images (survivals, comparisons, deconstructions of ideology). This supposed, in the mind of Warburg, the establishment of an extensive documentation on the war, collected in the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek since the start of the hostilities.

It amounts to a considerable documentation, if we keep in mind the private character, or familial character, so to speak, of the research institution founded by Aby Warburg. The library acquired at least fifteen hundred works about the war between 1914 and 1918. And innumerable photographs: around five thousand, according to the catalogue, but many of which are now lost, probably during the transfer of the library to London in 1933. We can consult today some 1,445 images, distributed in three catalogues. They include press photographs, images bought for use by the German army, postcards, postal stamps . . . Even reduced to a third of its original quantity, and even if Warburg seems to have given up organizing it into an atlas, this iconographic documentation already gives the impression soon to be given also by the plates of *Mnemosyne*: something like a brilliantly organized disorder, a profusion of images in which extraordinary affinities appear, sending us back to the most fundamental motifs of the Warburgian *Kulturwissenschaft*.

What do we see in these images? Ancient or religious buildings,

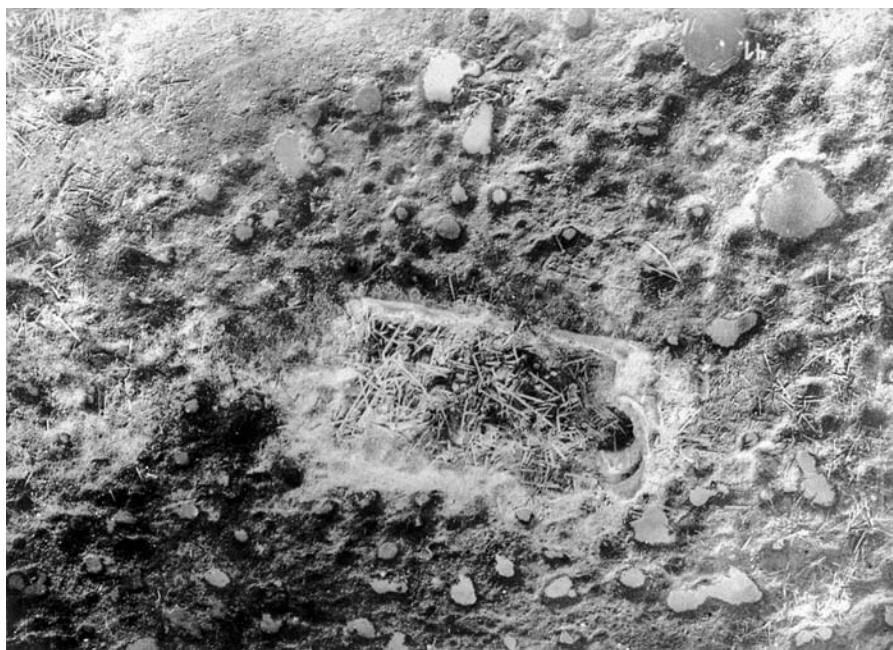


54. Aby Warburg, Kriegskartothek (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (A 2611). Photo: Warburg Institute.

monuments of a long cultural duration, collapsed under the bombs; Doric columns speckled with the impact of machine-gun bullets (fig. 54). Many aerial images (signs, par excellence, of modern warfare), most of which have a lunar or antediluvian appearance (like a sign that all destruction leads to an archaeological gaze) (fig. 55). Terrible visions of the front overrun with barbed wire, the vegetation devastated, everything having the appearance of an exaggeratedly blackened engraving, a ghostly landscape in the manner of Hercules Segers or the remains of an apocalypse drawn by some expressionist painter (fig. 56). Everywhere, the stigmas of the *Urkatastrophe*, but everywhere, equally, the signs of a technological running of the ravages, as on the documents in which we see how the army demanded that the war be reproducible and be put into photographic or cinematographic images (fig. 57).

We see also, in this nightmare collection, the meaning of the visual paradoxes so characteristic of the Warburgian gaze. The aerial explosions, part of the terrifying new technology of this war, spread





55. Aby Warburg, *Kriegskartothek* (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (T 4156). Photo: Warburg Institute.

pretty little white clouds through the sky, very similar to those that any art historian is accustomed to seeing in a painting by the Italian Primitives (fig. 58). The dirigible—a motif that we will soon find in *Mnemosyne*—hit by a fighter plane has at the same time the implacable appearance of a technological document and the pathos of a mythological fall, somewhere between the chariot of Phaeton and the plunging of the damned into Hell (fig. 59). The image of a horse bizarrely suspended above the sea has the involuntary splendor of a shot by Eisenstein (fig. 60). But the sight of sheaves of sugar cane in the artisan's studio reminds us, at the same time, how much war crippled, disfigured, and reduced men to the pain of mutilation and of dissimilarity (fig. 61).

Elsewhere, appearing one after the other, in an apparent jumble, are military parades, the language of maritime signaling gestures, Hagia Sophia at Constantinople occupied by the German army, the beams of the anti-aircraft defense at night, villages in ruins, models



56. Aby Warburg, *Kriegskartothek* (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (T 3421). Photo: Warburg Institute.

designed as stratagems, catalogues for clothes made in paper substitutes, carcasses of tanks, the farewell of women weeping before the departing sailors, church altars covered in military commemorative plaques, ships exploding, the technical equipment of the gun turrets, the funeral of a Jew (killed in combat?), naval shipyards in full activity, bombs left on a beach, houses destroyed from the inside, bridges broken in two, monuments to the dead, army libraries, the meeting of the very latest submarine and of a sailing ship from a previous century, the reprocessing of rubbish, subterranean vehicles, an elephant from the zoo requisitioned for the war effort, wide-open coffins, dismantled pylons, the orchestra of the front, field ambulances, a bunker in the forest, bread baking in a time of shortage, ration tickets, misery in the streets, a row of flayed cattle in the abattoir, a makeshift military cemetery, soldiers occupying a *shetl* in central Europe, an Easter orthodox procession on the Eastern front . . .

It is clear that in Warburg's view this iconographic cacophony



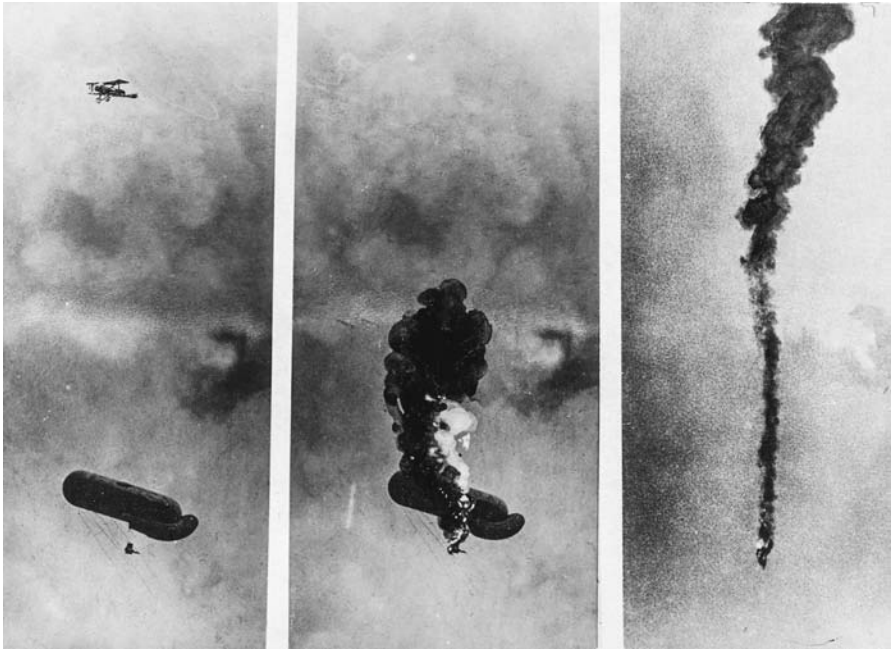
57. Aby Warburg, Kriegskartothek (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (T 3597). Photo: Warburg Institute.

meant as much as did, in Sigmund Freud's view, the gestural disorder of an attack of hysteria: This visual kaleidoscope would be, on the whole, no less than a collection of symptoms, an immense geology of conflicts working in the open air, crossing over the surfaces, and swarming in depths. Consequently, it was necessary to obtain the means—the historical, philological, archaeological, philosophical means—to interpret the *Urkatastrophe* in the apparent dissemination of its appearances. Hence the establishment, at the heart of the library, of tools for archiving and classing into files the innumerable motifs of this great modern “psychomachy.” Warburg's *Kriegskartothek* comprised, in 1918, seventy-two boxes holding ninety thousand files.<sup>147</sup> What remains today, in the London archive, is three boxes of files (*Notizkästen*) numbered 115, 117, and 118, which bear witness to the intense philological work carried out by Warburg and his collaborators in parallel to his iconographic collection.



58. Aby Warburg, *Kriegskartothek* (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (T 4632). Photo: Warburg Institute.

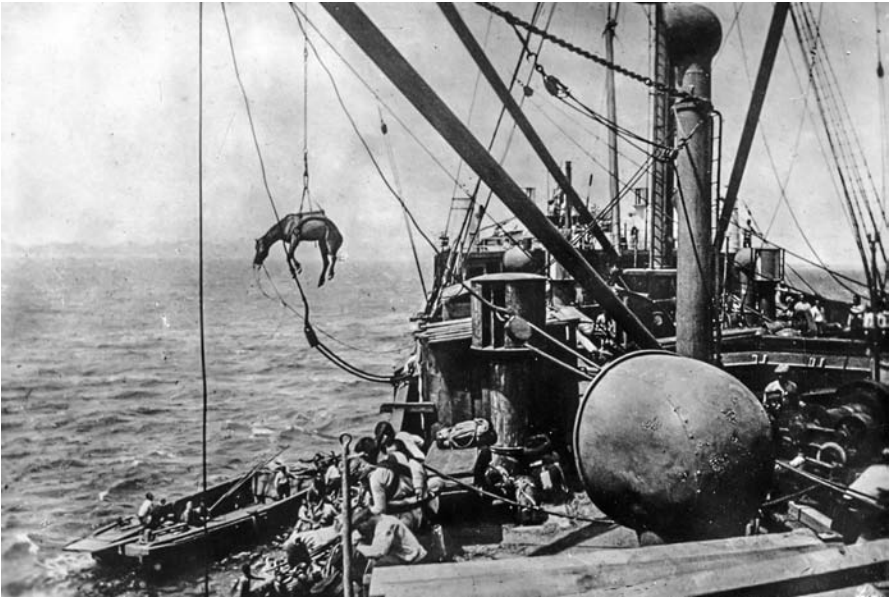
Claudia Wedepohl went through these boxes in 2002. *Kasten 115* is labeled “War and Culture” (*Krieg und Kultur*). It makes a list of the objects (medals, postcards, war museums) as well as the theoretical tools necessary for its interpretation (the sociology of Max Weber, for example). *Kasten 117* is devoted more particularly to the “superstitions of war” (*Aberglaube im Krieg*) and gathers all kinds of material, both historical and ethnological, already the object of a previous conference (fig. 62).<sup>148</sup> *Kasten 118* is labeled “War and Art” (*Krieg und Kunst*) and covers a considerable field, from postcards representing Hindenburg to propaganda images in general, including the futurist manifestos of Marinetti. A little diary with metallic rings, containing 134 pages, completes this apparatus by establishing the basis of an index in which the different writings reveal a collective engagement around Warburg’s project. The entries of this index go from “Prehistory” (*Vorgeschichte*) of the war to the different geographical sectors of its occurrence, unrolling from “Religion” to “Techniques of Hygiene” (*Technik-*



59. Aby Warburg, Kriegskartothek (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (T 4809). Photo: Warburg Institute.

*Hygiene*), from “Poetry” (*Dichtung*) to “Ethics” (*Ethik*), from “Arms Factories” (*Münitionsfabriken*) to “War Literature” (*Kriegsliteratur*), and from “Celestial Figures” (*Figurae Coeli*) to “Cinema” (*Kino*).<sup>149</sup>

The undertaking of cultural history and iconology carried out by Aby Warburg on the Great War deserves, of course, to be contextualized. In its own way, it belongs to those “paper storms” that, from 1914, were unleashed around the European intellectual world. It belongs, notably, to the specifically German phenomenon—of which we find, in France, only a few examples in that period—of “war collections” (*Kriegssammlungen*), which flourished on a large scale: from the Kaiserliche Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek of Strasbourg (which was already, for Warburg, at the end of the nineteenth century, a model for his future *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek*) to the Royal Library in Berlin, the Deutsche Bücherei of Leipzig, or the university library of Jena. Not to mention the extraordinary private collections of Theodor Bergmann in Fürth and of Richard Franck in Ber-



60. Aby Warburg, Kriegskartothek (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (A 193). Photo: Warburg Institute.

lin and Stuttgart, a veritable institution that employed no fewer than twenty-four people full time and counted, in 1921, around 45,000 works—plus 2,150 periodical titles.<sup>150</sup> A work by Albert Buddecke on the German *Kriegssammlungen*, which appeared in 1917, already listed 217 public and private collections devoted to the Great War.<sup>151</sup>

But what radically differentiates the Warburgian project from all these collections often put on show in public exhibitions for patriotic ends,<sup>152</sup> concerns the critical content that guided its principle. The German *Kriegssammlungen* targeted the institution of a self-glorifying national memory, while those of Aby Warburg opened the way to a genuine political iconology and, consequently, to all the historical and anthropological analyses that flourish today regarding images produced in the time of the Great War.<sup>153</sup> The “war collection” gathered by Warburg was guided, indeed, by an anthropological concern—characteristic of his *Kulturwissenschaft* in general—and this explains his extremely broad approach, beyond any hierarchy of aesthetic values between “works of art” and “imageries,” to the consider-



61. Aby Warburg, Kriegskartothek (1914–18). London, Warburg Institute Archive (A 383). Photo: Warburg Institute.

able *visual field* put into play during the Great War. The works on “war art,” acquired by the library in Hamburg from 1914 to 1918, are striking to our contemporary gaze in the general mediocrity of paintings reproduced.<sup>154</sup>

This is because any “psychomachy” involves, well beyond a history of art with limited boundaries, the launching of a vast anthropology of images and of the beliefs that these images reconfigure and retransform ceaselessly. If *Kasten 117* was the object of specific attention on the part of specialists, it is first of all because its subject, the “superstitions of war” (*Aberglaube im Krieg*), entered directly into such an anthropological design. It is clear, for example, that certain fundamental motifs in the *Mnemosyne* project—like the “unsettling duality” (*die unheimliche Doppelheit*) of triumph and martyrdom, or the crucial notion of “demonization” (*Dämonisierung*)<sup>155</sup>—are present, already, in Warburg’s work on the Great War.<sup>156</sup> I believe it is not by chance that the actual collection of disasters in anthropomorphism





composed by Georges Bataille and his friends from *Documents*, between 1929 and 1930, should have ended up—under the influence of the work of Marcel Mauss—in a “Collège de sociologie” in whose discussion, from 1937 to 1939, an anthropology of war was sketched,<sup>157</sup> something that Ernst H. Kantorowicz, Georges Dumézil, or Franco Cardini would found historically afterward.<sup>158</sup>

Recent historiography of World War I has ended up adopting this point of view of cultural anthropology.<sup>159</sup> People even spoke of the war from the perspective of myth.<sup>160</sup> Above all, historians took account of the intrinsic difficulties in any legibility of experience, which amounted to asking the question of beliefs faced with facts and of rumors faced with testimonies, notably on the highly debated question of “German atrocities.”<sup>161</sup> But, where the historian can try, legitimately, to discern the “true” from the “false” in this generalized “system of uncertainty” that constantly interweaves competing discourses,<sup>162</sup> the anthropologist—or the archaeologist of discourses, in the manner of Michel Foucault—will adopt a more transversal gaze and will locate the critique of language, or of images, on another level—the level that Aby Warburg characterized as *Kulturwissenschaft*.

Just as one must not confuse Warburg’s *Kriegskartothek* with the patriotic *Kriegssammlungen* compiled by his contemporaries, one must no doubt dissociate the problem of *Kasten 117* from the numerous positivist works that were published from 1914 on, and that simplified things by accusing the obstinate “superstitions of war” of being mere “errors.” Some examples, among others: In 1916, it was the article by Waldemar Deonna on the “Increase of Superstitions in Times of War” or Yves de La Brière’s critique of prophetic oracles, which proliferated from the beginning of the conflict.<sup>163</sup> In 1917, Lucien Roue, in turn, created his own catalogue of “superstitions of war”—but so did Guillaume Apollinaire, with a more cheerful and much less accusatory tone.<sup>164</sup> In 1918, Albert Dauzat wrote a whole work on the “legends and superstitions of war,” in which the positivist viewpoint dominates once again, coming directly from Auguste Comte (the “fictional” state of fetishism) or Gustave Le Bon:

All troubled periods, and in particular in war, by increasing general nervousness and credulousness, give birth to a great number of false rumors which, once they correspond to the general state of mind,

were quick to be substantiated in the simplistic souls of the masses. Acting on weak and emotive brains, they provoke hallucinations, even prophetic images. Finally, multiplying the occasions for dangers, they are favorable to waking and to development of ancestral superstitions. Despite the advanced state of our civilization, the global conflict could not escape this law. To the curious observer it has offered an abundant and picturesque pick of the most varied facts, of which we would not have suspected, five years ago, the possible—and fast as well as multiple—appearance around us.<sup>165</sup>

Against this simplistic—or “evolutionist,” in the trivial sense of the term, where reason gets off very lightly—viewpoint, the Warburgian analysis of “survivals” made it possible to understand, on a much more fundamental level, the anachronistic coexistence of a modern war marked by terrible technological “novelties,” such as aerial bombardments or chemical weapons,<sup>166</sup> and yet crossed by so many archaisms of social behavior. The “psycho-historical” point of view of the *Nachleben* made it possible, indeed, not to dissociate these paradoxes of temporality, with Warburg showing himself, once again, to be very close to Freud’s analyses redefining—precisely in the years 1916 and 1917—the inseparable relations between psychological “evolution” and “regression.”<sup>167</sup> Walter Benjamin, in 1925, thought again about the ethical and political consequences of such an anachronism, when the war, so technologically *new* that “the human imagination [refused] to follow it,” created a state of psychosis where the chemical weapon—the clouds of gas—became a sort of “ghost” as unfathomable as it was ruthless.<sup>168</sup>

Aby Warburg—who, let us remember, defined the history of images as a “history of ghosts for big people [*Gespensstergeschichte f(ür) ganz Erwachsene*]”<sup>169</sup>—therefore approached the Great War as a fight against ideas, a fight with ideas, but also a fight against ghosts, a fight in which the whole of European civilization was engaged, no matter what. His analysis of the “superstitions of war” must have led to a revision of the survivals at work in the great “psychomachy” of the time.<sup>170</sup> We will not be surprised to find that the files in *Kasten 117* consign certain spiritualist phenomena (apparitions of the dead) or mystical phenomena (the symmetrical cases of Barbara Weigand in Germany and of Claire Ferchaud in France) of the Great War that

have since been studied carefully by historians.<sup>171</sup> But it has to do, in the Warburgian view, with placing all these phenomena in an anthropology or a “psycho-history” that could verify the politics of survival at work in each cultural symptom added to the collection of *Kasten* 117. This is why it is essential to recall the coexistence of this Kriegskartothek with the research by Warburg in the same years on the religious and political imagery of the Reformation—another period of schism and cultural crisis—haunted by chimerical beings, pope-donkeys, monk-calves, and other monstrous sows of Lutheran propaganda.<sup>172</sup>

But Warburg, as Nietzsche had done in his own time and as Georges Bataille would soon do, played dangerously with the fire of this “psychomachy.” As he arranged and rearranged, on his work table, the images of his Kriegskartothek, was he not making himself the soothsayer or the haruspex of the great psychological conflicts that surrounded him and went through him? Like the first plate of *Mnemosyne*, on divination (fig. 3), the last, devoted to contemporary history, appears readily like an exercise in political divination—or, at least, anxiety or presentiment (fig. 44). We could say, then, that Aby Warburg conceived his atlas (or his own existence as a modern Atlas) only to bring together dangerously all the meanings of the Latin word he understood well, the word *superstes*. It is a word for survivor, for testimony, but for superstition, too.

Émile Benveniste showed that *superstes* signifies, first of all, the one who remains, not so much above, but rather beyond or over something. It refers to the act of “surviving,” of “getting over,” as we say of someone who “survived an ordeal”; it refers, more generally, to the act of “having crossed some event, of getting over that event”—and, thus, of “having been a witness” to it.<sup>173</sup> The *superstes*, consequently, is the one who assumes the *superstitio* as “the property of being present” as a witness to an event from which he is far in space and in time: in sum, the soothsayer of a history that is past, present, or future, in which he did not physically participate. This “capacity for presence” fascinates and worries at the same time. Does it not characterize all the poetics of the great historians? Whatever the case, we know that it is the “capacity for presence” itself that brought the Romans—for whom divination, as we have seen, was an exogenous, foreign, cross-boundary practice, a “Babylonian” or “Etruscan” practice—to dis-

tinguish the dangerous *superstitio* from their own official *religio*.<sup>174</sup> By approaching the extreme of the cultural phenomena of the Great War, Aby Warburg remained to some extent beyond the “true” and the “false,” in an area of thought far away from any religion—for example, the patriotic or bellicose religion of the German *Kriegssammlungen* or the epic narratives in the style of Jünger—yet, it must be said, dangerously close to his objects of study: the images considered to be like so many busy ghosts.

## The Seismograph Explodes

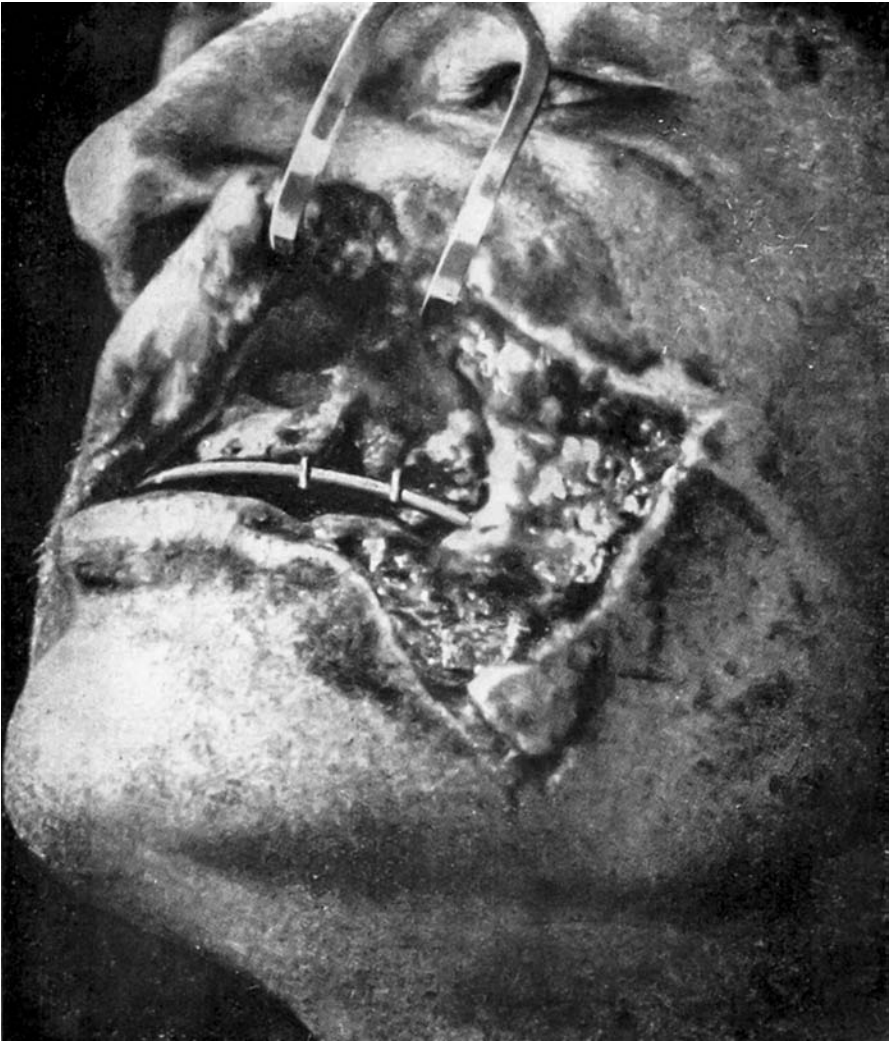
“Since all research begins with an anxiety and finishes with an imbalance . . .”<sup>175</sup> This phrase by Lev Shestov, written a little before World War II in a book entitled *Athens and Jerusalem*—a book that addresses the question of migrations and of cultural boundaries—explains quite well, I believe, the work carried out by the author of *Mnemosyne* during World War I. Warburg was indeed, throughout those years, an anxious researcher devoted to imbalance, and because of his research, in danger of falling. A “patient of the war” as much as an observer, according to the expression of Ulrich Raulff.<sup>176</sup> In short, a *superstes* in every sense of the word: a witness with a prodigious “capacity for presence”; a historian capable of interpreting events according to the beyond of a long “psychomachic” duration; a geologist of telluric movements whose latencies he knew how to analyze as well as the eruptions, the repressions as well as the returns of the repressed; but also the victim—the surface of inscription or the “seismograph,” as he said himself—of the process he observed. As though he were to be, at some moment, touched by the burning lava of history, becoming that being of fear and of “superstition,” that “unbalanced” person, to the point of falling into complete madness.

If Warburg referred to the conflict of 1914–18 as an *Urkatastrophe*, it is because he perfectly understood everything that was, to his “psycho-historian’s” eyes, at work on the European continent like a war of souls: a war carried on in the psyche of every person. The *Notizkästen* of Hamburg bear witness to a considerable phenomenon of the Great War: Not only was it a conflict of “the disfigured” (the *gueules cassées*, as they quickly became known in France), a conflict

that was destructive of faces—no historical event had ever affected the integrity of the human face to that extent (fig. 63)<sup>177</sup>—but it was also an immense conflict that was destructive of souls. A conflict in which, as never before, psychology and psychiatry were convoked in turn, called upon, enrolled, militarized, but also called into question, as far as their epistemological, moral, and political foundations. On the one hand, it was necessary to treat the ill souls of the war: to invoke masculine hysteria, to carry out electric shock treatment, to detect any “deliriums of interpretation,” to denounce the “simulations” to the point of the most complete absurdity, as in the case of a so-called “pathological fear” of a soldier at the front<sup>178</sup> (we might wonder indeed what “illness” reveals the fear of dying when thousands of men are cut down around you).

But how, on the other hand, should we understand these souls sick with war? The social—and basic—psychology of someone like Gustave Le Bon attempted, from 1915, to grasp the *Psychological Teachings of the European War*, and then to judge, in about a hundred exhausting and useless pages, the “the mental transformations of the peoples,” the “moral perturbations,” the “persistence of illusions,” and the “role of false ideas” in the state of exception engendered by the conflict.<sup>179</sup> In the same years, Freud’s point of view was, of course, totally different. The author of *Traumdeutung* contested the psychiatric approach to “war neuroses”<sup>180</sup> by going beyond the unilateral conception of trauma as dread linked to the vital risk of an accident, to explore the mechanisms of deferred actions, of “fixations,” and of unconscious memory.<sup>181</sup> This is why he had to take a position, in the context of an inquiry organized in Vienna on the question of psychiatric torture performed on soldiers suspected of simulation, against the arguments of Julius Wagner-Jauregg challenged for abuse of electric shock treatment.<sup>182</sup>

From a more general perspective, the “Timely Reflections on War and Death,” published by Freud in 1915, reveal exactly what might have led Warburg, in the same years, to speak of an *Urkatastrophe*: that is, that war “strips away our later stratifications of culture [*die spärteren Kulturauflagerungen*] and brings the primeval man [*Urmensch*] in us back to the surface.”<sup>183</sup> Which comes down to naming at the same time the psychical distress (*seelische Elend*) that war imposes on us and the violent anachronism in which we are left by any disruption



63. *Gueule cassée*. From E. Friedrich, (1924) 2004, 214. Author photo.

to our “traditional” relation to death.<sup>184</sup> And such was Freud’s anxiety faced with the psychical “disasters” of the war, that soon a fundamental imbalance took form in his thinking, that is to say, a calling into question affecting the very foundations of his notion of psyche:

Caught up in the vortex of this bellicose age, and given only one-sided information, with no detachment from the great changes that have already taken place or are about to do so, and with no sense of the future that is forming, we begin to have doubts about the meaning of the impressions crowding in on us, we begin to doubt the value of our own judgments.<sup>185</sup>

Yet, where Warburg could only accumulate feverishly the images of his Kriegskartothek and the files of his *Notizkästen*, without ever succeeding in formulating an articulate theoretical response to his anxiety—hence the slipping of imbalance into madness—Freud succeeded, from 1915, in reconstructing or in reassembling and reviewing his own psychological thinking in a masterly series, published in French as *Métapsychologie*, that involved reexamining and bringing things back into play, a collection whose concluding essay dealt, by no accident, with the question of mourning and melancholy.<sup>186</sup> Other anxieties and other imbalances would demand, in the following years, a thinking about something “beyond the pleasure principle” (for the repetition and the death impulse), the “future of an illusion” (for the incessant psychomachy of the *astra* with the *monstra*), and, finally, “civilization and its discontents”<sup>187</sup> (another way to name the tragedy of culture).

Where historians are able to give a precise date for the end of the Great War—that is, 11 November 1918—the “psycho-historian” Aby Warburg and the “metapsychologist” Sigmund Freud quickly realized that such a war survived or outlived, psychically, culturally, and politically, the silence of the weapons. The war was finished, yet it was an interminable war: finished in the eyes of Clio (history) but interminable in the eyes of Mnemosyne (memory). Interminable as a war of mourning.<sup>188</sup> But also as a war of images: Let us imagine, for example, the actual “psychomachy” that, in the 1920s, set the photographic montages of Ernst Friedrich in his work *Krieg dem Kriege!* against the lofty iconography of Ernst Jünger in his atlas of images entitled *Das*



64. National-Socialist demonstration. From E. Jünger and E. Schultz, 1933, 32. Author photo.

*Antlitz des Weltkrieges* in 1930 and *Die veränderte Welt*—subtitled *Eine Bilderfibel unserer Zeit*, “an alphabet primer in images of our time”—in 1933 (figs. 63–64).<sup>189</sup>

Such would be the endless tragedy of culture: The *astra* call upon a necessary recovery of thought—which is what Edmund Husserl attempted in his conferences from 1922 to 1924 on the ethics of the “renewal” and his work of reappropriation of knowledge<sup>190</sup>—but the *monstra* have not finished threatening what is left of reason. To get to the end of it, it would be necessary to revoke the specters or kill the ghosts that continually haunt—or harass—historical memory. But we cannot kill ghosts since they are already dead: They are indestructible due to the context of *Nachleben*. Annette Becker has spoken, regarding the period from 1919 to 1939, of an “impossibility of memory,” but this, I believe, was just a way to name memory itself with its traumatic, symptomatic, and irremediable content: memory insofar as it fails all our conscious memories and all our official monuments.<sup>191</sup> Before even launching his great *Mnemosyne* project, Aby Warburg, as a cultural historian, was unable to confront such a



tragedy of memory. He was so attentive to perennial religious persecutions and anti-Semitism—notably, as much with regard to the long term as to the recent avatars of anti-Semitism, as Charlotte Schoell-Glass has shown<sup>192</sup>—that we cannot imagine him considering what was going to become the first great genocide of the twentieth century merely as a passing period: the Armenian genocide of 1915, absent from Jünger's *Bilderfibel*, but perfectly documented, for example, in the terrible atlas of images by Ernst Friedrich.<sup>193</sup>

Who, then, could have “got out” of such a war without deep injuries, without lasting anxieties, and without the imbalance of every movement? This is all the more true, in the case of Warburg, because the Germany of 1918—the losing nation, soon to be humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles—did not “get out” of the war except to prolong the crisis or the “politics of catastrophe,” according to an expression soon to be used recurrently by Warburg. An interminable war, therefore:<sup>194</sup> a war that distributed everywhere the potency of its *monstra* and the deadly economy of an *Urkatastrophe*. It is the betrayed hope of the German Revolution that, from November 1918, terrified Warburg so much before being recounted by Alfred Döblin;<sup>195</sup> it is the unknown factors of the Weimar Republic, a genuine explosion—in both of the senses that I gave earlier, each commented on, for example, in the admirable chronicle of Siegfried Kracauer—of modernity;<sup>196</sup> it is, finally, the lasting deployment of the “European civil war” that placed Western societies in the widening grip of fascism and totalitarianism.<sup>197</sup>

It is striking to note that, unlike Freud—the sovereign thinker over his own anxieties—the two great theoreticians of social memory, Aby Warburg in Germany and Maurice Halbwachs in France, were unable to avoid any imbalance or symptom of thought. It is strange, indeed, that Maurice Halbwachs should have kept silent on his experience in the Great War: Having lived through the hell of the battles, from August 1914 to February 1915, while preserving his talent for observation—collecting and studying letters from the front, the photographs, the illustrated press documents<sup>198</sup>—he was nonetheless incapable of grasping that “material” in his great book of 1925, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, in which he examined the motifs of cultural memory and the crucial role of images, before suggesting, in *La mémoire collective*, a distinction between Clio (history as a “tableau of events”) and

Mnemosyne (memory as “multiplicity and heterogeneity of collective durations”).<sup>199</sup> Should the comparison between Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg, perhaps, emerge on the hypothesis of a “war repression,” as Annette Becker has suggested?<sup>200</sup> It is true that there are more images of 1914–18 in *Mnemosyne* than there are reflections on the Great War in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*.

But repression allows certain openings for the returns of the repressed. What was silence in Maurice Halbwachs became a *cry*—and a crisis—in Aby Warburg. On 2 November 1918, at four in the morning, the historian of images was admitted urgently to the clinic of Doctor Arnold Lienau, in Hamburg, having threatened—with a revolver in his hand, screaming, out of his mind—the lives of his loved ones and his own; he was immediately given a whole series of medical substances, such as Pantopon, Tropfen, or Veronal.<sup>201</sup> But this crisis was like the war itself: not an episode, but a process that would keep Warburg inside the walls of different asylums until 1924. The war was, it is true, finished as a historical episode, but the memorial psychomachy continued, with its weight of suffering, ever heavier on the shoulders of our modern Atlas. Heinrich Embden, Warburg’s doctor, described his “collapse” in the following terms in 1918:

Serious symptoms seem to have appeared in a relatively immediate manner in Autumn 1918, under the effects of impressions produced by our desperate situation. (I was at the front.) As I have already reported orally, he thought that an English governess, a friend of the family’s, who had stayed in Hamburg during the first months of the war, was the “chief spy of Lloyd George” and that he, Warburg, would consequently be held responsible for the unhappy results of the war and punished for this. From one hour to the next, he expected a catastrophe (imprisonment, etc.) and the agitation inherent to such a complex led to the first notable fact of his psychosis—*he threatened his family with a revolver*, to protect them from the worst by killing them—then to his transfer to the clinic. Here, his *hallucinations*, which were very vivid, had an almost exclusively threatening and worrying character. The voices turned against him and against his family. He heard shots being fired at his wife and responded with extreme agitation to her cries for help. Furthermore, delusions of

wrongs of a psychochemical nature: fear of metals and metal objects, due to the electrical influence; *fear of poisoning*, because the water of the bath contained sublimate [mercury chloride].<sup>202</sup>

The clinical “anamnesis” written on 19 May 1921 by Heinrich Embden leaves no doubt that this psychological disaster of Aby Warburg appeared first of all like a disaster of war:

The war plunged W[arburg] into an excessive agitation [*maßlos*], partly because of patriotic, elevated and pure, sentiments and partly because of personal repercussions which it caused in him. Very early on he had sound intuition regarding the dangers, after the battle of the Marne. He played with the idea of enlisting as an interpreter, and spoke a lot about it: “It is a job where you can easily take a bullet.” He took horse-riding classes, acquired boots and gaiters, . . . he tried, thanks to his old relations, to work for the homeland, more particularly in the German institute of Art History, in Florence. . . . During the war years, he became ever more agitated. He assembled an enormous collection of newspapers, reading seven daily, underlining everything that concerned the news; all of this was catalogued, in a gigantic map collection, by a group of helpers. Moreover, he carried on more and more intense research on superstition. For his principal scientific project, the survival of ancient modes of thinking in the Middle Ages, he devoted his studies to astrology, etc. Then, he slipped little by little from the point of view of the historian to a partial-belief, then superstitious behavior. . . . He eventually took himself for a werewolf. He believed he could not escape from imminent threats except by killing his family and by suicide; he grabbed a revolver, was easily disarmed and, in the first days of November 1918, he was taken to the clinic of Doctor Lienau.<sup>203</sup>

We know that after the psychiatric services of Hamburg and Jena, Aby Warburg was finally admitted to the Bellevue clinic of Kreuzlingen on 16 April 1921, where he began, under the responsibility of Ludwig Binswanger, a long period of care,<sup>204</sup> marked by the famous conference on the ritual of the serpent, given in front of an audience of experts and madmen—following which the interminable psychomachy took on the appearance of an interminable curing of the soul,

that *unendliche Heilung* (as Davide Stimilli had wanted to call his remarkable edition of the clinical history of Aby Warburg).<sup>205</sup> We know also the difficulties encountered by the psychiatrists in identifying the historian's suffering: Binswanger first of all gave a diagnosis of schizophrenia, which excluded any intellectual reconstruction of the patient ("I believe a return to work is highly improbable," he wrote to Embden, on 18 August 1921),<sup>206</sup> before sharing the opinion of Emil Kraepelin, who diagnosed a "mixed manic-depressive state" accompanied by an "absolutely favorable prognosis" for the return to intellectual work.<sup>207</sup>

These diagnostic debates surrounding Warburg's case give us an indication that the problem of his madness could not be reduced to the observation of a "lack" or to its "semiological" conceptualization, that is to say, to its unilateral embedding in the framework of a "clinical tableau." One must obviously take seriously Binswanger's psychopathological approaches—which are both subtle and comprehensive—regarding his patient, but one must equally listen to the patient himself as thinker. If Warburg spoke so much about "psychomachies" in his studies of cultural history, should we not also take him seriously in his psychical disaster, as a symptom of the tragedy of culture that played out beyond him, all around him, from the beginning of the Great War? We know the considerable function of the concept of *Denkraum* in the work of Warburg: that "thought space" in turn constructed (in the results of his historical science) and destroyed (in the ruins of the war), reconstructed (in the images and files of his map collection and destroyed once again (in the collapse of November 1918) . . .

We notice, then, by reading the clinical history of Warburg, that not one of his delusory motifs is, in fact, separable from the great paradigms in which his historical and philosophical thinking had organized itself for a long time. The madness of Warburg was, therefore, first of all, a fate of his *Denkraum*. His "psychomachy," a fight in the space of thought against the *astra* and the *monstra*, the constructions for collecting the multiplicity of the world and the explosions of the same world in millions of cadavers (the real war) and in efficient ghosts (the war in the soul). From the beginning of his psychiatric confinement, for example, Aby Warburg experienced a direct—and legitimate—relation to the case of Friedrich Nietzsche, who had been

treated a few years previously by a certain Otto Ludwig Binswanger, uncle of his own doctor in Kreuzlingen.<sup>208</sup> We should not be afraid to see, at the other end of this process, the *Mnemosyne* atlas itself as a decisive moment of this great “psychomachy,” which is both singular and impersonal, that final reassembling and reviewing of a *Denkraum* that has lost its equilibrium because of the disasters of the Great War.

It is no coincidence that in 1927, during a period of intense work on the *Mnemosyne* atlas, Aby Warburg gave a particular seminar on the “anxious gay science” of the historian. He sought to embody it in the pair made up of Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Nietzsche, to concentrate then on the very point in which the anxiety becomes imbalance, that is to say, the psychical collapse of Nietzsche in 1889. According to Warburg, historians cannot be reduced to the simple status of chroniclers of times past: They are first of all “receptors of mnemonic waves [*Auffänger der mnemischen Wellen*], . . . of very sensitive seismographs [*sehr empfindliche Seismographen*] with which the foundations tremble when they have to capture the wave and transmit it”; hence, “the risk [*Gefährlichkeit*] in [this] profession, that of pure collapse.”<sup>209</sup> Faced with this danger or this fundamental anxiety, Burckhardt enclosed himself in an “ivory tower” made of books, images, and files (like Warburg in his library); but Nietzsche, in the light of Turin, made of this anxiety a fatal imbalance, a fall into madness (like Warburg in his crises).

The author of *Mnemosyne* concluded that Burckhardt was a seer who managed to remain faithful to the great lucidities of the Enlightenment, while Nietzsche was a visionary of the *nabi* type, “the ancient prophet who runs through the streets, tears at his clothes, moans, and, sometimes, leads the people.”<sup>210</sup> It is easy to understand, by reading the seminar, which is subtly autobiographical, that Warburg was all these things at the same time: a seer of the time animated by a constant psychomachy of the *astra* (as a man of the Enlightenment, a precise philologist, a collector of books, files, and images) with the *monstra* (as a tragic man, an inspired philosopher, a hallucinating visionary of “mnemonic waves” produced by the quakes of history). This is why the clinical narrative of Aby Warburg should be read according to the dual perspective of the *astra* and the *monstra*, as though the hallucinatory space of his delusionary visions were only the explosion—the burst having become a bursting—of a space of

thought in spite of all, his own vision of history. That is to say, a version, but a “dismantled” one, of the most authentic knowledge. Nietzsche had, with *Daybreak*, already theorized the virtues of such knowledge by suffering:

He who suffers intensely looks out at things with a terrible coldness: all those little lying charms with which things are usually surrounded when the eye of the healthy regards them do not exist for him; indeed, he himself lies there before himself stripped of all color and plumage. If until then he has been living in some perilous world of fantasy, this supreme sobering-up through pain is the means of extricating him from it: and perhaps the only means. . . . The tremendous tension imparted to the intellect by its desire to oppose and counter pain makes him see everything he now beholds in a new light: and the unspeakable stimulus which any new light imparts to things is often sufficiently powerful to defy all temptation to self-destruction and to make continuing to live seem to the sufferer extremely desirable.<sup>211</sup>

This so very “vital” way of understanding the knowledge of the sufferer could easily be applied to the case of Aby Warburg. When, in him, the seismograph exploded, the “mnemonic waves” no longer had to pass in transit through interposed books, images, and files: They came directly to shatter his soul, his vision, and all his limbs. They disfigured him for this, no doubt. But the monstrous traces that they left on his conscious life were no less the traces of a real war, an impersonal war that, after all, he only suffered and converted into *monstra*. In Kreuzlingen, Warburg was in this sense a being of the *duende*, in the precise meaning, the Dionysian and spectral meaning, that Federico García Lorca gave it by stripping it of the protection of the Muses.<sup>212</sup> Clio was no longer there, indeed, to provide Warburg with any clarity of narrative. In the temporal disorder—*disparates, caprichos*, or *desastres*—which shook him at this time, he was the plaything of the Erinyes rather than the Muses, of Dionysus rather than Apollo, of pathos rather than logos. Each of his *astra*, his constellations of thought, broke apart—being fragmented and revealed at the same time—under the swarming figures of the *monstra*.

For example, that which had justified the exceptional and famous philological precision of Warburg—“the Good Lord nestles in de-

tail”—was, after 1918, given to the most uncontrollable paranoid exaggeration, which Heinrich Embden called an “excessive sensitiveness [*übermäßige Empfindlichkeit*]” for details: “He adorned benign things with an acute, gigantic meaning, by making it a question of principle [*eine scharfe und großartige prinzipielle Einkleidung*].”<sup>213</sup> At the same time, his deep respect for singularities—that very fecund epistemological principle in his work—linked with the leitmotif of survival, made him see a soul in each thing, however modest it was: “Every pea, every apple, every bean is the soul of a man.”<sup>214</sup> This is a way of being recaptured by that “animism” he so often studied from an anthropological point of view, from the ancient Greeks, to the Renaissance, to the Hopi Indians. No more Muses, therefore, but Psychemes everywhere: This is how Binswanger, on 2 July 1921, wrote in his notes that Warburg “becomes agitated at night, when moths, attracted by the light, fly into his room. Is afraid that he will be killed by the guard and does not sleep for hours; tells of his pain to the moths.”<sup>215</sup> And dated 10 August:

[Warburg] has invented a cult with his little moths which fly about his room at night. He calls them “little creatures which have a soul” [*Seelentierchen*], he can talk with them for hours. Is very preoccupied because his “little butterfly” has nothing to eat; wants to give it some milk, brings it a leaf from a linden tree after his walk. Is sad when the little butterfly goes away. Looks for it everywhere. Is happy to find another little animal. He speaks to them in the following manner: “Little butterfly, the professor thanks you for being able to speak with you, can I tell you all my pain [*darf ich dir all mein Leid klagen*], think a little, little butterfly, November 18, 1918, I was so afraid for my family that I took my revolver and that I wanted to kill them, and me too. You know, because the Bolsheviks were coming.”<sup>216</sup>

But, from the great theoretician of polarities, we could not miss expecting that everything should fall into its opposite. Binswanger said he was astonished by the “striking contrast” in Warburg, “between, on the one hand, his tender respect for plants, animals, and inanimate objects (particularly wrappings, like those of chocolates, which were not to be thrown away) and, on the other hand, his intellectual aggression, his sadistic brutality during his psychotic phases.”<sup>217</sup> This

violence which, ever further from the Muses, made him resemble Saturn—that is, Cronos, Time—devouring his children. Even Fritz Saxl, in his notes on Kreuzlingen, adopted the comparison: “He’s a hard saturnine father [*ein harter Saturn-Vater*].”<sup>218</sup> This immense negative force made Warburg howl for hours—he finally lost the timbre of his voice—and hit others with, says Binswanger, a “colossal force [*kolossale Kräfte*],”<sup>219</sup> like Atlas carrying out alone his war against the gods on Olympus.

This saturnine or titanic violence was, of course, only the other face of a terror at every instant. Warburg saw a soul in each thing only because he saw a death in each thing or in each image: an effect of a war or an obsidional murder displaying poisons, plots, fatal weapons, and cadavers all around him. In Kreuzlingen, Warburg was Saturn first of all, haunted by the anxiety of having devoured—or of having to devour—his own family, before being put to death in his turn: In the pralines he thought there was the flesh of his brother, which horrified him at the thought of it going into his stomach and ending up in the toilet. This is why, wrote Binswanger, “he leaves, necessarily, some leftovers every time he eats something. If, by accident, he should eat these leftovers, he becomes extremely unhappy and moans about having eaten one of his children [*jammert, eines seiner Kinder verzehrt zu haben*].”<sup>220</sup> Everything, every aspect becomes, then, the instrument of a lie and of a danger: Swiss bread (*Bürli*) is so suspicious to Warburg that he demands unleavened rolls; a flower becomes threatening; tea is just a brew of human blood or the potion imagined by some “anti-Semitic clique”; fish contains his own son and from his plate implores him: “Father, don’t eat me [*Vater, du wirst mich doch nicht essen*]”; his birthday cake, on 13 June 1922, is “made with something much worse than human blood.”<sup>221</sup>

Such was the state of war that Warburg imagined in Kreuzlingen. As in war, every situation concealed a danger. As in war, every piece of information was falsified by lies and propaganda (one of his main themes of research between 1914 and 1918). Thus, “the butter is fly grease, the bread is not bread”; the proofs of his article on Luther are “false”; “the kale is his brother’s brain, the potatoes are the heads of his children, the meat is the flesh of the members of his family”; the newspaper articles on the nomination of his brother to the level of honorary doctor are lies; and Warburg articulates all of these sus-



picious by means of imprecations, gibberish, and neologisms of all kinds.<sup>222</sup> This does not prevent him from confining, day by day, like a good *superstes*, all the elements of his psychomachy (that is, the as-yet-unpublished material, from the Kreuzlingen notebooks kept at the Warburg Institute in London). Thus, he appears “very agitated when one tries to take from him a large packet of letters which he had until then kept with him, among which some date from the time he was with Lienau, as well as a diary, which is completely torn, also dating from that period.”<sup>223</sup>

Warburg’s interminable psychological war after 1918 was a pathological war, without any doubt: It responded to his personal destiny or to his personal history, for example, when he made his amorous relation with the family’s English governess a delusional motif of political guilt regarding his own role in the German defeat.<sup>224</sup> But this war was also in line—in a seismographic line—with *History*, for example, when Binswanger told, in 1922, that his patient appeared “very disturbed by the death of Rahenau [and] holds [*hält*] that his brother is in great danger.”<sup>225</sup> By using the verb *halten*, which means first of all “to hold” and “to maintain,” Binswanger subtly avoided suggesting that his patient possessed a simple delusional belief: He might have known that the small political group that had assassinated Walter Rathenau on 24 June 1922 was actually getting ready to kill Max Warburg a few days later.<sup>226</sup>

We can understand, then, that the author of *Mnemosyne* was actually what he appeared in Nietzsche: a “very sensitive seismograph” and a “seer” in the manner of a *nabi*. Capable, as such, of suffering madly and of exploding into pieces. But continuing, within this very pathos, to listen to the impersonal and subterranean movements, and to the *basso continuo* of objective history. When Warburg “sees,” in the garden in Kreuzlingen, “boxes filled with human flesh” or parcels of earth “prepared for burying men alive,”<sup>227</sup> he is merely displacing—and thus, bringing closer to him, to the point of incorporating it—a historical reality that was visible everywhere during the Great War; when he imagines that his library is in flames,<sup>228</sup> he is merely foreseeing the fate that the Nazis of Hamburg were planning, in 1933, for the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg; when he is terrified of a “penal colony”<sup>229</sup> (*Verbrecherkolonie*), he is situating himself somewhere between a fiction of a Kafkaesque *Strafkolonie*

and the future reality of the Nazi concentration camps, which we can hardly help thinking of when, weaving the recurrent motif of anti-Semitic hatred, Warburg ends up believing that “the old logs that were burned in the fire were the members of his family.”<sup>230</sup> When he speaks of a “politics of catastrophe” (*Katastrophenpolitik*), we no longer know whether he is accusing the doctors around him or the leaders of the whole of Europe.<sup>231</sup>

The clinical history of Aby Warburg would be of no importance to us if it were merely a purely subjective episode, a simple lack in his “space of thought.” However, it is much more than that. It develops in a dialectical manner, always on two heterogeneous, conflicting planes, yet which constantly cross over each other: nonknowledge and knowledge, pathos and logos, personal history and history itself. This is how we must understand Warburg’s great “psychomachy.” We should not be surprised that he “suffered for a long time from the feeling of having a head like Janus [and] claimed to feel this very acutely.”<sup>232</sup> In Kreuzlingen, his condition was most often considered to be “oscillating” (*häufiger schwankt*) by Binswanger:

For hours, he can be amiable, calm, pleasant, and have a brilliant conversation on scientific themes, and be witty and on the mark; and suddenly, everything turns upside down, he enters into a terrible state of agitation, of an intensity that we have not observed for a long time, he uses the most vulgar expressions and becomes aggressive.<sup>233</sup>

Alternately, he argues and rails, reasons and vociferates, works and moans, classes his papers and throws everything overboard, calms down, and then becomes anxious again, begins to scream, only to end with extraordinarily spiritual puns.<sup>234</sup> The people around him thought for a long time that this war would never end.

## Panoramic Tables to Return from the Disaster

And yet, as we know, Aby Warburg ended up leaving Kreuzlingen, his “penal colony,” and by recovering his sanity, he was able to return to his cherished library to throw himself into the last great project of his life, the *Mnemosyne* atlas of images. But what is said of that

“miracle” and that individual “cure” can be said of the war and the cultural “psychomachy” in which Warburg fought with so much painful energy: Their temporality cannot be reduced to that of easily situated historical episodes. That “miracle” and that “cure” have undergone, at the hands of historians, numerous simplifications, even biographical and methodological mystifications. On the one hand, Ernst Gombrich saw in *Mnemosyne* no more than a “solution to the impasse” in which Warburg stayed after returning from his madness:<sup>235</sup> To the one who no longer knew what to say, there remained nothing, in short, but to reclassify the images of his picture library. This amounts to misrecognizing the heuristic content, which is open and so theoretically innovative, in the *Mnemosyne* project. On the other hand, the atlas of images appeared like the incarnation of the “miracle of the cure”: a means of rescue owed to Fritz Saxl, since it is he who, after greeting his master just out from the asylum, organized a “party” by arranging, in the reading room in Hamburg, a few panels that summarized in images the fundamental themes of Warburg’s research.<sup>236</sup>

It is no doubt necessary to establish a chronology of *Mnemosyne* — for example, by locating any mentions of the project in that astonishing document, the *Tagebuch*, the “diary” of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, kept by different hands, between 1926 and 1929.<sup>237</sup> And, of course, to distinguish among the three principal versions of the project, which remained unfinished at the time of Warburg’s death.<sup>238</sup> But I would like, here, to ask another kind of question: What space of thought does the *Mnemosyne* atlas invent, exactly? What fate does it keep for the fundamental anxiety of the Warburgian method and for the profound imbalance that came of it in 1918 and 1924? The imbalance, in Warburg, was so linked to the anxiety — that is, the method itself — that we can certainly be in doubt regarding the “rescue” ability of *Mnemosyne* in the economy of thought. The *Mnemosyne* atlas does not offer either an “exit” from the anxiety or a tranquil reassurance of “scientific” research. Quite the contrary, it constitutes the brilliant reformulation of this anxiety, its practical and theoretical recomposition, its reproduction in new forms, and its re-editing and piecing together. It carries in it, enduringly, that “knowledge of suffering” that the Titan Atlas embodies (on the mythological level) and which Nietzsche designated as the peak of any thought (on the philosophical level). What, then, would be the political lessons of

such an anxiety in front of a history devoted to the imbalance of any chronicle?

We know that a fundamental moment in Warburg's "psychomachy" to return from the disaster into which the Great War had thrown him was the conference given in Kreuzlingen in 1923 on the "snake ritual" of the Hopi Indians.<sup>239</sup> Ludwig Binswanger's clinical notes, which bear witness to the event and its clever accompanist, seem very precious here in the sense that the psychiatrist, as we know, was an actual theoretician of "pathic knowledge" and a keen observer of the "style of being" of every one of his patients.<sup>240</sup> On 10 March 1923, he saw in Warburg an "agitated, furious, violent" state; on 12 March, Fritz Saxl arrived from Hamburg to help the scholar prepare for his conference; on 18 March came "the end of the opium cure." This cure "brought no relief whatsoever. The patient was as bad as before." But, thanks to the presence of his assistant, Warburg becomes "more calm [and] works quite regularly on his conference"; he remains, however, the man "with the Janus head" since, "with the development of his work progressing well . . . the state of fundamentally delusional state of mind remains."<sup>241</sup>

The conference finally took place on 21 April 1923. Binswanger made a rather brief summary of it for himself, preferring to note what struck him in the style or presentation of the speech: the "surprising intellectual mastery" linked with the "dynamism" of the argumentation, imbalanced, however, by the broken timbre of the speaker's voice; the "great quantity of knowledge [presented] in a slightly disordered manner"; and, above all, the fact that the "patient was very anxious about the staging of the images [*Inszenierung der Lichtbilder*]," so that the "conference itself was more a chat linked to the photographic material [*Photomaterial*]."<sup>242</sup> Between two crises—or between innumerable cries—Aby Warburg, therefore, found in a certain visual presentation the possible viewpoint indicator, or panoramic table, of his thinking, which Binswanger also noted at a moment when he justly observed the psychical apprehension of space in his patient:

*June 4 [1924]. Transfer to the Villa Maria.* [Warburg] slowly got used to the idea of this move, but . . . the most difficult thing for him is to get used to new rooms, particularly in the bathroom. . . . He needs from

now on to put the current bathroom in agreement with those in Jena and Parkhaus, which causes him the worst problems. It is already very difficult to reconstruct by memory [*in der Erinnerung zu rekonstruieren*] the bathroom in Parkhaus. The patient is equally disturbed, in the other places, by the new organization of space; he is actually disoriented [*eigentlich desorientiert*] since, for example, the axis of the table is arranged differently in relation to the window, to the extent that, from the window, he has to make different movements to return to the table, etc. Places on the table objects that have an affective resonance, books, images, because they help his orientation [*die Orientierung erleichtert*]. Thus, when he reads, he looks discretely at these objects which give him a certain relief. For this reason, we cannot make him give up his habit of carrying his personal effects around with him.<sup>243</sup>

We can understand, then, that in this psychopathology of visual space—whose information Binswanger, a few years later, tried to grasp on the phenomenological level<sup>244</sup>—Aby Warburg could only give his attention to a thing by linking it to other connected things to form a constellation in which he could recover an orientation for his thought. Hence that “habit of carrying his personal effects around with him,” which, once again, relates the author of *Mnemosyne* to the Titan Atlas, to the figure of the Wandering Jew or to Benjamin’s rag-and-bone man—but a rag-and-bone man who accumulates manuscripts, files and photographs to attempt to gather the parceling of the world by means of planes of thought or by plates, by interposed panoramic tables.

Planes of thought or panoramic tables: That is what Warburg needed in order to avoid falling completely into the *disparates* of the world, the caprices of the imagination, or the disasters of history. It is, indeed, what he needed to engage victoriously with his psychomachy of the *astra* and the *monstra*. Panoramic tables—like the Babylonian divinatory livers, the celestial map of the *Farnese Atlas*, or, soon, the plates themselves of the *Mnemosyne* atlas—would have been, to Warburg, what his anxiety demanded methodically in order to avoid slipping into total chaos. “I see only chaos before me [*ich sehe nur Chaos vor Augen*],” he wrote on 7 April 1924, a few days before a visit from Ernst Cassirer, who “reoriented” him and thanks to whom he could

feel inside him again something like a “potential of liberation [*Befreiung*] regarding the psychical disorder.”<sup>245</sup>

A panoramic table, in the divinatory sense of the term, supposes the constant circulation of malevolent and beneficial spaces, thus of melancholic moments (falls in time) and maniacal moments (triumph over destiny): *pars hostilis*, on the one hand; *pars familiaris*, on the other. Between 1918 and 1924, it had to do, for Warburg, with turning over the record or the “table” from the first to the second, even if it were done with a movement in which it was necessary to go over, fatally, the evil cases of fate. *Pars hostilis*: These are, for example, the paranoiac interrogations of Warburg, when he asks, upon his arrival at Kreuzlingen, what he has been accused of.<sup>246</sup> *Pars familiaris*: This would be, upon his return to Hamburg, the interrogation itself thought of as the *ethos* par excellence of the researcher:

Here is a genuine question of scientific *ethos* [*eine Frage des wissenschaftlichen Ethos*]: do we have the ambition to solicit on the part of students, the exclamation point of admiration or the question mark of modesty [*Fragezeichen der Selbstbescheidung*]?<sup>247</sup>

Another example of this (harmful) disorientation and of the (beneficial) reorientation of the Warburgian *Denkraum* concerns the memorative function of images. Warburg, attending a conference by Binswanger in Kreuzlingen, took some furtive notes, which veer quickly toward his own “psycho-historian” questions. He writes: “Image and sign [*Bild und Zeichen*],” and then: “Phobic selection of the memory function in images [*phobische Auslese der Funktion des Bildgedächtnisses*],” a motif that would again, in the introductory text of *Mnemosyne*, in 1929, be the focal point of the whole reflection on the polarization — terror and attraction, *monstra* and *astra* — of images.<sup>248</sup> The autobiographical fragments written by Warburg in Kreuzlingen all reveal this capacity of memory images to function alternatively as *pars familiaris* and *pars hostilis*: Thanks to Darwin, then to Hegel, Warburg discovered the fundamental principle of an “immanence of the Law” (*Immanenz des Gesetzes*), which was *also* the irrational motive for all his “phobic hallucinations,” for his “demonic images,” and for what he called at one moment his “spirits” or “*Pst-Pst-Ladies* [*Pst-Pst Damen*].”<sup>249</sup> Thus, the scholar in Warburg understood well the

double cultural function of images—*astra* and *monstra*—without receiving any guarantee, as a patient, of escaping this oscillation, which he had, since his childhood, fully experienced:

I have kept from this period [a typhoid fever contracted at the age of six] the images which came to my mind in feverish hallucinations, and by their sharpness they still impress me as much as. . . . From that time comes the fear aroused by the incoherence and the disproportionate force of visual memories [*unproportioniert zusammenhanglose Bildererinnerungen*] or olfactory and auditory sensations, the anxiety which engenders chaos, and the attempt to set up an intellectual order in that chaos [*intellektuell Ordnung in dieses Chaos zu bringen*]*—*that tragic infantile attempt [*tragische Kindheitsversuch*]*—*of the thinking man began therefore very early for me.<sup>250</sup>

Memory would therefore be at one and the same time what fixed Warburg to the harmful part of the irremediable *monstra* and what allowed him to aim for the beneficial part of the *astra* in an “attempt at self-liberation through the memory [*Selbstbefreiungs-Versuch durch die Erinnerung*] of [his] attempts at clarification [*Aufklärungsversuche*] in Renaissance psychology” and of cultural history in general.<sup>251</sup> It is in this sense that the sojourn in Kreuzlingen was not only a digression in madness, but also a construction or a reconstruction, a re-orientation of the mad potency of images on the fate of men, experienced, as never before, in the work carried out in Hamburg between 1914 and 1918.<sup>252</sup> The correspondence between Ludwig Binswanger and Aby Warburg after Warburg’s return to Hamburg<sup>253</sup>—and just before his death—allows us to better grasp that work of reorientation whose result is none other than the *Mnemosyne* atlas, that great collection of panoramic tables: tables or “plates” for redoing what the war had undone and for understanding the great Western “psychomachy” according to the fateful play of the *pars hostilis* of images and their capacity to come, in spite of all, and fully play their role in the *pars familiaris* of our thought.

Binswanger correctly sees, first of all, the meaning of Warburg’s intellectual anamnesis as a prolonging of his “pathic” anamnesis carried out in Kreuzlingen: “What you tell me about the develop-

ments in your work has interested me greatly,” he wrote to the historian on 28 December 1925. And then explains: “This manner of tracing a backwards arc [*dieses Bogenschlagen nach rückwärts*] represents also a forward tension [*ein Aufstreben nach vorwärts*].”<sup>254</sup> Warburg would confirm in these terms: “I have a huge amount to do, my intellectual productivity gives me a great desire to undertake something [*unternehmungslustig*], to the point that my very dear psyche is beginning to weave faithfully the threads of the last ideas that I had before the war.”<sup>255</sup> In June 1927, Warburg reiterated his thoughts: “In the autumn I hope to return to Italy to finish a series of studies that the war had interrupted.”<sup>256</sup>

But these studies, as we know, took an unexpected yet foreseeable turn. An orientation or, rather, a new presentation: It is, in 1926, an “exhibition destined for a conference of German orientalists . . . in relation to the third edition of Boll’s *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*,” spreading to an atlas project that was to “show the migration of astral symbols,” requiring for that a whole photographic logistics—“the Photoclark of Dr. Jantsch, of Uberlingen, [which] allowed me to obtain in very little time an enormous quantity of images, without needing glass negatives”—all this to render visible certain “considerations on the psychology of images.”<sup>257</sup> This work is none other than *Mnemosyne*, regarding which Warburg would soon confide to Binswanger that it was “beginning to push the initial limits” and to make its completion problematic; to which the psychiatrist replied—as a mark of admiration or anxiety?—that Warburg’s new project resembled a “monstrous work [*eine horrende Arbeit!*].”<sup>258</sup>

*Horrend*: “horrific,” “terrifying,” but also “enormous,” “considerable,” “tremendous.” Why so terrifying? Because the project inherent to *Mnemosyne* is none other than a “history of ghosts for big people” begun in the horror of World War I, and it had gone from anxiety to imbalance and then to the author’s madness, and was to end with the nightmarish announcement of the victory of fascism in Europe (figs. 43–44). Why so tremendous? Because the ambition behind *Mnemosyne* was to reedit and piece together again a world that had been dismantled by the disasters of history; to retie the memory threads beyond its episodes, to renew the intellectual cosmography, as though the sphere carried by the mythological Titan, in the



*Farnese Atlas*, destroyed by modern times, were to be entirely recomposed and redrawn anew, afresh, by this seer of time that was Aby Warburg.<sup>259</sup>

It is no accident if the vocabulary used by the historian of images, upon his return from Kreuzlingen, suggested a response by thought to this “dislocation of the world,” which the war represented in his eyes. What, then, are the weapons of thought against those of the military fight that men constantly carried on against themselves? Warburg spoke often about his library—whose entrance was adorned with an inscription in Greek, *MNEMOSYNH*, for *Mnemosyne*—as a “citadel of books” (*Büchertrutzkasten*).<sup>260</sup> In 1927, in an autobiographical text in which the trauma of the Great War once again appears, he sought to play on the two words *arsenal* and *laboratory*.<sup>261</sup> He reiterated there his idea of a “citadel” for thought. But it was not an ivory tower closed on its own triumphs of erudition, as a positivist or idealist scholar might have wished: instead, it was an experimental apparatus making the Warburgian *Denkraum* into something like a laboratory capable of inventing for itself, constantly, new devices for seeing time at work in words, images, and human gestures.

### **The Atlas of Images and the Surveying Gaze (*Übersicht*)**

The *Mnemosyne* atlas of images was, therefore, the last “device for seeing time,” the last apparatus on which Warburg worked from his return to Hamburg in 1924 until his death in 1929. He based himself on the primordial intuition that a regulated redistribution, a new presentation or a problematized reassembling and re-viewing of the materials accumulated during thirty years of erudite research, might be capable of yielding a hitherto unseen heuristic fecundity, a genuine renewal of his “thought space,” of his entire *Denkraum*. It is important to note that the question is as practical as it is theoretical: Theories do not come out, “fully armed,” from scholars’ heads. They depend directly on “memory devices”—of which Michel Foucault updated the ancient vocabulary of the *hypomnèmata*, but whose long history, from antiquity to the Renaissance, Frances Yates had already established in

the context of the Warburg Institute<sup>262</sup>—these “theaters of memory” to which *Mnemosyne* is evidently related.<sup>263</sup>

As a fascinating object, like any brilliant and unfinished work, *Mnemosyne* has caused—by no coincidence, in the context of “post-modern” thought—some mystification, the least of which is not that it might be an “anomic” and mute object, the invention of a sort of “history of art without texts.” This is wrong, not only because long theoretical manuscripts accompany the elaboration of the atlas, notably between 1927 and 1929, and because Warburg planned the publication of two volumes of texts to comment on the arrangement of the illustrated plates,<sup>264</sup> but also because, if the *Mnemosyne* atlas aims for the organization of the Warburgian *Denkraum*, this would signify that it is inseparable from the other elements of that space. It is not by chance that Gertrud Bing, following the death of Warburg—therefore, in the absence of the planned volumes of commentary—thought that the simultaneous publication of *Mnemosyne* and the library catalogue could offer an inestimable tool to “found a cultural science.”<sup>265</sup>

It is unlikely that the atlas of images was thought—and must be thought—in strict relation to the collection of books organized, as we know, along principles that were as disconcerting for a standard librarian as *Mnemosyne* is for a standard iconographer.<sup>266</sup> It was as much a pedagogical concern<sup>267</sup> as a method of research inherent to the work of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in its totality: Like the books of the library, the photographs of the atlas were reproducible objects and, as such, indefinitely displaceable, reusable in different contexts for new problems to appear.<sup>268</sup> Like the other activities of the institute, the constitution of the atlas was conceived by Aby Warburg—we read this in a letter written to Ernst Robert Curtius on 23 May 1929—from the perspective of a collective work (*kollegiale Hilfbereitsschaft*) placed under his authority.<sup>269</sup>

Yet we should not forget that the atlas of images was, in Warburg’s time, a genre that flourished in the field of “cultural sciences.” Far from forming an endangered species, as Barbara Petchenik has shown in the field of geography,<sup>270</sup> the scientific atlases surrounded Warburg from the first years of his intellectual training (which, as we see, takes nothing away from the novelty or the originality of *Mne-*

*mosyne*). This is how the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg has kept on its shelves, until today, a whole series of historical, archaeological, artistic, or anthropological atlases acquired by the historian of images from his youth until the end of his life: such as the *Denkmäler der Kunst zur Übersicht ihres Entwicklungsganges* by August Voit (1847); the *Allgemeiner historischer Handatlas* by Gustav Droysen (1886); the two *Bilder-Atlas* by Richard Engelmann, in 1889 and 1890, devoted to Homer and to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid; the historical atlas of the city of Hamburg composed in 1904 by E. H. Wichmann; the extraordinary microphotographic analysis of Rembrandt by Max Lautner (1910); the *Bibelatlas* by Hermann Guthe (1911); a historico-geographical atlas of postal stamps published in 1922; the *Atlanten zur Kunst* by Wilhelm Hausenstein (1922); the historico-anthropological *Weltatlas* by Westermann revised by Adolf Liebers (1922); the *Kulturgeschichtlicher Atlas* of theater by Carl Niessen (1924–27); a volume of *Bilder zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte* published in 1928 by Guido Schönberger . . .<sup>271</sup>

But Warburg was not a man to want to compose exhaustive encyclopedias, repertories, or inventories (and this is why the picture library of his institute was the work of Fritz Saxl, not his own). He did not look to bend the notion of atlas to that of a dictionary. His concern was quite different: How can we present an argument whose elements are not words or propositions, but possibly distant images in space and in time? How can we go beyond mere iconographic determination, the kind that displays on a double page the antique “source,” on the one hand, and its Renaissance “copy,” on the other, such as we see in his first works, for example, in the thesis on Botticelli?<sup>272</sup> In 1906, we can already see, in the two publications from his conference on the death of Orpheus, the will to modify this system by displaying, on the same plane—on the same plate—the different elements of an iconographical overdetermination that his analysis brought up to date (fig. 65).<sup>273</sup>

We retain the impression—upon a first, paradoxical glance—that this sharp sense of overdeterminations might have come out stronger and more precise from the psychotic ordeal: It is, indeed, upon his return from Kreuzlingen that Warburg shows an inflexible desire to no longer keep with the mere determinations of traditional iconography (one image recalling its source) or with the trenchant dualisms



65. Aby Warburg, *Der Tod des Orpheus. Bilder zu dem Vortrag über Dürer und die Italienische Antike* (1906), Warburg's house, Hamburg. Author photo.

of Wölfflinian formalism (a style such as the “linear,” for example, contradicting its competitor, the “pictorial”). No doubt he had understood, and no doubt thanks to the careful listening of Ludwig Binswanger, that the multiplicities, in which his thought so often risked getting lost, made up the most precious object, the most irreplaceable and central—albeit centrifugal—object of his method. The *Mnemosyne* atlas, with its bizarre packets or constellations of images, has its practical and theoretical reason for being in an exhibition of multiplicities to which each conference, from then, became an important matter. Hence, the exceeding, and even the optical inversion, of usual projections of slides by means of a more experimental apparatus where the speaker and his audience were surrounded, encircled by a multiplicity of images playing like so many visual points of reference in the exposition of his argument. Such was the case, in 1925, for the conference given by Warburg in homage to Franz Boll—and placed under the authority of the psychomachic motif par excellence, *Permonstra ad sphaeram*<sup>274</sup>—then, in 1926, for a presentation on Rembrandt, and again, in 1927, for the conference on the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.<sup>275</sup>

And this is how every time he spoke in public—his attempt to expose an argument—ended up accompanying his exposition of images where the argument sought its congruent visual form rather than its mere retrospective “illustration.” The *Tagebuch* of his library shows multiple traces of this incessant work: on 26 August 1926, for example, Warburg wrote that he was working on “preparing the atlas of images [*Bilderatlas . . . vorbereitet*]” for his conference on Rembrandt; a few weeks later, he evoked the “material of images [*Bildermaterial*]” and the “tableaux” put in place in the reading room.<sup>276</sup> Little by little, all the themes approached by Warburg between 1926 and 1929 systematically accompany another attempt to show them in the form of images mounted and pieced together (figs. 66–67).<sup>277</sup>

It is no exaggeration to say that with the *Mnemosyne* atlas, Aby Warburg would genuinely have found the apparatus that his research seems to have been waiting for: a method capable of manipulating, as interpreting objects, the images themselves, which made up first of all the objects to be interpreted. Warburg was not unaware that Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, had been, since antiquity, a central figure in the *Denkraum* in general, that “thought space,” albeit the



66–67. Reading room of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg, during the *Ovid* exhibition (1927). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

constant object of all conflicts or of all “psychomachies.”<sup>278</sup> By having the name *Mnemosyne* engraved on the front door of his research institute, the historian of images made the atlas of the same name something more than a new chapter in his intellectual development: on the one hand, he spoke of it as a project that was consubstantial to his whole life as a scholar and philosopher—“my project of thirty years,” he wrote in two letters from 1928<sup>279</sup>—and, on the other hand, he made it that interminable work whose three existing versions give us, since they are neither complete nor commented, only a partial idea of its scope.<sup>280</sup>

*Mnemosyne* is, indeed, that strange apparatus—ghostly in its own way—which demands more than it exists. What it demands is admirable and asks us, even today, to consider it like a new departure in the historiography of images, and as such, to interpret it, in the musical sense of the term, to unfold all of its versions, all of its possible resources. What exists remains marked by the completeness and by an anxiety—even an imbalance—that is constantly put into play, a playing by which every configuration is placed in crisis as soon as it is proposed. That is why *Mnemosyne* is in no way what the disciples and biographers of Warburg have sought generously to find in it—that is, a synthesis of his research over its long duration. “A large work of synthesis,” wrote Gombrich,<sup>281</sup> to follow close behind the “official” text on *Mnemosyne* written sometime after the death of the master, and where Fritz Saxl presented the atlas of images as a unitary result of Warburg’s work, grasped, at last, in its totality: “With the atlas, Warburg succeeded in presenting the plenitude of his scientific work, with his research results, on a unitary mode [*in dem Atlas gelingt es Warburg, die Fülle seiner wissenschaftlichen Arbeit und ihre Resultate einheitlich der Forschung vorzulegen*].”<sup>282</sup>

It suffices to look through the plates of *Mnemosyne*—that is, to lose oneself in conjectures about looking for enigmatic relations woven between the elements of this multiplicity of images—to see that Fritz Saxl’s formulation is merely a pious wish. Far from constituting a synthesis and offering itself in a “unit” (*Einheit*), the *Mnemosyne* atlas seems rather to redisperse constantly everything that it nonetheless gathers. Saxl himself thought in 1930 of increasing the number of plates to three hundred and was, as a result, theoretically speaking, obliged to admit the somewhat disconcerting multiplicity of the con-

textualizations and the conflictualizations where any image of *Mnemosyne* is placed before the gaze of another image.<sup>283</sup> Gombrich, too, ends up recognizing the character of “kaleidoscopic permutations” that the montages of Warburg’s atlas take on, before the other authors used the analogies of the labyrinth or of the rebus.<sup>284</sup>

*Mnemosyne* is, therefore, a masterpiece—the overwhelming epistemological bet, a new form of visual knowledge—where everything that is united, gathered, delivers multiplicities of relations that it is impossible to reduce to a synthesis. It is the work of a salutary crisis of the unit and of a necessary crisis of totality, a whole group of tables to gather the parceling of the world of images, beyond any—idealist or positivist—hope of synthesis. The word *Einheit*, used by Fritz Saxl, does not correspond to anything that the *Mnemosyne* atlas offers to our eyes. As for the word *Fülle*, it cannot be understood as a “plenitude,” which in any case never existed in Warburg’s work, but rather like an “abundance,” that exuberance that each plate of the atlas dizzily shows and asks us still to prolong our thought.

In the few significant letters written by Warburg between 1927 and 1929 to explain his atlas project, we never find the words *Synthesis* or *Einheit* but, rather, words or expression that turn around the adverb *zusammen*, that is, the idea, which is more modest and empirical, of a “gathering-together.”<sup>285</sup> Warburg knew well, then, that his collection of images worked like an ensemble of “plates”—or of “panoramic tables”—on which multiple things, often heterogeneous, came to meet each other. This is why he evokes the context of intelligibility of *Mnemosyne* as a “solid and yet mobile, frame that can be articulated [*einem festen Rahmen, der doch zugleich verstellbar ist*]” for his cultural history of survivals from antiquity.<sup>286</sup> In a letter to his friend Jacques Mesnil, from 3 May 1928, he finally evokes the idea of a system—in the technical sense as well as in the conceptual sense—capable of modifying itself before every novelty, every exception, every singularity, every excess: thus, an “extensible” system at the risk of being “interminable” (*ein weitläufiges System*).<sup>287</sup> *Mnemosyne* gathers what the disciplinary boundaries usually separated, as Ernst Cassirer saw,<sup>288</sup> but what it gathers it does not make into any kind of “unit” or even “totality.”

Hence, the crisis of legibility that is experienced each time we think about the signification—the interpretation or the underlying



narrative—of the relations shown by Warburg between images and his atlas. There is no doubt that *Mnemosyne* was, in the eyes of its creator, an iconological tool and a collection of “symbolic migrations.”<sup>289</sup> But we can only wonder about its “systematic use,” toward which Giovanni Previtali was to lean fifty years later.<sup>290</sup> *Mnemosyne* is an iconological tool only when deconstructing the prejudices of iconography itself by opening the hole to symptoms in the overall legibility of symbolic traditions.<sup>291</sup> This supposes an unconventional philology, a philology in need of *Urworte*, constantly modified by concurrent processes of intensification and of neutralization, of polarization and of depolarization, of singularization and of typologization.<sup>292</sup>

*Mnemosyne*, therefore, would be neither the *n*th variant of the *ut pictura poesis*—as a certain relation with the works of Mario Praz, for example, would suggest<sup>293</sup>—nor the radical project of a “history of art without text.”<sup>294</sup> It is a collection of images to show how images act.<sup>295</sup> And how, acting, they come and disturb even our language, which they support and undermine at the same time, with which they support themselves and where they are modified at the same time. Werner Rappl spoke of *Mnemosyne* in terms of a “storm of images” (*Bildersturm*).<sup>296</sup> We could easily prolong this reflection by seeing in the Warburgian atlas a tool for collecting and for reading the historical world like a great tormented “psychomachy,” beyond any positive balance of “images” with “facts.” *Mnemosyne* would be a storm of images in that it brings up what Juvenal, in his *Satires*, rightly called a “poetic storm” (*si quando poetica surgit tempestas*).<sup>297</sup> It is situated, therefore, beyond any “reading of facts,” as Ernst Bloch, Warburg’s contemporary, claimed from an explicitly materialist and political point of view:

The question [at the time of the philosophical debates of the 1920s] was that of the concept of truth: does it justify the world [*die Welt rechtfertigend*] or is it hostile to the world [*zu Welt feindlich*]? Is not everyone in existence deprived of truth? The world as it exists *is not true*. There exists a second concept of truth, which is not positivist, which is not founded on an observation of facticity, *verification through facts*; but that is rather charged with value [*Wertgeladen*], as for example in the concept of “a true friend,” or in Juvenal’s expres-

sion *tempestas poetica*—that is, a storm such as we find in a book, a poetic storm, one that reality will never know, a storm carried out to the end, a radical storm. Thus, a *true* storm, in this case in relation to aesthetics, to poetry—in the expression “a genuine friend,” in relation to the moral sphere. And if this does not correspond to the facts . . . in that case, then *so much the worse for facts* [*um so schlimmer für die Tatsachen*], as old Hegel said.<sup>298</sup>

This crisis of the legibility of facts is not without a certain crisis of narrative—which reveals, in Warburg, the difficulty of writing commentary texts for his atlas—or even a crisis of historicity as such. Warburg was a “seer of time” beyond any chronicle of events.<sup>299</sup> Since Freud, in 1915, had evoked “fates of impulses” (*Tribschicksale*), irreducible to episodes in the subject’s history, Warburg soon envisaged images from the perspective of psychomachies and their subterranean “forces of destiny” (*Schicksalsmächte*).<sup>300</sup> The *Mnemosyne* atlas did not seek, however, to clarify art history, but rather to make it more complex, if not to darken it, by superposing onto it a foliated cartography of memory, or a complex geology of survivals. What goes for this point of view of images goes also for impulses: Thus, Lacan commented on the “fates of impulses” from the perspective of assembling in a montage and of its disassembling or *dismontage*.<sup>301</sup> We can see, in *Mnemosyne*, that the fate of images cannot be equally apprehended in terms of montage, and of disassembling and of constant reassembling, reediting, and piecing together, or re-montage.<sup>302</sup> This is why the Warburgian theory of memory was gradually organized wholly around the operating notion of interval.<sup>303</sup>

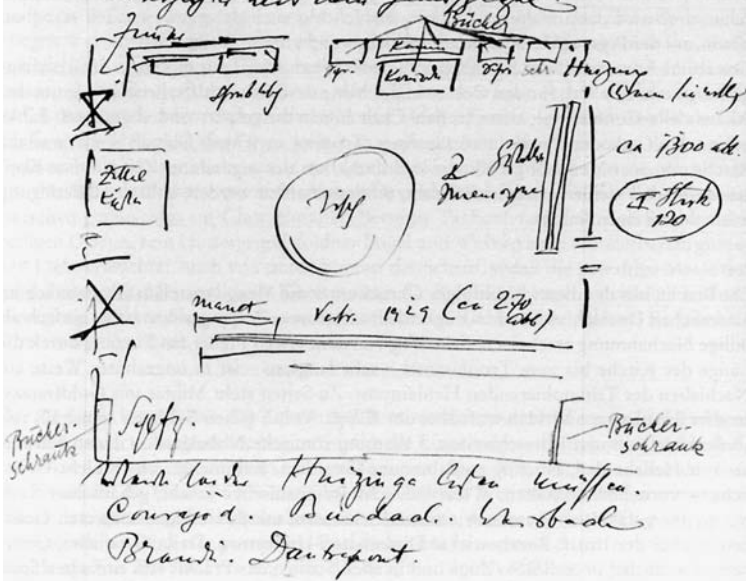
By redoubling art history with a “psycho-historical” point of view on the memory of images—images understood as memory function<sup>304</sup>—Aby Warburg smashed the disciplinary boundaries that still separated the *Kunstgeschichte* from a philosophically constructed *Kulturwissenschaft*, and where the *Mnemosyne* atlas fulfilled its role of conceptual apparatus.<sup>305</sup> Regarding this apparatus, we could say already what Ernst Cassirer had, in 1929, seen in the very strange filing of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg: “From the series of books came, always more clearly, a series of images, of motifs and of original spiritual configurations [*eine Reihe von Bildern*,

von bestimmten geistigen Urmotiven und Urgestaltungen].”<sup>306</sup> Werner Hofmann called these “spiritual configurations” “constellations [*Konstellationen*],” and Sigrid Weigel called them “figures of knowledge [*Wissensfiguren*],” brought to light by a genuine “technique of the mind [*Geistestechnik*].”<sup>307</sup> Claude Imbert, in turn, saw what she called a hitherto unseen analytical space: “The atlas [of Warburg] is, first of all, not the title of a book or the name of a repertory of images; it is the doubled analytical space of a hitherto unseen mental operation.”<sup>308</sup>

Coming from a translator of Gottlob Frege and an epistemologist of “formulary languages,” this last remark deserves to be examined, all the more because Claude Imbert sees in this “analytical space” a truth built outside of “any determinism.”<sup>309</sup> What, therefore, should we call that “analytical space” invented by Aby Warburg in the “non-determined”—yet overdetermined—succession of plates in *Mnemosyne*? It suffices to return to the words that Warburg himself used to describe his own apparatus, or *Denkraum*, of images. On 10 February 1929, in Rome, the historian noted in his *Tagebuch*: “Afternoon, set up [*aufgestellt*] *Mnemosyne* on two hessian fixed frames. We can now survey [*übersehen*] the whole architecture [of the images] from Babylon to Manet, and critique it [*kritisieren*] without further ado.”<sup>310</sup> On the little plan that accompanies the manuscript, we can see just as easily the architecture of the piece where Warburg made his “installation,” as we can the content of the plates shown. Beside the word *Mnemosyne* we can read the indication: “around 1300 reproductions [*ca 1300 Abb(ildungen)*]” (fig. 68).

The “analytical space” of *Mnemosyne*—but with it the Warburgian *Denkraum* in general—was characterized, therefore, by a genuine “consideration of the representability” (*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*) of the knowledge at work, and more precisely by a rigorous work of visual installation. *Aufstellen*: “to put in place” in order to place before the gaze; also “to assemble an apparatus, equipment, a machine,” to put them to work. The operation comes from a technique of visualization that is neither narrative nor explicative, neither contemplative nor mute. It is not explicative (and, as such, the deterministic hopes of a “demonstration *ad oculos*” expressed by scholars from Fritz Saxl all the way to Fernando Checa were inevitably disappointed)<sup>311</sup> because it allows only a “surveying gaze,” a simple *übersicht*. It is neither mute nor senseless (and, as such, the arguments of Benjamin Buchloh on

10 Febr. 1929. Luffahrt Witten. Gelloria Bayreuth. 111 X  
 Karte b. Besten - Calyp abg. die roten Leuchter  
 flucht in Transport. Am die Maschine auf  
 zur Witterung abgefl. Fett kann man  
 die ganze Architektur von Bayreuth bis Meiner  
 Witterung und Witterung des Erdreichs.  
 nach mehreren Tagen Bekanntheit  
 Künster des I. Gammung, Jäger, Wasserfaktoren,  
 Inmangfakt. Substanz in jeder Witterung  
 Witterung hat den fäulnisigen



68. Aby Warburg, Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg (10 February 1929), ink on paper. London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

its “anomic” character seem completely unsuitable)<sup>312</sup> because it allows, and even convokes, a gesture of conceptual criticism (*Kritik*).

In a philosophical sense, this means that the Warburgian “analytical space” is founded on a search for truth—possible to critique in its results, as the author wished, and consequently permanently modifiable—that transgresses the boundaries of thought and of seeing, of discourse and of image, of the intelligible and of the sensible. But which, as a result, transgresses also the canonical, deterministic models of the explanation itself. *Mnemosyne* appears, therefore, to be a theoretical work founded on the crisis of the scholarly explanation. This crisis is in no way the mark of a lack of rationality. It characterizes a logical and gnosiological position formulated in Warburg’s time, born like a *tempesta philosophica* in 1918, in the torment of the Russian front and then in the mud of an Italian prison camp. This is the position of Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Not that it is necessary to get excited again over the mystical silence to which his ultimate and all too famous proposition invites us (“whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”).<sup>313</sup> It is rather the penultimate phrase that we should retain here, when Wittgenstein calls upon us to “surmount the[se] propositions” themselves to “see[s] the world rightly [*Er muß diese Sätze überwinden, dann sieht er die Welt richtig*].”<sup>314</sup>

*Mnemosyne*, in this sense, might appear as that visual “installation” thanks to which what cannot be given a deterministic explanation must be shown, presented through montages, thanks to which an *Übersicht*, or “surveying gaze,” could “surmount these [univocal] propositions” so that we can “see[s] the world rightly.” In his scathing critique launched against positivist determinism, Wittgenstein, of course, always emphasized the presuppositions of language, its use and its rational intentions. For him, “what is essential in the intention, in the drawing, is the image. The image of what forms the intention,” he wrote in *Philosophical Remarks*, before noting, a few pages later: “The meaning of a question is the method by which to answer it. . . . Tell me how you seek, I will tell you what you are looking for.”<sup>315</sup> Should we be surprised, in this context, to read in the *Brown Book* these lines where the explanation—which aims to reduce, to “essentialize” the multiplicity of cases—quickly makes room for a simple presentation, an *Übersicht* of singularities?

Imagine that someone wished to give you an idea of the facial characteristics of a certain family, the So and so's, he would do it by showing you a set of family portraits and by drawing your attention to certain characteristic features, and his main task would consist in the proper *arrangement* [*Zusammenstellungen*] of these pictures, which, e.g., would enable you to see how certain influences gradually changed the features, in what characteristic ways the members of the family aged, what features appeared more strongly as they did so.

It was not the function of our examples to show us the essence of “deriving,” “reading,” and so forth through a veil of inessential features; an inside which for some reason or other could not be shown in its nakedness. We are tempted to think that our examples are *indirect* means for producing a certain image or idea in a person's mind,—that they *hint* at something which they cannot show. [On the contrary] our method is *purely descriptive* [*rein beschreibend*]; the descriptions we give are not hints of explanations.<sup>316</sup>

The example chosen by Wittgenstein is aimed explicitly at the method of “composite faces” by which Francis Galton, following the example of Cesare Lombroso, claimed, in the nineteenth century, to extract the “type” or the “essential figure” of a crime from the superposition or the authoritarian sum—and not the more modest multiplication—of photographs of English criminals.<sup>317</sup> “To rid us of the [essential] images incrustated in our language demands a lot of work,” commented Christiane Chauviré, “and the philosophical problem which troubles us will be dissolved as soon as we arrive at the *Übersicht*, the synoptic vision.”<sup>318</sup> This *Übersicht* that Wittgenstein will praise in his *Remarks on Frazer's “Golden Bough”*—that is, in a field, anthropology, which brings us directly to the anxiety that was Warburg's through the elaboration of his *Mnemosyne* atlas:

I think that the very undertaking of an explanation [*Erklärung*] is already a failure because we must only arrange correctly [*richtig zusammenstellen*] what we *know* and add nothing, and the satisfaction that we try to obtain by the explanation comes by itself. . . . The historical explanation, an explanation in the form of a hypothesis of evolution [*Entwicklung*], is only *one* way of arranging the information—of giving the synoptic table [*Synopsis*]. It is just as possible to consider

the data in their mutual relations and to group them in a general table [*Übersicht*], without making a hypothesis concerning their evolution in time. . . . It is this synoptic presentation [*diese übersichtliche Darstellung*] which allows us to understand, meaning precisely “to see the correlations” [*Zusammenhänge sehen*]. Hence the importance of the discovery of *intermediary terms* [*Zwischengliedern*]. But a hypothetical intermediary term must not in such a case direct our attention towards similitude, the connection of *facts* [*auf die Ähnlichkeit, den Zusammenhang, der Tatsachen lenken*].<sup>319</sup>

Following directly from certain propositions of the *Tractatus*, on the illusion that the laws of nature might be “explanations,”<sup>320</sup> the essay on the *Golden Bough* amounts to saying that in anthropology as well as in aesthetics (and equally in philosophy), the explanation is mixed up with the elimination of strangeness and of the “singularity” that only a comparative presentation is capable of respecting. “Wittgenstein,” writes Jacques Bouveresse, “estimates that the essential merit of people like Darwin or Freud is not to be found in their explicative hypotheses as such, but in their ability to make facts speak themselves by regrouping them and ordering them in a new way.”<sup>321</sup> This is exactly what Warburg had just done in his *Mnemosyne* atlas: He had invented a mode of presentation so that the “surveying gaze” would let new connections or affinities between certain images rise to the surface, a way of making *tempestas philosophica* of unseen problems appear, and of opening new horizons for a cultural history.

*Mnemosyne* thus arranges its anthropological objects—many of which come from mythology, religion, superstition—without ever sacrificing to the scientific myth of exhaustive classification, to the positivist religion of final explanations, or to the “causal superstition”<sup>322</sup> of univocal determinations. In the manner that Warburg founded its practice and, contemporaneously, Wittgenstein founded its reason, that “synoptic presentation” of multiplicities that is the *Übersichtliche Darstellung* is above all important for its heuristic capacity to arouse comparisons. It is important, therefore, for its morphological and critical content, its way of discovering and of constructing a whole world of hitherto unseen affinities or of conflicts. We should not be surprised, since we are speaking of affinities and of morphology, that the explicit rooting of Warburg’s project in Goethe

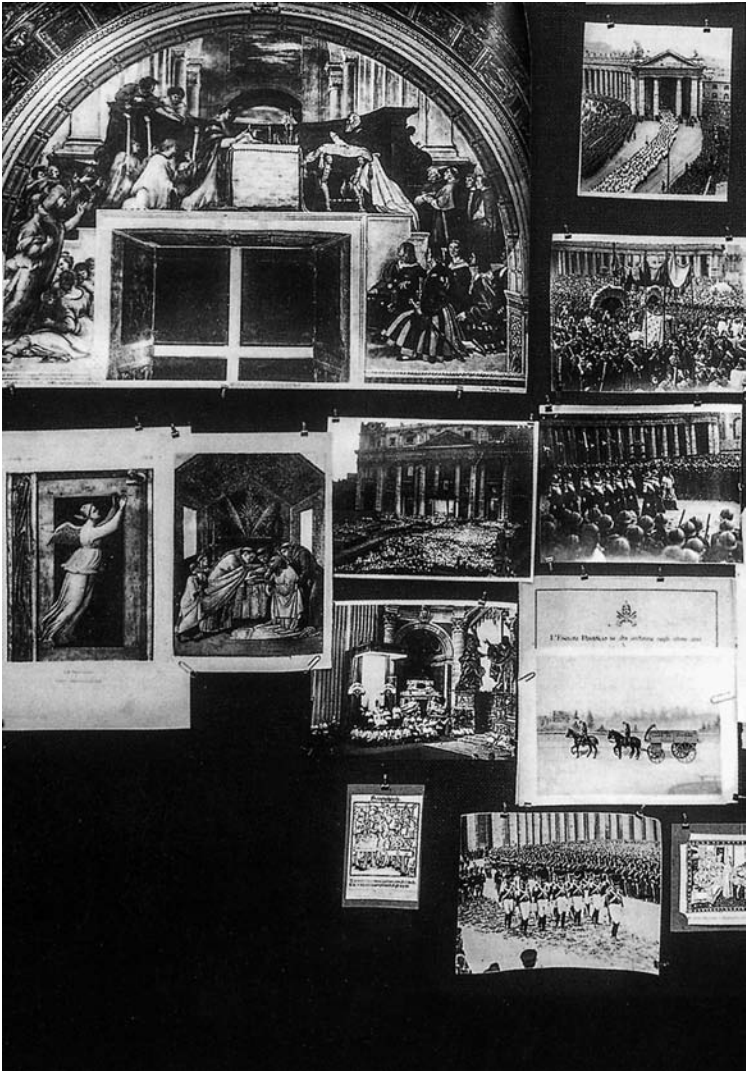
reappears also, although more discretely, in Wittgenstein's argument in which the famous lines of Goethe are cited: "And thus the chorus points to a secret law [*Und so deutet das Chor auf ein geheimes Gesetz*]."323 That "secret law" of images of which no single theory knows the real story—or the synthesis—since it is invented, embodied and transformed in each new affinity, and in each new conflict.

## The Inexhaustible, or Knowledge through Re-montage

The *Mnemosyne* atlas thus seems to be an exemplary apparatus for this *Übersicht* whose epistemological pertinence Wittgenstein—at the very moment when Warburg was working feverishly on his collection of images—justified, in fundamental reflections, as an insight, general survey, or synoptic table. A plate from the *Mnemosyne* atlas is composed, first of all, to guide us in questioning and to make us perceive certain configurations of affinities or conflicts, configurations through which Warburg wagered that the deepest strata of the Western "psychomachy," from antiquity to today, would appear. But the verb *übersehen* has another sense that Wittgenstein did not want to use, yet which is part of any experience of insight. It is the exact counter-motif—the Freudian counter-motif—of its heuristic fecundity: the sense of "omission," if not "blocking out." *Übersehen* is, no doubt, to view with a surveying gaze and to make sure that certain things or relations jump out for us to see; but it is also *not* to see, not to grasp everything, not to remark everything, to omit something that, in the "insight" itself, jumps or escapes us in the depths of the unknown.

It is quite striking that, in the "kaleidoscopic" phenomenology of *Mnemosyne*, everything that "jumps out at our eyes," on the one hand, seems, on the other hand, to plunge into darkness and, consequently, to escape our gaze. Everything that bursts forth as new evidence—a new affinity, a new configuration, new relations—also flees as a new mystery, a new question to confront, and a new problem to construct. For example, I can understand that, on the last plate of *Mnemosyne* (figs. 44 and 69), the Eucharistic ritual photographed in 1929 was put in "configuration" with the *Mass of Bolsena* painted by Raphael in the Vatican; I will suddenly discover that the two xylographs of the "Eu-





69. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* (1927–29), pl. 79 (detail). London, Warburg Institute Archive. Photo: Warburg Institute.

charistic miracles,” reproduced at the bottom of the plate, show a tragic complicity between the dogmatic establishment of the feast of Corpus Domini and the development of anti-Semitism in the Renaissance . . . But, at the very moment when I notice the relations established by Warburg between these images arranged together, all the other relations indicated on the plate escape me: Why, in this place, is there a representation of Hope? Why the catalogue of Japanese corporal punishments and that photograph of *hari-kiri*? Why the railway accidents and the sports column of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*?

The *Übersicht*, that “surveying gaze” devoted to the discovery of new configurations, but also to the dislocation and loss of any unity, characterizes the working of *Mnemosyne* so well because it defines, at bottom, the very condition of the Warburgian mind as such: its potency and its pathos at the same time (as in the mythical character Atlas). In his long letter written in 1921 to the medical personnel at the Bellevue clinic—a name predestined, it seems—Aby Warburg wrote of himself: “My illness consists in losing my capacity to link things according to their simple causal relations [*daß ich die Fähigkeit, die Dinge in ihren einfachen Kausalitätsverhältnissen zu verknüpfen, verlierte*], which is reflected in the spiritual domain as well as the real.”<sup>324</sup> Although in the continuation of this letter, it is a question of “aubergines stuffed in an indefinable manner”—and of the delusional over-interpretation that results—it is the *logos* and the *épistémè* of the great historian that is uttered here in complete lucidity. *Mnemosyne* shows us, indeed, that Warburg’s genius consisted in his being able to link images beyond their “simple causal relations.”

By thinking, as he always did, about the “form of being” of his patient, Ludwig Binswanger said no less: “In him, the rigor of the structure always remains a little in the background of the profusion of materials and of witty insights [*zurück hinter der Fülle des Materials und geistreicher Aperçus*], but this is more sensitive to the listener than to himself. Unfortunately, he does not always manage to formulate logically and verbally the connection that he sensed [*geschauten Zusammenhang*].”<sup>325</sup> It was only after Warburg’s death that Binswanger, reading the obituaries by Fritz Saxl and Ernst Cassirer, managed to express the mix of compassion and admiration that he felt, deeply, in front of the anxious gay science of his patient: “These obituaries seem to be variations on a profound and unfathomable musical

theme [*unergründlich*], that no one could exhaust [*das von niemanden ausgeschöpft werden kann*], but that fills everyone's existence with joy, as soon as one or other measure sounds in the silence of being."<sup>326</sup>

If the *Mnemosyne* atlas is indeed the "legacy of our time" in the field of the historical understanding of images, then we must accept the double condition that it imposes on the knowledge it gives: The inexhaustible in it—the abundance, the opening of new horizons—does not go without the unfathomable of something which remains perhaps forever mysterious, unformulated, and invisible. The inexhaustible element in Warburgian knowledge is not only linked with the prodigious quantity of iconographical material that we see parading in *Mnemosyne*, from Babylonian divinatory livers to press photographs from the first decades of the twentieth century. It has to do, above all, with that capacity to displace the gaze, which made Warburg a real "seer of time," someone who reassembles and re-views lost time (lost but efficient even in our most intimate contemporaneity). Thanks to the "little gesture which consists in displacing the gaze, he makes visible, makes appear what is so close, so immediate, so intimately linked to us that because of that, we do not see it," as Michel Foucault would say of any philosopher as a "diagnostician of time."<sup>327</sup>

But this inexhaustible element implies also its unfathomable counterpart. The *Mnemosyne* atlas, as Werner Rappl saw, remains structured like an *opus incertum*,<sup>328</sup> always between revelation and mystery, donation and withdrawal. Warburg himself was aware of this double condition: "The eternally fleeing pause between impulse and act; it is up to us to prolong as long as possible, with the help of Mnemosyne, this suspended breath [*diese Atempause*]."<sup>329</sup> This is a way of saying that *Mnemosyne* breathes: Breath is held when the unstable equilibrium of an affinity of images is established; breath is taken when the intervals—the black background of the plates—regain their right to the unfathomable. It is something that Warburg himself expressed with a whole vocabulary, an idiosyncratic jargon even, of oscillation and of polarity, as though this were read above all in the texts of the last years of work on *Mnemosyne*, between 1927 and 1929: I am thinking of the manuscript of the *Grundbegriffe*—where we find a definition, brief and striking in equal measure, of culture as a "tragedy of imminent polarity [*Tragödie immanentur Polarität*]"<sup>330</sup>—

and, above all, of the introduction (*Einleitung*) in which Warburg tries to summarize the theoretical project inherent to his *Mnemosyne* atlas:

To introduce, consciously, a distance between oneself and the outside world, is what we can no doubt call the founding act of human civilization; if the space opened in this way [*Zwischenraum*] becomes the substratum of an artistic creation, then the conditions are ready for this consciousness of a distance [*Distanzbewußtsein*] to become a permanent social function which, given the rhythm of the pendular coming and going between matter and Sophrosyne [wisdom], draws the cyclical movement between a cosmology of the image and a cosmology of the sign of which the capacity or powerlessness to direct the mind [*als orientierendes geistiges Instrument*] means no less than the fate of human culture [*das Schicksal der menschlichen Kultur*]. . . . To clarify the critical phases [*kritischen Phasen*] of this process, there would be a lot more to grasp regarding the knowledge of the polar function [*Erkenntnis von der polaren Funktion*] which makes artistic creation oscillate between imagination [*Phantasie*] and reason [*Vernunft*]; the immense documentary material offered in this respect by images formed by man, in particular, has not been made use of. Between imaginary action and conceptual contemplation this groping exploration of the object [*das hantierende Abtasten des Objekts*] takes place, followed by its plastic or pictorial reflection, which we call the artistic act [*künstlerischen Akt*]. . . . The *Mnemosyne* atlas, with its iconographic material, seeks to illustrate the process that we could describe as an attempt to assimilate, through the representation of living movement, a base of performed expressive values [*vorgeprägter Ausdruckswerte*].

The triumph of existence, prefigured by the plastic forms of Antiquity, bursts in the overwhelming opposition between the affirmation of life and the negation of the self [*in der ganzen erschütternden Gegensätzlichkeit von Lebensbejahung und Ich-Verneinung*], and appears to the soul of the ulterior generations which on the pagan sarcophagi see Dionysus leading the orgiastic band, and on the Roman [triumphal] arches, the triumphal march of the emperor. . . . After Nietzsche, there was no more need to pose as a revolutionary to know the essence of Antiquity in the symbol of the hermetic double column

of Apollo-Dionysus. . . . The furious gesticulation that accompanied the procession of the gods of drunkenness, particularly in Asia Minor, embracing a whole spectrum of expressive movements of a humanity shaken by its terrors [*die ganze Skala kinetischer Lebensäußerung phobisch-erschütterten Menschentums*], [and that is an] essential and worrying characteristic [*wesentliches und unheimliches*] of its expressive values, such that they could for example speak, on ancient sarcophagi, to the eye of the artists of the Renaissance.

It is with a singular ambivalence that the Italian Renaissance tried to assimilate this hereditary base of phobic engrams [*diese Erbmasse phobischer Engramme*]. . . . The necessity to confront [*der Zwang zur Auseinandersetzung*] the formal world of predetermined expressive values—whether they come from the past or the present—represents, for any artists concerned with affirming their own manner, the decisive crisis [*die entscheidende Krisis*].<sup>331</sup>

This text remains, without a doubt, painful to read with its long circumvolutions. It reminds me much less, however, of the image of “eel soup [*Aalsuppenstil*]”<sup>332</sup> that Warburg used to describe his own style of writing than of the painful contortions of a Laocoön in the grip of his serpents or an Orpheus put to death by the furious Maenads. For he is taken in the style in which he writes: a labor, a suffering, a “psychomachy.” It is the harsh work of any human culture to enter into “confrontation” (*Auseinandersetzung*), or the “decisive crisis” that puts man in front of—his own perhaps—“monsters.” The inexhaustible and the unfathomable are united, therefore, in Warburg’s work as in what he saw at work in every culture: the “groping exploration,” the tragedy even, in which we find ourselves alternatively oriented and disoriented. This is why the essential (*wesentlich*) is always also, for Warburg, the uncanny (*unheimlich*) par excellence. As Nietzsche had seen, we do not stop coming and going in the “interval” (*Zwischenraum*) that attaches and separates, at the same time, matter and thought, the image and the sign, the orgiastic feast and the ritual of power, Dionysus and Apollo. . . . Any history of our gestures—and, consequently, of our images—is nothing less, according to Warburg’s thinking, than the history of that oscillation.

That *Mnemosyne*, to conclude, resembles a visual apparatus as unfathomable as it is inexhaustible points, perhaps, to nothing other

than its structural affinity with the questions it examines, “tragedy of culture” or “polar function” of images. *Mnemosyne* would be that “decisive crisis” put to work at the heart of historical knowledge to create an opportunity for an embracing gaze on certain “decisive crises” of Western culture. In the same way that someone facing the *monstra* can only proceed by “groping explorations,” the *Mnemosyne* atlas would be an object constructed for that very exploration, with its own material. In this way it is neither a doctrinal summary nor a manual, neither a systematic dictionary nor an archive, neither a recapitulating synthesis nor an analysis, neither a chronicle nor a unilateral explanation. Instead, it is an essay, in the trivial sense of the term—we can try to see if this works or not, if this makes our gaze appear or if it obsesses our gaze, and try once again whatever happens—as in the epistemo-critical sense that was given to it, along the lines of Walter Benjamin, by Theodor Adorno.

The *Mnemosyne* atlas has all the characteristics given by Adorno in his remarkable text, “The Essay as Form”: It “constructs juxtapositions” beyond any hierarchical method; it produces arguments without renouncing its “affinities with the visual image”; it seeks “a greater intensity than discursive thought can offer”; it does not fear “discontinuity” because it sees in it a kind of dialectics at a standstill, a “conflict brought to a standstill”; it refuses to conclude, and yet it knows how to “let the totality light up in one of its chosen or haphazard features”; it always proceeds in an “experimental manner” and works essentially on the “form of its presentation,” which reveals in it a certain link with the work of art, although its issues are clearly not artistic.<sup>333</sup>

The essay appears here like that “open form”—neither teleologically closed, nor strictly inductive, nor strictly deductive—which presents a contingent or fragmentary material in which we gain in legibility what we lose in precision. It “suspends the traditional concept of method” by seeking “in the transitions its content of truth”; as an “anachronistic” genre par excellence, it associates ancient techniques of exegesis to the modern political horizons of criticism. It is not afraid of “overinterpretations” since it is only interested in overdetermined objects. It is slowly revealed to be indissociably “realist” and “dreamy,” seeking in this double perspective to grasp the “true complexity” of human things, in consideration of which its theoretic-

cal potency is incomparable, and “swallows up the theories that are close by,” while it shows itself, on occasion, to be “more dialectical than the dialectic.”<sup>334</sup>

There is no longer any doubt, in this sense, that *Mnemosyne* should be the “legacy of our time.” But we must understand, then, that the atlas of images is to be seen from this epistemo-critical perspective that the light shed by Nietzsche or Wittgenstein, Benjamin or Adorno, has, I hope, made evident. It is in this way a heavy legacy to bear, a legacy that does not simplify our lives since it proposes—very coherently with its own lessons on history and culture—an oscillation rather than a position, a zigzag rather than a rectilinear line. To assume the lesson of *Mnemosyne* is to accept coming and going between the gay science and anxiety: between the inexhaustible of multiplicities (epistemic function in which dispartes of the sensible world are at work) and the unfathomable of survivals (a critical function in which the disasters of memory are at work). A double system, therefore, and double temporality for this visual knowledge of a new kind.

The reception of *Mnemosyne* suffered, too often, from lack of awareness of this epistemo-critical content and the double temporal system that sustains its efficiency. To consider Warburg’s atlas only from the “specialized” perspective of art history is to misrecognize it twice: once in the extension of its epistemic field (which goes well beyond art), and again in the dialectic of its models of time (which go well beyond standard history). Was the Kriegskartothek of 1914–18 only a tool for art historians? Certainly not. Must it be inscribed in the aesthetic debates on “tradition” or “novelty” inherent in that period of the war?<sup>335</sup> This would amount to betraying the dialectical richness of the entangled temporalities that Warburg never ceased to bring to light. And if World War I determines an essential part of our contemporary “disasters,” it does so above all according to the symptomal ways whose economy Ángel González García described in terms of “remains” and of “invisible history.”<sup>336</sup>

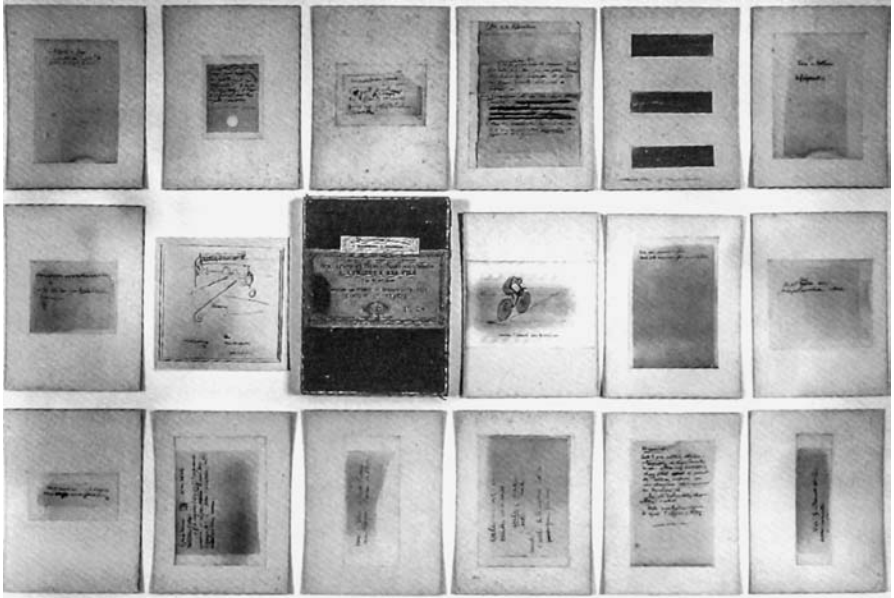
The *Mnemosyne* atlas, unfortunately, did not escape every series of debate whose terms—organized on epistemic and temporal models that Warburg had deconstructed—quickly showed their limits. That the contemporary artistic tastes of Warburg (Böcklin, Franz Marc, Libermann . . .) should have been rather far from avant-garde art<sup>337</sup> takes nothing away from the striking analogies that Werner Hofmann

or Kurt Forster established between *Mnemosyne* and certain works by Alexander Rodchenko, for example.<sup>338</sup> That the plates of the atlas are *not* collages in the strict sense of the term (as Benjamin Buchloh rightly remarked) in no way means that *Mnemosyne* should be cut off from its affinity with the arts of montage in order to be enrolled in the great epochal fight between “postmodernism” and “modernism” (as the same Buchloh tried to show).<sup>339</sup>

The inexhaustible, in the *Mnemosyne* atlas, means nothing other than the capacity to show constantly, to dismantle and to reassemble, heterogeneous bodies of images so as to create unseen configurations and to grasp certain unnoticed affinities or certain conflicts at work. This means that the notion of montage itself is made poorer by being considered only from the perspective of an “artistic” process. Far beyond a *process*, montage is a *procedure* capable of putting into movement new “thought spaces”: This is a way to call and to reconfigure the Nietzschean gay science. Even in the field of aesthetics, montage is characterized by its transversal, paradigmatic, or transdisciplinary nature, as Ernst Bloch saw in 1935 and as critics such as P. Adams Sitney or Hanno Möbius have shown more recently.<sup>340</sup> This is why it is not incorrect to compare *Mnemosyne* with a documentary—and, in its principle, nonartistic—work by August Sander, for example (figs. 41–42).<sup>341</sup> This is why it can be fruitful to recall that while Warburg was putting together his *Notizkästen* of the Great War, Marcel Duchamp was creating for his *Box of 1914* a series of facsimiles, techniques that are *a priori* nonartistic, practiced above all in fields such as archaeology, for example, and convoked to produce, not tableaux, but “plates” valid for the logic of their collection (fig. 70).<sup>342</sup> We know also that when Warburg was working on his *Mnemosyne* atlas, in 1927, Kasimir Malevich exhibited in Berlin not only admirable tableaux, but also tables conceived according to the theoretical stakes of an *Übersicht* of cultural history in which suprematism found its place in the midst of texts—translated into German—outlines and photographic montages (fig. 71).<sup>343</sup>

We can remember that the affinity—which is very surprising at first glance—between Warburg and Marcel Duchamp was brought to the fore, somewhere between the chrono-photographs of Étienne-Jules Marey and the collages of Georges Braque, by one of the most passionate disciples of Warburg himself, William Heckscher.<sup>344</sup> Be-

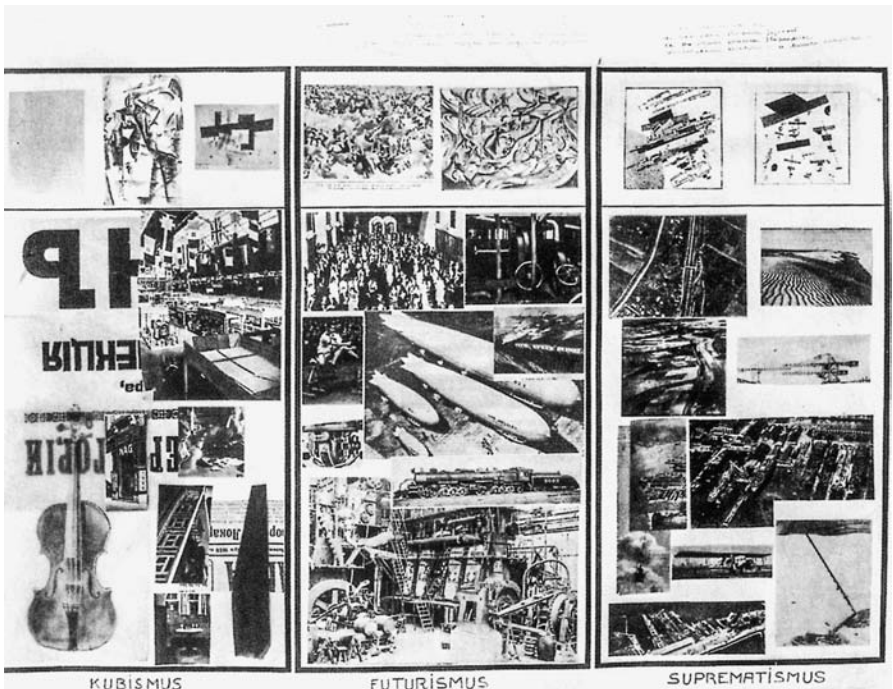




70. Marcel Duchamp, *The Box of 1914* (1913–14), photographic facsimiles. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. Photo: DR. © Succession Marcel Duchamp/ADAGP, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2018.

yond the differences in process, the common procedure brought to the fore in this kind of affinity concerns first of all the critique of the tableau implemented by any atlas undertaking—like those “Boxes” by Duchamp—to the advantage of what the author of *Mnemosyne* called a comparative *Übersicht* of images. From 1912—which William Heckscher identifies as the crucial moment of the “invention of iconology”<sup>345</sup>—we find in Warburg’s correspondence the magnificent expression, reminiscent of old French, *tableau labil*, which refers to a little apparatus conceived for managing the presences and absences of scholars during the tenth international congress of the history of art, held in Rome.<sup>346</sup> Was this not already a search for an alternative to the intangible frame of the fixed tableau, before the mobile plates of the atlas show their full efficiency as “multiple topographies”—as Wolfram Pichler and Gudrun Swoboda have said—and dynamic montages?<sup>347</sup>

Bernd Stiegler has spoken of montage as a *Kulturtechnik*, which allowed him to envisage, from the perspective of the *longue durée*, the photographic procedures of the 1920s and 1930s, beyond any traditional questions of art and of industry, of the “subjective” expression and of “objective” recording.<sup>348</sup> This point of view allows us, in any case, to situate *Mnemosyne* in a context in which photographic montages play a decisive role in the presentation—but also in the constitution itself—of the knowledge at this time organized into collections.<sup>349</sup> It is a whole construction site that needs to be opened here, for example, by comparing the exhibitions of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg with the numerous photographic exhibitions contemporary to them in Germany,<sup>350</sup> or by noting the concomitance of the *Mnemosyne* atlas with the synoptic presentations of



71. Kasimir Malevich, *Analytic Charter* (c. 1925), montage of photographs, documents, photomechanics, pencil and ink drawings on paper, 63.5 × 82.6 cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art. Photo: DR.

knowledge in the books of Le Corbusier and of Amédée Ozenfant, the pedagogical montages of the Bauhaus in Weimar and of VKhUTEMAS in Moscow, or the extraordinary “typo-photographic” compositions of László Moholy-Nagy in his books *Malerei Fotografie Film* or *Von Material zu Architektur*.<sup>351</sup>

The art historian is undoubtedly right to take into account the formal procedures and their underlying themes: As such, the *Arbeitskollagen* of Karl Blossfeldt or the documentary series of August Sander and Walker Evans<sup>352</sup> can easily be distinguished, by their techniques as well as by their central issues, from a publication like the dadaist *Handatlas* of 1919–20 or the albums of Hannah Höch and of George Grosz,<sup>353</sup> not to mention the ulterior uses of documentary photography—archaeological, ethnological, geographical, or historical—by the surrealists.<sup>354</sup> But it happens that an “epistemo-critical” approach, as Walter Benjamin or Ernst Bloch claimed, must bring to light both the procedures and the paradigms beyond simple procedures: This is why Benjamin, in his “Little History of Photography,” accounts for the great photographic mutation of the first two decades of the twentieth century by uniting the names of Eugène Atget and August Sander, Germaine Krull and Karl Blossfeldt, but also László Moholy-Nagy, even Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin.<sup>355</sup> This great mutation—beyond the famous “decline of the aura”—is none other than the *Übersicht*, a procedure by which photography took part in knowledge by finding new forms for the presentation, even the constitution of that knowledge.

The *Mnemosyne* atlas marks, evidently, a crucial moment, albeit unknown to Benjamin in 1931, in this great “epistemo-critical” mutation. Its fundamental mobility and its perpetual concern for “perfectibility”—made possible by the use of the little pincers with which Warburg could arrange an image provisionally before others’ eyes on his black screen before changing its place—has to do exactly with the procedure of montage Benjamin spoke of in his text on technological reproducibility.<sup>356</sup> That the author of *The Arcades Project*, in this reflection, permitted himself to “pass” almost immediately from Atget to Charlie Chaplin gives us another clue that montage was indeed envisaged by him beyond any specificity of the medium.<sup>357</sup> We should not be surprised, therefore, that, in this context, the efficiency of the *Mnemosyne* atlas was often envisaged through a cinemato-

graphic paradigm (and not his procedure, which Warburg never used or commented upon), as we find in the reflections of Giorgio Agamben, Philippe-Alain Michaud, or Karl Sierek.<sup>358</sup>

We know, however, after the famous “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” written by Walter Benjamin for his book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, that the bringing to light of a configuration of original thought never goes without a “dual insight”—a dialectic—in which the truth content of an object proceeds from “the remotest extremes and the apparent excesses of the process of development,” where we find “the sum total of all possible meaningful juxtaposition of such opposites.”<sup>359</sup> This point of view is found already in the Warburgian atlas itself—for example, with the crucial motif of “polar oscillation”—but also should be applied to every reflection on its implications. If the *Mnemosyne* atlas appears to be like an “origin” in Benjamin’s sense—meaning “an eddy in the stream of becoming,”<sup>360</sup> a term we have, for our part, indexed in the expression *tempestas poetica* or *philosophica*—we should attempt to follow the movements beyond its pure factuality or its pure internal philology. In other words, in its memory as well as in the desire it sets in motion.

That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete. . . . Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their [pre- and post-history; *Vor- und Nachgeschichte*].<sup>361</sup>

The *Vorgeschichte* of the *Mnemosyne* atlas supposes a considerable temporal arc, as I have tried to show, from the ancient divinatory “tables” to baroque “theaters” of memory. In the limits of the age of photography, William Heckscher, first of all, recalled the importance of the chrono-photographic plates of Étienne-Jules Marey, while Philippe-Alain Michaud evokes the first cinematographies of the human gesture of dancing.<sup>362</sup> Contemporary to *Mnemosyne* would be, evidently, the considerable development of filmic procedures tending to produce something like an *Übersicht* in movement, as we see in

the synoptic apparatuses of Abel Gance or the synchronic montages of René Clair, Walter Ruttmann, Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean Vigo or László Moholo-Nagy.<sup>363</sup> As for the *Nachgeschichte* of the Warburgian atlas, we find it evoked in numerous contemporary examples, from Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker to Basilio Martín Patino, or from Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi to Harun Farocki.<sup>364</sup>

This “post-history” of the *Mnemosyne* atlas gives us a tangible embodiment of its formal fecundity, of its character as an inexhaustible “gay science.” The field of contemporary art is crossed by this from every direction: I am thinking not only of the paradigm of the cartographic atlas that we see in Robert Smithson, Alighiero e Boetti, and so many other artists,<sup>365</sup> and not only in the artistic interpretations of Warburg, in the form of direct references, even performances or “digitized” prolonging.<sup>366</sup> I am thinking above all about the fact that some of the artists who were the most radical in their formal choices—Josef Albers or Ad Reinhardt in the field of abstract painting, or Sol LeWitt in that of minimalist sculpture—will have felt, at one point, the structural need to acquire photographic atlases.<sup>367</sup> I am thinking also of two great artists who took the inexhaustible element of the atlases at face value: Marcel Broodthaers, with the methodical humor of the gay science<sup>368</sup> (fig. 72), and Gerhard Richter, with the impressive scope of his *Atlas* created over a long period.<sup>369</sup> I am thinking, finally, of the considerable production of photographic books among contemporary artists, or their use of impersonal archives, as we see in the magnificent collection entitled *Evidence* by Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, in the *Album* of Hans-Peter Feldmann, in the books and films of Ulrike Ottinger, or in the anonymous photographs collected in *Floht* by Tacita Dean.<sup>370</sup> Not to mention, within this inexhaustible profusion, the photographic “table” apparatuses reinvented by Christian Boltanski or Robert Filliou, Annette Messager or Sophie Calle, Robert Rauschenberg or John Baldessari, Dennis Oppenheim or Victor Burgin, Hanne Darboven or Lothar Baumgarten, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Susan Hiller or Joëlle Tuerlinckx . . .

We notice, however, that this intense production of collections was, thus far, interpreted in terms of archives, according to a “post-modern” conceptual framework in which the *Mnemosyne* atlas was, besides, quite often convoked.<sup>371</sup> Yet, some essential differences separate the atlas of images from an economy of the archive. Let us recall



72. Marcel Broodthaers, *Untitled, Panel A* (1974), photographic montage on paint, 180 × 220 cm. Lost work. Photo: DR. © 2018 The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SABAM, Brussels.

that *Mnemosyne* is made up of around a thousand images, which is very little if we think of the archives—the picture library—that Warburg and Saxl had built up over decades in the context of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg. The atlas chooses, at the very moment where the archive refuses to choose for a long time. It aims at an argument and proceeds by means of violent *sections*, where the archive renounces the argument and imposes its unembraceable mass. In this sense, Warburg put the Nietzschean gay science to work, just as Michel Foucault claimed it for the use of historians:

History becomes “effective” to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. “Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional founda-

tions and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.<sup>372</sup>

In short, the atlas gives us an *Übersicht* in its discontinuities, an exposition of differences, where the archive drowns the differences in a volume that cannot be exposed to sight, in the continuous mass of its compacted multitude. The atlas offers us panoramic tables, where the archive forces us first of all to get lost among the boxes. The atlas shows us the trajectories of survival in the interval of images, where the archive has not yet made such intervals in the thickness of its volumes, in piles or in bundles. There would, of course, be no atlas possible without the archive, which precedes it: The atlas offers in this sense the “becoming-sight” and the “becoming-knowledge” of the archive. It extracts from it the anthropological salience right up to the emphasis of pathos that Foucault, in the text quoted above, refers to the necessary dramatization of knowledge and, therefore, to a certain position-taking in the question of memory, of genealogy, and of archaeology.<sup>373</sup> Hence, the pioneering role of an exhibition like *Museum vom Menschen*, in 1996, produced in Vienna by Gerhard and Nora Fischer, starting from a very precise reflection on Warburg’s *Bilderatlas*, well before “archive fever” touched the world of international exhibitions.<sup>374</sup>

The archive asks us, of course, to confront the question of the inexhaustible as well as that of the unfathomable. But the atlas, by its own choices—or rather, by its montages—makes visible both the inexhaustible and the unfathomable as such. In consideration of which it is capable of releasing the differences, of extricating their uncanniness. The philologist who spends his life in an archive, becoming familiar with it little by little, often loses as a result that feeling of the uncanny, while the passing spectator of that archive—and this goes as much for the spectator in a museum who passes quickly in front of a work by On Kawara or Hanne Darboven, for example—gives up on patience and loses interest in research. An atlas, however, gives us the possibility of exercising that “surveying gaze” of differences and their strangeness. It is in this way that the atlas, without fail, transforms the gay science into an anxious gay science.

It is impossible, facing *Mnemosyne*, to escape this anxiety, which constitutes the motive force of these configurations in which the War-

burgian *Denkraum* itself is constituted. We would not understand, without that fundamental anxiety of the atlas—in other words, its perpetual movement, its oscillation, its tragic vision of culture—that human memory is merely an immense field of conflicts in which ambivalences and “decisive crises” come one after another, psychical latencies and symptomal explosions, silences of the body and gestural elegance, dream images and passages to political acts.<sup>375</sup> What the atlas reveals in the great body of cultural archives is nothing other than that “psychomachia” which makes us see, at every moment, something like the symptom of a conflict at work, as much on the psychical level as in the torments of political history. This is why Warburgian “survival” (*Nachleben*) must be understood in the agnostic perspective of a “great war” of images.<sup>376</sup>

On 18 August 1928 Aby Warburg noted in his diary the extent of the anxiety that filled his work on the *Mnemosyne* atlas: “Morning, desperate fight with the company of specters [*Kampf mit der Geister Compagnie*]; 1051 images must be installed.”<sup>377</sup> In his psychiatric anamnesis from 1921—attached by Ludwig Binswanger to his patient’s file—Heinrich Embden reserved an equally peculiar fate, in Warburg, for that “deadline anxiety” (*Terminangst*) that made him “afraid of finishing something [and] of postponing all of his conferences [or] publications,” inducing “very complicated rituals” as well as “physical pains and extreme fatigue.”<sup>378</sup> It is, in short, as though a fundamental fear had accompanied Warburg from his conception of the origin of images—and of culture in general—made up of an attempt to put at a distance, with fear, the all-too-close chaos of the *monstra*<sup>379</sup> to his own incapacity to close a constellation of *astra* or some conceptual system.

A fear suffered (by interposed symptoms), a fear enacted (by composed images), or a fear thought (by the piecing-together of the atlas): It accompanies Warburg in each of his works, it invades his *Denkraum*, and nestles in each of its “details.” We should not be surprised that this fear opens and crosses the *Mnemosyne* atlas right up to the last plate. Some preliminary fear was needed for whole societies to want to question their fate by tearing the liver from sacrificed sheep and to claim to “read” in it the decisions of the heavens, as we see on plate 1 (figs. 3–4). Some persistent fear was needed, too—Warburg’s own—for the very last plate (figs. 44 and 69) to pass dizzily, but



logically, from the mystical body (the *hoc est corpus meum* of the Eucharistic ritual) to the body of a dictator (Mussolini and the fascist ritual).<sup>380</sup> Goya's work is certainly the most striking absence in the *Mnemosyne* atlas.<sup>381</sup> But the atlas will have ended up relating to a collection of *Desastres* and a visual "workroom" for an undertaking similar to *Crowds and Power*, in which fear and thought are united to form a "politics of the mind," as Charlotte Schoell-Glass insisted,<sup>382</sup> or a "political iconology" whose premises Michael Diers noted in Warburg, not by chance, at the time of the Great War.<sup>383</sup>

This "political iconology" appears today to be an essential part of the legacy of Warburg.<sup>384</sup> Its visual form—the atlas, the *Übersicht*—corresponds, no doubt, or rather responds, to the crisis of narrative that saw, at the beginning of the twentieth century, epic constructions dissolve and photographic or cartographic procedures take over at the heart of the field of literature.<sup>385</sup> This is what created the need for the photographic "Albums" of the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez during the Spanish Civil War, or the *Scrapbook* of William Heckscher and the *Kriegsfibel* of Bertolt Brecht during World War II.<sup>386</sup> It is also, to a large extent—the extent of memory and disaster—what encouraged writers like Claude Simon, Georges Perec, or W. G. Sebald to invent literary forms that seem almost to support the practice of atlases of images.<sup>387</sup>

The same goes, of course, for the field of visual arts. Aby Warburg was no doubt aware of the photographic montages published by John Heartfield in 1918 in the context of the dadaist movement, before multiplying, in the leftist press, following Hitler's failed putsch of 1923, its visual charges against National Socialism.<sup>388</sup> One of the photomontages (fig. 73) evokes the plate of *Mnemosyne* that concerns the notion of the *Handbarmachung* of images, that is to say, their capacity to be "within hand's reach," to be potent while they can be manipulated and rearranged at leisure (fig. 17).<sup>389</sup> In the two cases, cosmic fate (in Warburg) and political history (in Heartfield) are figured by a series of playing cards arranged on the black background of the plate as though they were on the table of a clairvoyant, very erudite in Warburg or very mischievous in Heartfield. Where Warburg shows us the secular cortège of the "Muses in exile" and the series of Tarot cards of Marseille, beginning with the favorable figure of the Buffoon, Heartfield seeks to jeer at the "Thousand Year Reich" claimed



73. John Heartfield, *Das tausendjährige Reich* (1934), photographic montage, 46 × 34.5 cm. Berlin, Akademie der Künste. Photo: DR. © 2018 The Heartfield Community of Heirs/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

by Hitler by representing a house of cards just about to collapse, and in which the dictator appears on the right of the image, as boastful and evil, in the card of the Drummer (*der Trommler*).

Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory. We can, henceforth, understand that the atlas of images that bears her name is the visual

form, the operating form of an anxious memory—even a fear—born of the collision of the Now with the Formerly, the present disaster with the *longue durée* of the “psychomachy,” that “history of ghosts for big people” which constantly survives and is constantly reactualized in our history. The atlas of images would be, more precisely, the visual collection of an anxious memory transformed into knowledge, whether in the space of historical thought, in artistic activity, or in the public and political space.<sup>390</sup> It is an illustrated atlas—precise in its design, complete, documented, overwhelming—that Thomas Geve, a child interned from the age of thirteen in Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and then Buchenwald, decided to compose in 1945 when he was still too weak to be evacuated from the camp by the Allies.<sup>391</sup> It is a kind of atlas mixing drawings and photographs that the Polish painter Władysław Strzemiński—the former assistant of Kasimir Malevich at the School of Fine Arts in Witebsk—decided to devote, between 1940 and 1945, to the fate of his “friends the Jews.”<sup>392</sup> And it is through the mediation of photographic atlases that artists Naomi Tereza Salmon and Esther Shalev-Gerz found a possible response to the terrifying archaeology of the Buchenwald camp.<sup>393</sup>

Is Mnemosyne, therefore, a melancholic goddess?<sup>394</sup> No doubt, but not only that. The “history of ghosts for big people” is found everywhere in On Kawara or Christian Boltanski, in the *Kulturwissenschaftliche* of Hanne Darboven, *The Russian Ending* by Tacita Dean, *Fait* by Sophie Ristelhueber, or *Recall* by Susan Hiller.<sup>395</sup> But there are also atlases that turn their re-montages—their reediting, piecing together, re-viewing—into taking a position with the utmost virulence, protestations in action, “psychomachies” claimed as such: We see this in Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas* and also in his little work *War Cuts*; we see it, too, in Sigmar Polke, but also, in a methodical manner, in Hans Haacke and Alfredo Jaar, Harun Farocki and Pascal Convert, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Pedro G. Romero and Walid Raad.<sup>396</sup> These artists remind us today—as Warburg did throughout his work—that Mnemosyne, although mother of the Muses, is nonetheless not one of them. To invoke her is to come back to the question that far precedes and goes well beyond the field of “art.”

Daughter of Uranus (the sky) and Gaia (the earth), Mnemosyne personifies a more fundamental anxiety, which brings into question our “thought space” facing history, making us come and go, cease-

lessly, between the *monstra* and the *astra*, calling our reminiscences from the past to the heart of our fears or our present fights, and our desires of the future. What future? How should we “read” the configurations—or the fragile houses—of playing cards on the table of fate? “Knowledge / as / prophecy [*Wissenschaft / als / Prophetie*]” we read on three well-separated lines, in one of Warburg’s manuscripts accompanying the elaboration of *Mnemosyne*.<sup>397</sup> What, therefore, was the thinker—philosopher or artist, historian or metapsychologist of cultures—hoping to achieve in this constant re-montage—reediting, re-viewing and piecing together—of images on the black tableaux of his atlas, beyond the possibility that, between the “surveying gaze” (*Übersicht*) and the “critique” (*Kritik*) constantly aimed at him and at the world, something of the “fires to come” of history would appear to him? That is the difficult—and dialectical—work of anyone who attempts to see time.



# Bibliographical Note

This work consists of the introductory text from the catalogue for the exhibition entitled *Atlas ¿Como llevar el mundo a cuestras?* (Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back? trans. M. D. Aguilera and S. Lillis) that I organized at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, November 2010–February 2011), an exhibition that traveled to the ZKM-Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe and then to the Sammlung Falckenberg in Hamburg.

This exhibition showed (with notable variations between the exhibition venues) works by Francesc Abad, Ignasi Aballí, Vito Acconci, James Agee, Vyacheslav Akhunov, Josef Albers, Alighiero e Boetti, Louis Aragon, Hans Arp, John Baldessari, Gianfranco Baruchello, Georges Bataille, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Samuel Beckett, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Benkard, Marc Bloch, Barbara Bloom, Karl Blossfeldt, Erwin Blumenfeld, Mel Bochner, Christian Boltanski, Jorge Luis Borges, Brassai, Bertolt Brecht, George Brecht, André Breton, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Broun, Jacob Burckhardt, Victor Burgin, Sophie Calle, Lewis Carroll, James Coleman, Pascal Convert, Salvador Dalí, Hanne Darboven, Moyra Davey, Tacita Dean, Guy Debord, Fernand Deligny, Ernesto De Martino, Marcel Duchamp, Albrecht Dürer, Max Ernst, Walker Evans, Öyvind Fahlström, Harun Farocki, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Robert Filliou, Peter Fischli, Alain Fleischer, Benjamin Fondane, Ernst Friedrich, Thomas Geve, Alberto Giacometti, Jean-Luc Godard, Francisco de Goya, Georges Grosz, Hans Haacke, Ernst Haecel, Raymond Hains, Richard Hamilton, Mike Handel, John Heartfield, Susan Hiller, Hannah Höch, Roni Horn, Douglas Huebler, Asger Jorn, On Kawara, Mike Kelley, Paul Klee, Arthur Köpcke,

Germaine Krull, John Latham, Le Corbusier, Zoe Leonard, Sol LeWitt, El Lissitzky, Ghérasim Luca, Man Ray, Piero Manzoni, Étienne-Jules Marey, Master of the Codex Coburgensis, Gordon Matta-Clark, Paul McCarthy, Henri Michaux, László Moholy-Nagy, Matt Mullican, Michael Najjar, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Ulrike Ottinger, Amédée Ozenfant, C. O. Paeffgen, Jean Painlevé, Giuseppe Penone, Sigmar Polke, Walid Raad, Robert Rauschenberg, Chris Reinecke, Gerhard Richter, Arthur and Vitalie Rimbaud, Pedro G. Romero, Charles Ross, Dieter Roth, Thomas Ruff, August Sander, Thomas Schmit, Franz Schubert, Kurt Schwitters, W. G. Sebald, Meyer Shapiro, Claude Simon, Robert Smithson, Alfred Stieglitz, Władysław Strzemiński, Larry Sultan, Antoni Tàpies, Paul Thek, Stefan Themerson, Rosemarie Trockel, Kurt Tucholsky, Isidoro Valcarcel Medina, Karl Valentin, Marc Vaux, Jacques Villeglé, Simon Wachsmuth, Franz Erhard Walther, Aby Warburg, David Weiss, Franz West, Christopher Williams.

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[In the many instances where the author quotes from French translations of texts originally written in other languages, I have used English-language editions, where available, in this English translation. In some cases, wherever it seemed more appropriate to keep with the wording of the French translation used by Didi-Huberman, I have translated directly from the French translation as it appears in Didi-Huberman's original text.—Trans.]

# Notes

## I. Disparates

1. Cf. E. Panofsky, (1924) 1983, 17–23, 61–89.
2. L. B. Alberti, 2004, III.33, p. 123. Cf. M. Baxandall, 1971, 37–50, 151–71; M. Baxandall, (1972) 1985, 202–11.
3. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002b, 127–41; 2009, 238–56.
4. C. Baudelaire, (1857a) 1976, 329.
5. Meaning literally “as good as an image” and equivalent to the English phrase “as good as gold.”
6. W. Benjamin, (1927–40) 1999, 456–88; H. Blumenberg, 1981.
7. W. Benjamin, (1927–40) 1999, 462–63.
8. W. Benjamin, 1933a (1999), 722.
9. W. Benjamin, (1916–39) 2001, 145.
10. W. Benjamin, (1933a) 1999, 722.
11. A. Warburg, (1902) 1990, 106.
12. A. Warburg, (1927–29) 2003.
13. E. Bloch, (1935) 1978, 9.
14. Cf. G. Neumann and S. Weigel, eds., 2000.
15. Cf. S. Flach, I. Münz-Koenen, and M. Streisand, eds., 2005.
16. Cf. H. Belting, (1998) 2003.
17. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 1997.
18. L. B. Alberti, 2004, III, 33, p. 240.
19. “*Beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d’une machine à coudre et d’un parapluie*” (Lautréamont, [1869] 1970, 224–25).
20. A. Warburg, (1927–29) 2003, 9.
21. *Ibid.*, 8.
22. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 452–505.
23. Cf. E. H. Gombrich, 1986, 285.
24. Cf. L. Binswanger and A. Warburg, (1921–29) 2007.
25. Cf. L. Binswanger, (1933b) 2000.
26. W. Benjamin, 1933a (1999), 722.



27. A. Warburg, (1927-29) 2003, 10.
28. Notably under the following call numbers: FEI, FME, and FMH.
29. Cf. A. Warburg, (1912) 1990, 197-220.
30. A. Warburg, (1920) 1990, 245-94.
31. A. Warburg, (1926) 1998, 559-65.
32. A. Warburg, 1925a, 2-5. Cf. F. Boll, 1903; F. Boll and C. Bezold, 1911 and (1917) 1966; F. Saxl, (1927-28) 1957, 58-72; (1936) 1957, 73-84; J. Seznec, (1940) 1980, 56-61; M. Ghelardi, 1999, 7-23; M. Bertozzi, 1999; M. Bertozzi, 2008, 97-113; D. Stimilli, 2005, 13-36.
33. Cf. A. Warburg, 1925b.
34. Cf. E. Wind, (1931) 1983, 21-35.
35. Cf. A. Warburg, (1912) 1990, 197-220; H. Belting, 2008.
36. A. Warburg, (1927-29) 2003, 124-25.
37. Cf. M. Rutten, 1938, 36-70; G. Contenau, 1940, 235-83; M. Mani, 1959-67; J. Nougayrol, 1968b, 31-50; J.-W. Meyer, 1983, 522-27; R. Leiderer, 1990 (with an anatomical atlas).
38. Cf. J. Bottéro, 1974, 100-111.
39. *Ibid.*, 123-24.
40. *Ibid.*, 134-43 (ritual), 143-68 (empiricism), and 168-93 (rationalization). Cf. C. J. Gadd, 1966, 21-34.
41. Cf. M. Jastrow, 1908, 646-76; J. Nougayrol, 1966, 6-19; 1968a, 25-81; E. Reiner, 1995; T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn, eds., 1999.
42. J. Nougayrol, 1968a, 32.
43. Cf. J. Bottéro, 1997, 233-51.
44. Cited by G. Contenau, 1940, 262.
45. Cf. F. Fossey, 1905; A. Boissier, 1905-6; V. Scheil, 1917, 145-48; 1930, 141-54; J. Nougayrol, 1941, 67-80; 1945, 56-97; 1950, 1-40; 1968a, 27-45.
46. Cited by J. Aro and J. Nougayrol, 1973, 50.
47. U. Koch-Westenholz, 2000, 493-540 (word index).
48. J. Nougayrol, 1968a, 40.
49. Cf. G. Manetti, 1993, 1-13.
50. Cf. J. Bottéro, 1974, 144-93.
51. Cf. G. Contenau, 1940, 242; J. Nougayrol, 1968a, 34.
52. Cf. A. Boissier, 1935; G. Contenau, 1940, 269-83; J. Bottéro, 1974, 70-72.
53. Cf. F. Cumont, (1906) 2006, 37-68, 253-96; F. Boll and C. Bezold, 1911.
54. Cf. G. Contenau, 1940, 235-37.
55. Cf. A. Merx, 1909, 436-43.
56. Cited in *ibid.*, 429-35.
57. Cited by R. B. Onians, 1951, 87.
58. *Ibid.*, 42-43, 109-15.
59. Cf. F. Lissarrague, 1979, 92-108.
60. A. Bouché-Leclercq, (1879-82) 2003, 136-37. Cf. R. Bloch, 1984, 36.

61. Cf. G. Bachelard, (1938) 1989, 13–22.
62. Cf. R. Bloch, 1963, 15–16.
63. Plato, *Timaeus* 71a–d, in Plato, 1977.
64. Cf. J. Pigeaud, 1989, 50–53.
65. Plato, *Timaeus* 72c–d, in Plato, 1977.
66. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2006.
67. Plato, *Timaeus* 71d–72d, in Plato, 1977.
68. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244c, in Plato, 1973.
69. Plato, *Phaedrus* 244b, in *ibid.*
70. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 273–362.
71. Cf. A. Giacometti, (1916–65) 2007, 481; (1948) 2007, 86–94; J. Beuys and V. Harlan, (1986) 1992, 107–11.
72. W. von Bartels, 1910; E. Galeotti-Heywood, 1921; A. Grünwedel, 1922, 128–31; G. Furlani, 1928, 243–85.
73. Cf. G. Colonna, 1984, 171–84; L. B. Van der Meer, 1987, 17–19; G. Rocchi, 1993, 9.
74. Cf. G. Dumézil, 1987, 636–40.
75. Cf. A. Bouché-Leclercq, (1879–82) 2003, 867–70; A. Grenier, 1946, 293–98; A. Maggiani, 1982, 53–88; L. B. Van der Meer, 1986, 5–15; 1987, 147–52.
76. Cf. L. B. Van der Meer, 1987, 141–44; G. Rocchi, 1993, 9 (who counts thirty-nine divinities).
77. Cf. G. Moretti, 1995.
78. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 391–432.
79. Cf. K. Reinhardt, 1926, 52–53, 105–6.
80. Cf. C. O. Thulin, 1906–9, vol. 2; R. Bloch, 1984, 49–60.
81. Cf. R. Pettazzoni, 1927, 195–99; G. Furlani, 1928, 243–85; J. Nougayrol, 1955, 509–19; G. Dumézil, 1987, 640–46.
82. Cf. A. Boissier, 1900, 330; 1901, 36; A. Ernout and A. Meillet, (1932) 1959, 289–90.
83. Cf. J. Bayet, 1937, 44–63; R. Bloch, 1968, 201–3; F.-H. Pairault-Massa, 1985, 56–115; S. Montero Díaz, 1991; D. Briquel, 1999, 185–204; 2000, 177–96; M.-L. Haack, 2003; S. W. Rasmussen, 2003, 117–48.
84. Cf. R. B. Onians, 1951, 594.
85. Suetonius, *Augustus* XCV, in Suetonius, 2000, 93.
86. Cf. G. Dumézil, 1987, 635–36.
87. Cf. R. Schilling, 1962, 3:1371–78.
88. Cf. F. Guillaumont, 1984, 43–120; 2006, 325–54; S. W. Rasmussen, 2003, 183–98.
89. Cicero, *On Divination* I.118, in Cicero, 2006, 83.
90. Cicero, *On Divination* II.28–29, in *ibid.*, 218–19. Cf. F. Guillaumont, 1986, 121–35.
91. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* II.V.24, in Pliny, 1940a, 185.
92. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XI.LXXIII, in Pliny, 1940b, 553.
93. S. Czarnowski, 1925, 339–59.
94. J. Vernant, 1948, 305.

95. *Ibid.*, 311–12.
96. *Ibid.*, 311.
97. É. Durkheim and M. Mauss, (1903) 1974, 13.
98. E. Kant, (1781–87) 1971, 150–56.
99. Cf. É. Durkheim and M. Mauss, (1903) 1974, 19–81; M. Mauss, (1907a) 1974, 94–96; (1907b) 1974, 96–99; (1913) 1974, 100–103; (1923) 1974, 125–31; (1925) 1974, 103–5.
100. Cf. É. Durkheim and M. Mauss, (1903) 1974, 82–89.
101. A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1964) 1974, 130–33. Cf. A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1943) 1971, 47–64.
102. Cf. A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1945) 1973, 183, 283.
103. A. Leroi-Gourhan, (1964) 1974, 261–300; (1965) 1974, 26–34.
104. Cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, 1962, 48–143.
105. *Ibid.*, 3–47.
106. *Ibid.*, 33.
107. Cf. J. Goody, 1977, 110–11 (*passim*, 108–39).
108. Cf. H. Damisch, 1987, 101–11.
109. Cf. J. Cauquelin, 2001, 158–61.
110. *Ibid.*, 160.
111. C. Goudineau, 1967, 79. Cf. E. Saglio, 1873, 347–53; S. Dow and D. H. Gill, 1965, 103–14; D. H. Gill, 1965, 265–69.
112. Cf. C. Goudineau, 1967, 77; J.-L. Durand, 1979a, 143–56; 1979b, 172–80.
113. Cf. H. Mischkowski, 1917; C. G. Yavis, 1949; D. H. Gill, 1965, 265–69; C. Goudineau, 1967, 77–134.
114. A. Ernout and A. Meillet, (1932) 1959, 397.
115. C. Goudineau, 1967, 85–119.
116. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXVI.I.1–4, in Pliny, 1962b, 145. Cf. R. H. Cohon, 1984; C. F. Moss, 1988.
117. W. Deonna and M. Renard, 1961, 58–60.
118. *Ibid.*, 107–8.
119. *Ibid.*, 122–23.
120. *Ibid.*, 124–25. Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXVIII.II., in Pliny, 1962a, 145.
121. Cf. B. Andreae, 2003, 46–51.
122. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXVI.LX.184, in Pliny, 1962b, 145. Cf. W. Deonna and M. Renard, 1961, 113–37.
123. A. Furetière, (1690) 1972, 3:1982; D. Diderot and J. d'Alembert, (1765) 1967, 804.
124. P. Imbs, ed., 1971–94, xv, 1294–95; B. Jooss, 1999; B. Vouilloux, 2002.
125. A. Ernout and A. Meillet, (1932) 1959, 672–73. Cf. A. de Ridder, 1904, 1720–26.
126. A. Furetière, (1690) 1972, 3:1981.
127. C. Lévi-Strauss, 1968, 390–411.
128. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 249–51.
129. A. Warburg, (1927b) 1998, 604.
130. A. Warburg, (1927–29) 2003, 100–101.

131. M. Foucault, (1961) 1988, 12; (1966a) 1994, xxii–xxiv.
132. M. Foucault, (1961) 1988, 208–9.
133. M. Foucault, (1966a) 1994, 46–50.
134. *Ibid.*, 384.
135. *Ibid.*, xv (citing J. L. Borges, [1952] 1999, 231).
136. *Ibid.*, xvii, xviii.
137. *Ibid.*, xvi.
138. *Ibid.*
139. *Ibid.*, xxiv.
140. M. Foucault, (1969) 1972, 4.
141. M. Foucault, 1966a (1994), 130.
142. *Ibid.*, 160.
143. *Ibid.*, 130.
144. *Ibid.*, 217–21.
145. *Ibid.*, 346.
146. *Ibid.*, xvii.
147. *Ibid.*
148. *Ibid.*, xvii; M. Foucault, (1984) 1994, 755–56. Cf. L. Marin, 1973, 87–114.
149. M. Foucault, 1966a (1994), xviii. Cf. M. Foucault, (1966b) 2009, 21–36.
150. M. Foucault, (1982) 1994, 275 and 285.
151. M. Foucault, (1984) 1994, 761.
152. *Ibid.*, 756, 762.
153. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, (1980) 2003, 22.
154. *Ibid.*, 12.
155. *Ibid.*
156. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 115–270.
157. Cf. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, 1980 (2003), 359–63.
158. *Ibid.*, 361.
159. *Ibid.*, 369, 458.
160. Cf. G. Deleuze, 1986, 101–30.
161. G. Deleuze, 1969, 74, 77.
162. *Ibid.*, 76.
163. *Ibid.*, 77.
164. *Ibid.*, 78.
165. W. Benjamin, (1928a) 2003, 46.
166. G. Deleuze, 1969, 168.
167. *Ibid.*
168. *Ibid.*, 81.
169. J. L. Borges, (1944) 2000, 128.
170. J. L. Borges (1949a) 2004, 79.
171. *Ibid.*, 13–14.
172. J. L. Borges, (1975a) 1999, 335.

173. J. L. Borges, (1960) 1998, 5, 18.
174. J. L. Borges, (1935) 2004, 7.
175. J. L. Borges, (1985) 1999, 954-55.
176. J. L. Borges, (1952) 1999, 747-51 (cf. F. A. Kuhn, 1886).
177. J. L. Borges, (1949b) 1998, 202; (1940) 1998, 131-38; (1949a) 2004, 583; (1970) 1998, 406.
178. J. L. Borges, (1960) 1998, 325.
179. J. L. Borges, (1975a) 1999, 462-69; (1975b) 1998, 485; (1975c) 1999, 563-64.
180. J. L. Borges, (1981) 1999, 790-91.
181. J. L. Borges, (1984) 1999, 865.
182. *Ibid.*, 863-920
183. Cf. W. Benjamin, (1937) 2002, 283-85.
184. W. Benjamin, (1932) 1999, 576; (1933-35) 2002, 344-413.
185. C. Baudelaire, (1859) 1976, 621-22.

## II. Atlas

1. A. Warburg, (1927-29) 2003, 16-17.
2. Cf. C. Riebesell, 1989, 33-34; U. Korn, 1996, 25-44.
3. Cf. R. Dussaud, 1945, 358.
4. For a different interpretation, cf. P. Sloterdijk, 2010, 41-63.
5. Cf. W. H. Roscher, (1884-86) 1978, cols. 704-11; P. Lavedan, 1931, 141-42.
6. P. Grimal, (1951) 1994, 59.
7. Cf. P. Lavedan, 1931, 952; J. Döring and O. Gigon, 1961.
8. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 347-49, in Aeschylus, 1961, 31.
9. Hesiod, *Theogony* 519-21, in Hesiod, 2008, 18. Cf. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* I.2.2-3, in Apollodorus, 1991, 28.
10. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 296-97, in Ovid, 2004, 61.
11. Hyginus, 2007, 149.
12. Cf. T. Reik, (1957) 1979, 40-79.
13. Cf. É. Tièche, 1945, 65-86.
14. H. Usener, 1896, 39-40. Cf. P. Chantraine, 1968, 1:133-34.
15. U. Aldrovandi, 1556, 230-31.
16. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 169-90.
17. Cf. E. La Rocca, 1989, 43-65; C. Riesebell, 1989, 34.
18. Cf. P. Falguières, 1988, 215-333.
19. Cf. E. Panofsky, (1930) 1999, 49-193.
20. Cited by F. Bardon, 1974, 44.
21. Cf. M. Rossi, 2000, 91-120.
22. Cf. M. Raoul-Rochette, 1835; J. Wetter, 1858; M. Mayer, 1887; G. Thiele, 1898, 17-56.
23. A. Warburg, (1920) 1990, 277.

24. Cf. J. Arce, L. J. Balmaseda, B. Griño, and R. Olmos, 1986, 3:2–16 (texts) and 6–13 (figures).
25. Cf. F. Saxl, 1933, 44–55; D. P. Snoep, 1967–68, 6–22.
26. Cf. G. B. Passeri, 1750; A. Bouché-Leclercq, (1899) 1963, 576–77; F. Boll, 1903; A. Warburg, (1926) 1998, 559–65; F. Saxl, 1933, 44–55.
27. G. Aujac, 1985, 433–34. Cf. Aratus, 2015, 139–67.
28. Homer, *Odyssey* I.52–54, in Homer, 2003, 4.
29. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* I.1, in Diogenes Laertius, 1999, 66.
30. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* XVI.75.2, in Clement of Alexandria, 1951, 104.
31. Virgil, *Aeneid* I.740–44, in Virgil, 1991, 24.
32. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* V.3, 8, in Cicero, 1960, 109.
33. Cf. A. Warburg, (1927–29) 2003, 10–19.
34. Cf. K. Lehmann, 1945, 1–27.
35. Cf. P. Friedländer, (1912) 1969, 135–64 (Atlas cited in lines 96–125), 174–76; G. Krahmer, 1920, 25–26; C. Cupane, 1979, 195–207; L. Renaut, 1999, 211–20.
36. Cf. A. Warburg, (1912) 1990, 197–220; (1920) 1990, 245–94.
37. Cf. H. Maguire, 1987, 17, 78.
38. Cf. J. Seznec, (1940) 1980, 20, 25.
39. Cf. J. Ramin, 1979, 51, 85–90, 115–19.
40. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.655–62, in Ovid, 2004, 163–64.
41. Cf. F. Saxl, 1933, 45.
42. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* V.6–7, in Pliny the Elder, 1940a, 222–23. Cf. Herodotus, *Histories* IV.184, in Herodotus, 1960, 190; J. Ramin, 1979, 27–39.
43. Cf. P. Plagnieux, 2003, 122–23.
44. Cf. É. Durkheim and M. Mauss, (1903) 1974, 13–89; C. Lévi-Strauss, 1962, 48–143.
45. Cf. P. Sloterdijk, 2010, 41–63.
46. Cf. J. Arce, L. J. Balmaseda, B. Griño, and R. Olmos, 1986, 3:6 (and fig. 13).
47. Cf. G. Colalucci, F. Mancinelli, and L. Partridge, 1987, 37–56.
48. Cf. M. Cole, 2001, 520–51.
49. Cf. E. von Philippovich, 1958, 85–88.
50. D. W. Winnicott, 1975, 38–40.
51. Cf. G. Didi-Huberman, 2002a, 249–306, 335–62; 2002b, 7–24, 127–41.
52. A. Warburg, (1927–29) 2003, 85; cf. 87, 99, 103.
53. Cf. E. Trummer, 1921.
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56. Cf. J.-C. Bailly, 1991, 139–70.
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65. Cf. B. Massin, (1977) 1993, 1255–59.
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76. *Ibid.*, § 348, p. 291.
77. *Ibid.*, § 355, p. 300.
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81. *Ibid.*, § 112, p. 173.
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83. *Ibid.*, § 298.
84. *Ibid.*, § 107, p. 164.
85. *Ibid.*, § 1, 54, 59, pp. 33, 123.
86. *Ibid.*, § 344, p. 282.
87. *Ibid.*, § 12.
88. *Ibid.*, § 342.
89. Cf. A. Warburg, (1927c) 1999, 21–23.
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93. *Ibid.*, § 300, pp. 240–41.
94. *Ibid.*, § 341, p. 273.
95. *Ibid.*, § 342, p. 275.
96. *Ibid.*, § 287, p. 231.
97. *Ibid.*, § 249, p. 215.
98. *Ibid.*, § 319, p. 253.
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100. *Ibid.*, § 371 p. 332.

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103. *Ibid.*, § 365, p. 321.
104. S. M. Eisenstein, (1935–37) 1985, 169–78 (here, 171).
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107. G. Bataille, (1939) 1970, 554.
108. M. Foucault, (1961) 1988, 285.
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111. Cf. P. Gassier, 1973–75, 2:107.
112. Cf. G. Levitine, 1955, 56–59; 1959, 106–31; E. Helman, 1958, 200–222; H. Hohl, 1970, 109–18; J. M. B. López Vázquez, 1982, 161–76; R. Alcalá Flecha, 1988, 444–53; A. Stoll, 1995, 264–70; V. I. Stoichita and A. M. Coderch, 1999, 165–83.
113. Cf. J. J. Ciofalo, 1997, 421–36.
114. Cf. F. Nordström, 1962, 116–32.
115. R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, and F. Saxl, (1964) 1989, 675. Cf. M. Warnke, 1981, 120–23.
116. A. Malraux, (1950) 2004, 36.
117. Cf. V. Bozal, 1993, 51–52.
118. Cf. K. Christiansen, 1996, 275–91, 348–69 (catalogue).
119. Cf. E. Mai, ed., 1996, 35–53; W. Hofmann, 1996, 23–33.
120. Cf. W. Hofmann, 1980a, 52–61; 1995a, 512–65; 2003, 73–147 (in particular, 85–86, 115, 113, 128, 130–35).
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122. Cf. J. Dowling, 1985, 331–59; A. De Paz, 1990, 214–24; P. K. Klein, 1994, 161–94; V. Bozal, 2005, 1:189–236.
123. Cf. H. Focillon, (1930) 1969, 122–42; C. Jacot Grapa, 1997; G. Poulet, 1977, 9–39.
124. Cf. S. Dittberner, 1995, 256–69.
125. E. Kant, (1797) 1972, 84.
126. Cf. J. Adhémar, 1948, viii–xiii; E. Lafuente Ferrari, 1989, 13–14.
127. E. Kant, (1798) 2006, 15.
128. *Ibid.*
129. *Ibid.*, 47–57.
130. *Ibid.*, 75.
131. *Ibid.*, 111.
132. *Ibid.*, 112.
133. Cf. B. Kornmeier, 1998, 1–17.
134. Cited by P. Gassier, 1973–75, 2:76, and by J. Blas, J. M. Matilla, and J. M. Medrano, 1999, 238. Cf. J.-P. Dhainault, 2005, 118 (translation modified).



135. Cited by López-Rey, 1970, 1:78–79; J.-P. Dhainault, 2005, 31–32 (translation slightly modified). Cf. J. Blas, J. M. Matilla, and J. M. Medrano, 1999, 415.
136. Cf. P. Gassier, 1973–75, 1:403, 438, 464, 523, 525, 611 (documentary “framings”); 1:149, 151, 159, 514–15 and 2:123, 137 (allegorical “montages”).
137. Cf. R. Wolf, 1991.
138. T. Gautier, 1838, 1–2.
139. C. Baudelaire, (1846) 1976, 497. [The subtitle is a pun on the French expression *envers et contre tous*, literally, “against and against everyone,” but here the word *envers*, “against,” is written as *en vers*, “in verse,” thus: “Critique in Verse and against Everyone.”—Trans.]
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141. *Ibid.*, 568.
142. C. Baudelaire, 2006, 236–38.
143. C. Baudelaire, (1857a) 1976, 329.
144. C. Baudelaire, (1857b) 1976, 569.
145. J. W. von Goethe, (1809–10) 2001, 61.
146. *Ibid.*, 151.
147. *Ibid.*, 146.
148. *Ibid.*, § 296, p. 35, and § 515, p. 68.
149. J. W. von Goethe, (1789) 1996, 98. Cf. T. Todorov, 1996, 51–65; A. Grieco, 1998, 147–68.
150. Cf. D. Cohn, 1999, 9–67.
151. *Ibid.*, 105–33.
152. Cf. A. Pinotti, 2001, 13–102.
153. Cf. P.-H. Tavoillot, 1995; A. Faivre, 1996, 43–48; D. von Engelhardt, 1998, 29–50.
154. J. Lacoste, 1997, 6.
155. Cf. I. Barta-Fliedl, 1994, 192–203.
156. Cf. J.-P. Lefebvre, 2000, 5.
157. J. W. von Goethe, (1809–10) 2001, § 489, p. 73 (translation modified).
158. *Ibid.*, 76, 155.
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160. Cf. E. Faivre, 1862; R. Magnus, 1906; R. Michéa, 1943; B. Wilhelmi, ed., 1984; F. Amrine, F. J. Zucker, and H. Wheeler, eds., 1987; G. Giorello and A. Grieco, eds., 1998; M. Wyder, 1999.
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162. Cf. C. F. von Weizsäcker, 1957, 697–711; É. Escoubas, 1986, 151–63; L. Van Eynde, 1998, 13–36, 67–109.
163. Cf. K. J. Fink, 1998, 169–93.
164. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 42–57; F. Moiso, 1998, 298–337.
165. J. Lacoste, 1997, 57–85. Cf. J. W. von Goethe, (1788–1820) 1992.
166. Cf. J. W. von Goethe, (1790–1810) 2003; J. W. von Goethe, (1810) 1973; J. Lacoste, 1997, 87–158; M. Basfeld, 1998, 71–90.

167. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 159–86; W. von Engelhardt, 2000, 459–73.
168. J. W. von Goethe, (1820–25) 1999. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 186–99; W. Busch, 1994, 519–27.
169. J. W. von Goethe, (1831) 1993, 146.
170. Cf. P. Maisak, 1996; J. Arnaldo and H. Mildenerger, eds., 2008.
171. Cf. A. Beyer, 1994, 447–54; S. Schulze, ed., 1994.
172. J. W. von Goethe, (1816) 2003. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1999.
173. Cf. W. Busch, 1994, 519–27; S. Schulze, ed., 1994, 528–65; B. Hedinger, I. Richter-Musso, and O. Westheider, 2004.
174. Cf. P. Maisak, 1996, 168–73.
175. G. Webster, 1998, 456–78. Cf. T. Lenoir, 1987, 17–28; R. H. Brady, 1987, 257–300.
176. J. Lacoste, 1997, 84. Cf. M. Bollacher, 2000, 529–47.
177. J. W. von Goethe, 1788–1820, 181.
178. F. Nietzsche, (1882–86) 1974, § 373, p. 334.
179. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 35–42.
180. Cf. A. Portmann, 1973, 11–21; R. Thom, 1978, 52–64.
181. R. Thom, 1998, 253–97.
182. Cf. P. Giacomoni, 1998, 194–229.
183. J. W. von Goethe, (1798) 1996, 81, 83, 84.
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185. J. W. von Goethe, (1785) 1989, 332–33. Cf. K. J. Fink, 1998, 174–79.
186. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 159–86.
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188. Cf. U. Grüning, 1999; G. Schuster and C. Gille, eds., 1999.
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191. *Ibid.*, 307–430.
192. Cf. L. Ficacci, 2000, 166–319, 386–93.
193. C. Asman, 1999a, 108–9.
194. *Ibid.*, 107.
195. *Ibid.*, 107–8.
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197. C. Asman, 1999b, 153–60. Cf. W. Albrecht, 2000, 65–78; J.-M. Valentin, 2000a, 19–41.
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200. Cf. J. Lacoste, 1997, 221.
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227. Cf. J. Adler, 1987.
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252. W. Benjamin, (1929) 1999, 207.
253. Cf. S. Freud, (1929) 1971.
254. Cf. T. W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, (1944) 1974, 13–20.
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258. Cf. J. W. von Goethe, (1831) 1993, 407–10.
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### III. Disasters

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340. E. Bloch, (1935) 1978, 204–11; P. A. Sitney, 1990; M. Teitelbaum, ed., 1992; H. Möbius, 2000.
341. Cf. B. Cestelli Guidi and F. Del Prete, 1999, 23.
342. Cf. A. Schwarz, 1997, 2:598–603.
343. Cf. T. Andersen, 1970, 113–36.

344. W. S. Heckscher, 1985, 268–72.
345. *Ibid.*, 253–55.
346. Cited by N. Mann, 2002, viii.
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348. B. Stiegler, 2009a, 285–320.
349. Cf. D. Elliott and T. Hahr, eds., 1998; A. te Heesen and E. C. Spary, eds., 2001; A. te Heesen, ed., 2002; 2004, 297–327; J. Arnaldo, 2007, 57–74; M. Cometa, 2008, 56–59; T. Castro, 2010, 229–44.
350. Cf. I. Graeve, 1988, 237–73; F. Brons, 2009, 15–30; A. te Heesen, 2009, 55–64; A. Holzer, 2009, 31–46; B. Stiegler, 2009b, 5–14.
351. Le Corbusier, 1925; A. Ozenfant and C.-É. Jeanneret, 1925; L. Moholy-Nagy, (1927) 1986; (1929b) 2001 (cf. B. Stiegler, 2009a, 255–68); S. O. Khan-Magomedov, 1990; K.-J. Winkler, ed., 2006–8.
352. Cf. O. Lugon, 2001, 61–83, 241–94; A. Wilde, 2001.
353. Cf. R. Sheppard, ed., 1982; H. Bergius, 2000; G. Luyken, ed., 2004; L. Le Bon, ed., 2005, 328–31; B. Möckel, ed., 2010.
354. G. Bataille, ed., (1929–30) 1991; A. Skira and E. Tériade, eds., (1933–39) 1981; A. Breton and P. Éluard, (1938) 2005. Cf. M. Poivert, 2006; Q. Bajac and C. Chéroux, eds., 2009, 20–61, 170–213.
355. W. Benjamin, (1931b) 1999, 507–30.
356. W. Benjamin, (1935) 2002, 101–33.
357. *Ibid.*, (1935) 2000, 82–83.
358. Cf. G. Agamben, (1992) 1995, 65; P.-A. Michaud, 1998, 37–64; 2003, 87–96; K. Sierek, 2009, 27–52.
359. W. Benjamin, (1928a) 2003, 47.
360. *Ibid.*, 39.
361. *Ibid.*, 39–40.
362. Cf. W. S. Heckscher, 1985, 269; P.-A. Michaud, 1998, 43–64; A. Métraux, 2005, 21–43.
363. Cf. S. Kracauer, 1947, 201–11; W. Beilenhoff, 2005, 201–19; I. Münz-Koenen, 2005, 271–92; M. Streisand, 2005, 153–79; A. Somaini, 2009, 153–82.
364. Cf. G. Bruno, 2002; H. Färber, 2003, 104–20; T. Hensel, 2005, 221–49; U. Holl, 2005, 251–70; U. Frohne, 2006, 161–86; G. Didi-Huberman, 2010, 177–95.
365. Cf. R. Storr, ed., 1994; M.-A. Brayer, ed., 1996; M.-A. Brayer, 2000; C. Buciu-Glucksmann, 1996; P. Bianchi and S. Folie, eds., 1997; W. Curnow, 1999, 253–68; K. Harmon, 2004; K. Harmon, 2009; A. Lemonnier, ed., 2004; M. Vanci-Perahim, ed., 2006; G. A. Tiberghien, 2007.
366. Cf. D. Sardo, 2000, 14–17; M. Diers, 2001, 299–332; L. Brown, 2002, 167–81; M. Bruhn, 2005, 181–87; L. Haustein, 2005, 309–24; K. Kelly, ed., 2006; H. Mun-der, ed., 2008.



367. Cf. G. Stolz, ed., 2004; B. Danilowitz and M. González, eds., 2006.
368. Cf. B. H. D. Buchloh, 1987, 65–117; C. David, ed., 1991; R. Krauss, 1999.
369. Cf. H. Friedel and U. Wilmes, eds., 1997; I. Blazwick and J. Graham, eds., 2003; S. Flach, 2005, 45–69; H. Friedel, ed., 2006.
370. Cf. L. Sultan and M. Mandel, 1977; T. Dean, 2001; U. Blickle, G. Matt, and C. David, eds., 2005; I. Schube, M. Clark, and M. Hochleitner, eds., 2007; H. Dickel, 2008; H.-P. Feldmann, 2008.
371. Cf. B. H. D. Buchloh, 1999, 117–45; R. Comay, ed., 2002; H. Foster, 2002, 81–95; H. U. Obrist, ed., 2002; S. Mokhtari, ed., 2004; H. Adkins, ed., 2005; C. Merewether, ed., 2006; O. Enwezor, ed., 2008; S. Spieker, 2008; K. Ebeling and S. Günzel, eds., 2009.
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373. Cf. S. Weigel, 2005, 99–119.
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381. Cf. K. Hellwig, 2010, 155–61.
382. C. Schoell-Glass, 1998, 155–246.
383. M. Diers, 1991, 168–86.
384. Cf. M. Warnke, 1992, 23–28; ed., 1996; 1999, 41–45; M. Diers, 1997.
385. Cf. M. Pierssens, 1990, 165–85. Cartography: cf. I. Pezzini, 1996, 149–68; R. Stockhammer, 2007. Photography: cf. M.-D. Garnier, ed., 1997; P. Hamon, 2001; D. Grojnowski, 2002.
386. Cf. J. R. Jiménez, (1936–54) 2009; C. Schoell-Glass and E. Sears, 2008, 23–27; G. Didi-Huberman, 2009.
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