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Survivance d'Aby Warburg

Aby Warburg's *Impresa*

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Aby Warburg's *Impresa*

Davide Stimilli

Crede mihi, plus est, quam quod videatur, imago
Ovid, *Heroides*, XIII.154

- 1 In a letter of June 11, 1924 to Alfred Doren, who had raised the timely question of how to celebrate Aby Warburg's sixtieth birthday in an adequate manner, Fritz Saxl rejected in no uncertain terms the idea of an edition of his writings: Warburg himself had apparently forbidden it, and Saxl considered only with reluctance the possibility of publishing a *Festschrift* in Warburg's honor. He rather inclined toward a publication of the catalog of the Library, which would grant, Saxl argued, "the best insight into his activity [*der beste Einblick in seine Arbeitstätigkeit*]." ¹ This observation will, unfortunately, become a *topos* in later accounts of Warburg's life and work ². The paradox, whereby a list of the books he purchased should be thought to provide the most reliable image of his work, may also partly answer for the unconscionable delay in bringing Warburg's unpublished writings to print. Proof enough that such narrowmindedness (I can find no better word) was wholly alien to Warburg's way of thinking is the warning he gave to one of his assistants: when cataloging a book, he thundered, one should not put a period after the title, since "a book keeps on living [*ein Buch lebt weiter*]" ³.
- 2 In Warburg's own case, it is as if a period was placed after the title of a book that did not yet exist. One may only hope that the end result of the now finally ongoing publication of his *Nachlass* will not itself be a full stop. Paul Valéry has suggested that there are no completed, or finished, but only abandoned works ⁴. With respect to Warburg, who should be compared, if at all, to Vasari's Leonardo, unable to bring to completion his paintings for excessive "*intelligenza de l'arte*," ⁵ the very category of "work" appears painfully inadequate to express the true character of his *modus operandi*. My title is meant to suggest an alternative, as it takes the word *impresa* literally and in its widest sense, following the example of Robert Klein and, even earlier, the intuition of a Renaissance theorist, Alessandro Farra: if every act and every operation of the human mind is thus an *impresa* ⁶ the unity of his library and his writings makes up indeed Aby Warburg's *impresa*, one to be defined, without exaggeration, as truly heroic ⁷.

EPEA PTEROENTA

- 3 Karen Blixen opened her lecture "On Mottoes of My Life," delivered in New York in 1959, by praising the wisdom of the interviewer who had asked her to sum up the events and experiences of her life in a motto. It was an appropriate question, she felt, for a person of her generation :
- 4 The idea of what is called 'a motto' is probably far from the minds of young people of today. As I look from one age to the other, I find this particular idea — the word, le mot, and the motto — to be one of the phenomena of life which in the course of time have most decidedly come down in value. To my contemporaries the name was the thing or the man; it was even the finest part of a man, and you praised him when you said that

he was as good as his word. Very likely it will be difficult for the younger generation to realize to what extent we lived in a world of symbols⁸.

- 5 Instead of condensing her life into a single motto, however, Blixen went on to provide a list of the mottoes she had chosen for herself throughout her life, true *Wahlsprüche*, in the German sense of the word⁹. She started with the first, which she had adopted when she was seventeen, Pompeius's *Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse*, as quoted in the Latin Renaissance translation of Plutarch's *Lives*¹⁰. This motto, she admits, was "not an original motto to choose; many young people will have made it their own,"¹¹ though she does not reveal the immediate source from which she borrowed it¹². Among her contemporaries, it appears at a prominent juncture in the opening lines of Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Laudi*¹³, the source, probably, of Antonio Machado's citation in Italian¹⁴ and Fernando Pessoa's translation into Portuguese: "Navegar é preciso; viver não é preciso"¹⁵. This odd consonance of voices, in other respects so diverse, may point to Nietzsche as the most likely inspiration, if not the direct source of the motto¹⁶. Mussolini, who had already chosen as a "password" in 1920 "the motto that was the imperial Rome's, before belonging to the Hanseatic Bremen: *navigare necesse*"¹⁷ modified it to "*volare necesse est*" on the occasion of an aeronautic convention that took place in Rome in 1923¹⁸. It is therefore not surprising to find the motto quoted by Warburg in a letter to his long-time friend Doren on May 3, 1926, just two days after the inauguration of the elliptical reading room in the new library building with Ernst Cassirer's lecture on "Freiheit und Notwendigkeit in der Philosophie der Renaissance"¹⁹. Warburg declares himself happy with the external shape of the Institute, which finally corresponds to that required by the "commanding idea," and then adds our "*Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse est*"²⁰.
- 6 In Warburg's case, a more local explanation is perhaps appropriate, if one considers that the Plutarchean maxim served indeed as motto of the Hanseatic League before Mussolini reclaimed it for imperial Rome²¹, and it still decorates the gate of the "Haus der Marine" in Bremen²². Whatever may be the case in this specific instance, Blixen's autobiographical *aperçu* certainly helps us to understand Warburg's evident fondness for mottoes and suggests that his predilection was something more than an individual whim. The roots of his fondness may lie in his mother's practice, as witnessed by his brother Max, to paper her children's rooms "with sayings and quotes [*Sprüche und Zitate*] of all kinds," so that they would find doors marked with the inscription *Carpe diem* or lift a desk top and behold, "See how beautiful it is, when brothers live in harmony with each other"²³. On the other hand, this personal inclination was itself grounded in a need broadly shared in contemporary culture: the collection of *Geflügelte Worte* assembled by Georg Büchmann, "the Abumasar of German proverbial lore"²⁴, had already reached its twenty-third edition when Warburg purchased it for his Library in 1910²⁵. And one finds a late symptom of what may more suitably be called an obsession in the diary of the Library, where we see him particularly worried by the disappearance from the shelves of August Otto's standard collection of Roman sayings²⁶. At the same time, and this is the point I would like to emphasize in the first part of my essay: Warburg was not just a collector of mottoes (even less of books), or a fashioner of *bon mots*, — which, already soon after Aby's death, his brother Max started transcribing²⁷, son Max Adolph then included in a florilegium aptly titled *Warburgismen*²⁸ — but rather that his mottoes were intentionally (not just involuntarily, as in Mussolini's case) "parodistic maxims"²⁹, to use a category that Gianfranco Contini coined in reference to Leo Spitzer, the great linguist and literary critic, another contemporary of both

Warburg and Blixen, born in Vienna in 1887. Spitzer's methodological motto, *Individuum non est ineffabile*³⁰, is indeed a transparent parody of the contradictory statement, *Individuum est ineffabile*, whose source³¹ George Boas and Arthur Lovejoy, Spitzer's colleagues at the Johns Hopkins University, spent years trying to identify, as we know from Gombrich³². Such an exercise has been equally performed on Warburg's most famous motto, "God is in the detail [*Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail*]"³³, (Fig.1) without producing more conclusive results³⁴.

Fig.1

Max Adolph Warburg, *ABC Aby Warburg zu Ehren für 1927*, WIA, III.18.1, fol. 4 (photo Warburg Institute, London)

- 7 I would like to suggest that Warburg's motto is also meant to be read, if not as a direct parody, at least ironically, rather than literally, as we can already see from its pairing with another apocryphal motto when he first introduced the two as "guiding principles [*Leitsätze*]"³⁵ on November 25, 1925 in the opening meeting of his seminar on *Die Bedeutungswandel der Antike für den stilistischen Wandel in der italienischen Kunst der Frührenaissance*: "We seek out our ignorance and attack it wherever we find it [*Wir suchen unsere Ignoranz auf und schlagen die, wo wir sie finden*]"³⁶. His son Max Adolph pointed out, but nobody else seems to have followed up his suggestion, as far as I can tell, that this second motto is an allusion to General von Moltke's maxim: "We seek out our enemy and attack him wherever we find him [*Wir suchen den Feind auf und schlagen ihn, wo wir ihn finden*]"³⁷, and I believe that the compilers of the spoof publication in honor of Warburg's 60th birthday (which, one is entitled to guess, had to be the most welcome homage on that occasion) were not too far from his intentions when they re-phrased the two mottoes and intertwined them with the rather uncanny result: "We look for God in the detail and attack him with the help of our ignorance, wherever we find him [*wir suchen den lieben Gott im Detail und schlagen ihn mit Hilfe unserer Ignoranz, wo wir ihn finden*]"³⁸.

- 8 Another, and more obvious example of Warburg's variation on a motto is, of course, the replacement of 'Harz' with 'Oraibi' in the quotation from Goethe's *Faust* that prefaces both the 1920 Luther essay and the 1923 lecture on the serpent ritual³⁹. But a particularly enlightening insight into his method as a motto-maker is provided by an autobiographical letter to his family on December 26, 1923, sent from Kreuzlingen, in which we see the motto for Franz Boll's exlibris slowly emerge [Fig.2].

Fig.2

Ex libris Franz Boll, WIA, III.47.3.3.3, n. 82 (photo Warburg Institute, London)

- 9 Warburg drew first upon the formula "per monstra ad astra," a simple variation on Kepler's motto "per aspera ad astra"⁴⁰, which he paraphrased as: "the gods have placed the monster [*das Ungeheuer*] before the idea," and then added a further variation: "One could say (it occurred to me last night): *Per monstra ad superos inferosve*, namely, fate has placed 'the struggle with the dragon' before the liberation from fear"⁴¹. Then, a few months later and just a week after Boll's sudden death on July 3, 1924, we already find in Warburg's notes the formulation that would become definitive: "per monstra ad sphaeram"⁴², meant to honor the achievement of his friend by an allusion to the title of Boll's masterpiece — as Saxl would make clear to the artist charged with creating the ex-libris, Rudolf Larisch⁴³ — but also, in all likelihood, to the *impresa* tradition, in which the sphere was used as an allusion to *speranza*, or hope, as Warburg himself had demonstrated in his early essay on Florentine *imprese amorose* [Fig. 3]⁴⁴.

Fig.3

Florentine engraving, Lorenzo de' Medici and Lucrezia Donati, from A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Teubner, Leipzig 1932, pl. XI, fig. 20

- 10 From these examples, it will have become clear that what mattered to Warburg was the work rather than the play involved in the formulation of a thought, *die Arbeit des Begriffs*, in Hegel's terms, rather than the mere *Einfall*: "to find a thought is play, to think it through, work [*einen Gedanken finden ist Spiel, ihn ausdenken Arbeit*]," as Usener put it in his essay on the *Weinachtsfest*. Warburg went on to make this the motto to his 1903 *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zur Psychologie der Kunst*⁴⁵ for once without granting himself the licence of tampering with it. If a motto then offered him the opportunity to "think through" a thought, rather than to invent it, variation on an already given thought rather than invention was the method whereby he mostly reached the definitive formulation that he was looking for.

MNHMOΣYNH

- 11 Another motto of his, however, was certainly not meant as a parody. In a 1964 essay, Gertrud Bing, who had been Warburg's assistant and in the later 1950s director of the Warburg Institute, drew a distinction that is, on the face of it, obvious, but has far-reaching implications: "He planned a pictorial atlas setting out the history of visual expression in the Mediterranean area, with the title *Mnemosyne*, the name which he had also chosen as a motto for his library"⁴⁶.
- 12 *Mnemosyne* was actually used by Warburg first as a motto and then as a title, and it is still visible, in Greek characters, over the entrance to the Library in Hamburg [Fig.4]; on

the other hand, he was never going to see it in print on the frontispiece of his *Bilderatlas*, as he died before completing it.

Fig.4

Entrance of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg: WIA, I.4.20.3, pl. 7 (photo Warburg Institute, London)

- 13 But what is the difference, if any, between the two occurrences of the word? The great scholar of the *impresa* W. S. Heckscher has pointed out that, within that tradition, “the brief motto was anything but a title; it may be called a challenge to the ingenuity of the reader-viewer of the *impresa* in its entirety”⁴⁷. In the case of *Mnemosyne*, however, it seems to me that the title presents as much a challenge to our ingenuity as the motto does. The second part of my essay will try to meet this challenge.
- 14 Warburg was not granted the opportunity to sum up his own life in a motto, but I doubt that he would have answered the question put to Karen Blixen with a mere list of the numerous mottoes that had guided him throughout his life, as we have seen from our only partial overview.
- 15 Shortly after Warburg’s death in 1929, Erwin Panofsky, who was at the time professor at the University of Hamburg and a close associate of the Warburg Library, suggested as a posthumous motto for his life Leonardo’s sentence: “No turning back for one who is bound to a star [*Es kehrt nicht um, wer an einem Stern gebunden ist*]”⁴⁸, which is in fact the motto of an *impresa* devised by Leonardo, whose image is a compass attracted by a star [Fig.5]⁴⁹.

Fig.5

Frontispiece, from Gerardus Mercator, *Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura* (Duisburg 1595)

- 16 Panofsky's suggestion is certainly fitting and even moving; however, there can be no doubt that *Mnemosyne* was the motto that Warburg chose for his life, as Gertrud Bing rightly pointed out, and well before he had to cross the final threshold. What seems to me to be lacking and needed is instead an image as a supplement to Warburg's life, and to his motto, as well. Warburg shared throughout his life the fascination of early Renaissance patrons, such as the Medicis, the Sassettis, and the Rucellais, for what he called "the secular art of the *impresa* (*die weltliche Impresakunst*).⁵⁰ The *impresa* was undoubtedly an object of keen historical interest for Warburg, who contributed in a decisive manner to the rediscovery and interpretation of this "genre of applied allegory," which he defined "an intermediary stage between the sign and the image (*ein Mittelglied zwischen Zeichen und Bild*)"; but it also afforded a still adequate way of expressing, as he puts it, "the stance of the individual at war with the world (*die Stellung des Einzelnen im Kampfe mit der Welt*)"⁵⁰. In other words, he was not only a scholar of the *impresa*, but also a creator of *imprese*: proof of this talent of his are the ex-libris for the libraries of his late friends Robert Münzel [Fig.6]⁵¹ and Franz Boll [Fig.2]⁵² and the print *Idea vincit* [Fig.8]⁵³, which Warburg originally conceived as the design for a stamp.

Fig.6

Aby Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, WIA, III.108.8.2, pl. 2, detail (photo Warburg Institute, London)

Fig.7

Francesco di Giorgio Martini, *Atlas*, ink on parchment, ca. 1490-1500, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig, Kunstmuseum des Landes Niedersachsen (photo B.P. Kaiser)

Fig.8

Lewis W. Hine, *A modern Atlas. The Home-work Burden. Said he made button-holes at home. Washington Square, N.Y.*, February 1912, 11.8 x 16.6 cm, gelatin silver print, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

- 17 And nobody has noticed up to now, as far as I can tell, that his last project was also an *impresa*, even if certainly unique in kind. In Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'impresa militari et amorose*, a 16th-century treatise that Warburg helped to recover for the history of art, one of the examples of *imperfette imprese* is provided by the *bellissimo motto* "Fortune aids the virtuous (*Virtuti Fortuna Comes*)," which a Venetian nobleman inscribed over the entrance to his palace, but without an accompanying body (*che anchor' si vede senza corpo*)⁵⁴, that is, a suitable image. Similarly, no body corresponds to Warburg's *bellissimo motto* [Fig.9].

Fig.9

Impresa of Andrea Gritti, from Paolo Giovio, *Dialogo dell'Imprese militari et amorose* (Lyon 1574)

- 18 *Das Wort zum Bild*, another fundamental principle of Warburg's methodology, which, as he says in a letter to his brother Max of June 13, 1928, inspired his activity from its very beginning, and for which he claims "the general meaning" of a "heuristic method 'in itself' (*die allgemeine Bedeutung des von mir seit den Anfängen meiner Tätigkeit vertretenen Grundsatzes "das Wort zum Bild" als heuristische Methode "an sich"*)"⁵⁵, means, of course, first of all: the word must supplement the image, but also: the image must speak for itself and by itself. In the first public occurrence of the word "Mnemosyne" I am aware of in his writings, found in the annual report on the Library for the year 1925, Warburg identifies Mnemosyne not as the goddess of Memory and mother of the Muses but rather as "the great Sphynx," out of whom he hopes "to unlock, if not her secret, at least the formulation of her riddle [*der grossen Sphynx Mnemosyne, wenn auch nicht ihr Geheimnis, so doch die Formulierung ihrer Rätselfrage zu entlocken*]"⁵⁶. In the case of "Mnemosyne", it seems to me that Warburg's own principle invites us to look for an image as a solution to the riddle the word poses — the reverse formula: *zum Wort das Bild!* is also recorded among his notes⁵⁷. In the pages that follow, I will try to provide a solution to the riddle of Mnemosyne, a solution that happens to be, as is often the case, in front of our eyes.

ATLAS

- 19 At the end of the 16th century, Gerhard Mercator, the great cartographer who had exchanged his German name, Krämer, for its Latin translation, Mercator⁵⁸, turned the proper name of a mythological figure into a common noun by prefacing his collection of maps with a frontispiece depicting Atlas [Fig.10]⁵⁹.

Fig.10

Impresa of Andrea Gritti, from Paolo Giovio, *Opera*, vol. 9, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma 1984

- 20 What we now commonly refer to as an atlas is therefore so called by antonomasia. The decay of a mythological name to a common noun that Warburg was able to prevent in the case of Nestor, which a tobacco company wanted to use for a new brand of cigarettes⁶⁰, occurred in the case of Atlas so successfully that even Warburg seems to have been unaware of its original dignity⁶¹. At least on one important occasion, however, he called the word by its name: on a folio-sized sheet dated April 8, 1925 [Fig. 11], which served as a “table for the organization of material” in preparation of his lecture in memory of Franz Boll⁶², we find the word mentioned in quotation marks. Warburg writes: “vom Lobus – zum Globus – vom Globus zum ‘Atlas’,” which he glosses immediately below: “vom Globus – über das Monstrum – zur Sphaera”⁶³.

Fig.11

Neuenheim bas-relief, detail, from Franz Cumont, *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* (Bruxelles 1899), vol. 2, n. 245

- 21 The sphere is here, literally, the celestial sphere that Atlas carries on his shoulders, though the carrier's name has become by way of metonymy the name of the burden he carries. The formula "vom Lobus zum Globus," which is also typical of Warburg's linguistic talent and, above all, of his late "gnomic style"⁶⁴, was later taken up *expressis verbis* in the text of the Boll lecture itself, delivered on April 25, 1925⁶⁵, where it sums up in an epigrammatic manner
- 22 the result of one of his fundamental interests in those years: the intensive study of hepatoscopy, and in particular of Etruscan haruspicy. Warburg meant it to comprehend the development that, from the more primitive divination through the liver, had led to the more abstract and scientific astrological system, which Franz Cumont had gone so far as to define as a "scientific theology"⁶⁶. Hepatoscopy was to have been at the center of Franz Boll's memorial, as we know from the original program for the evening, which included, besides Warburg's lecture, a never-delivered talk by Boll's brother-in-law, Gustav Herbig, on the Piacenza bronze liver, a still recent archeological find and the subject of a debate in which Boll himself had taken part⁶⁷.
- 23 Another witticism of Warburg's late years is that on the *Bollwerk* (literally, *bulwark*, but also: *Boll's work*)⁶⁸ erected by Boll with his *Sphaera* for the study of astrological iconography⁶⁹. Warburg's atlas was meant to provide equally unshakable support for the study of the "dialectic of the image"⁷⁰. According to a euhemeristic tradition of which he was, in all likelihood, aware⁷¹, the mythical Atlas was granted the merit of discovering the "sphere" *tout court*, namely, of systematizing the geometry of the sphere in order to understand the motion of the celestial bodies⁷²; hence Augustine had referred to him as "ille magnus astrologus"⁷³. In the introduction to his volume, Mercator had turned to the doxographical literature in order to outline a genealogy of Atlas, based above all on Diodorus Siculus and on Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio evangelica*, which identified him as the king of Mauritania and thus explained his customary location at the Western margins of the known world, on the shores of the Ocean and at the feet of the mountain range that still bears his name⁷⁴. But Warburg certainly could not ignore that, before decaying into the proper name of a mythical king, and then even lower into common noun of a collection of maps, and eventually of any tables or plates whatsoever, the name "Atlas" had been indeed a divine name — and as such had been discussed by his teacher at the University of Bonn, the great German philologist Hermann Usener in his work *On the Divine Names*⁷⁵; it is therefore certainly not unworthy to figure, beneath the title *Mnemosyne*⁷⁶, on the frontispiece of Warburg's "so-called lifework" (the litotes is Warburg's)⁷⁷. That which is still missing, beneath the motto MNEMOSUNE, is a suitable figure of Atlas. As will become clear through a closer inspection of the frontispiece of the eponymous *Atlas*, Mercator's *Atlas*, consistently with his interpretation, is not the titan holding the heavens of classical mythology, nor even the astrologer of the mythographers, but rather the first geographer: we see him measuring the globe with his pair of compasses. Instead of this all-too athletic Atlas, who seems almost ready "to play ball with the little sphere," like Leopardi's Atlas⁷⁸, or rather than the most famous ancient Atlas, the Farnese Atlas, who indeed appears inside *Mnemosyne*, on its second plate, — an Atlas truly adequate to reflect the spirit of Warburg's *impresa* would appear to be the one drawn in the 15th century by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, its iconography correctly identified as such by Fritz Saxl only after Warburg's death⁷⁹. This particular Atlas is perhaps the "body" best

suited, from a purely artistic point of view, to represent Warburg's life in an image and to produce a perfect *impresa* in conjunction with his motto.

- 24 Saxl had been Warburg's closest collaborator and was to be the first director of the Warburg library after Aby's death. What Saxl underscores in his interpretation is the modernity of the image created by Francesco di Giorgio: as opposed to the medieval representation of Atlas, who is even identified with God as he performs a purely cosmological function and can do so without effort, Francesco di Giorgio's Atlas betrays on his face, in a truly ancient manner, according to Saxl, the pain of his condition⁸⁰; at the same time, differently from the ancient
- 25 representation that the Farnese Atlas canonically exemplifies, the pain is not due to the physical weight of the heavens he has to carry on his shoulders, which are represented here in a diagrammatic manner, but rather to the internal suffering, due to the acknowledgement of an inescapable fate: Only because the artist [...] could identify himself with Atlas not as the carrier of the universe, but rather as the carrier of world history and therefore of his own personal destiny, he was able to lend to the figure the expression of external motion and, at the same time, of inner pain⁸¹.
- 26 In his treatise Giovio exceptionally allowed the representation of Atlas in his entirety, — contrary to the codified rules of the genre, which prohibit the depiction of the human figure as a whole⁸² — since, although he has human form, he is nonetheless “cosa fauolosa”⁸³. *Colla licenza degli anteriori*, to evoke yet another *variatio* of Warburg's⁸⁴, there seems to be no objection against the placing of this image of Atlas in Warburg's *impresa*, beneath the motto *Mnemosyne*.

ENGONASIN

- 27 Even if it was not his intended goal, Saxl has therefore implicitly provided, like Panofsky in a motto, the *summa* of Warburg's life in an image, in that which is perhaps his most authentically Warburgian essay⁸⁵. That which is lacking in Saxl's interpretation, however, is a dialectical reading, in Warburg's sense, of the image of Atlas. Saxl's Atlas is only an epigon “of the Atlases who carry the globe on their neck [*der Atlanten, die die Weltkugel in ihrem Nacken tragen*]” — much like those who inhabit Kafka's world, according to Walter Benjamin's extraordinary insight⁸⁶, and expend the energy of an Atlas just to carry a heap of clothes — an intuition shared by Lewis Hine when he titled his 1912 New York photograph “A Modern Atlas”. Saxl's mistake is akin to Kafka's mistake, when, visiting Verona, he felt compelled to compare his dejected state of mind to “the happy expression [*dem glücklichen Gesichtsausdruck*]” of the marble dwarf who holds a baptismal font on his shoulders in the church of Sant'Anastasia⁸⁷: both Saxl and Kafka are naively projecting feelings onto the impassive screen of Atlas's face. Saxl believes he can deduce the state of mind of the titan from the expression of his face, a conclusion that a line by Hesiod, Aeschylus, or Pindar would hardly allow⁸⁸. Atlas's face can betray no secret. From an authentically ancient point of view, only the gesture counts, and it is to Atlas's gesture that we ought to turn our attention. *Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail* is often misconstrued as if it were only applicable to the God of monotheism. But the dear Atlas, too, is hidden in the detail of his gesture⁸⁹. Saxl (and with him most interpreters of this figure)⁹⁰ does not seem to have noticed the contradiction that exists in the iconographic tradition between the kneeling and the standing Atlas, or has simply explained, or rather done away with it, by just cataloguing

it as another type. It is perhaps not by chance that the same contradiction exists, and has not been noticed by anyone, so far as I can tell, between the image of Atlas that accompanies the most widespread edition of Giovio's *Dialoghi*⁹¹ and the description contained in the text : it was the heauen with the *Zodiac* and the twelue Signes, borne upon the shoulders of *Atlas* kneeling on his left knee, and with his hands embracing the heauens, with a mot there aboue, *Sustinet nec fatiscit*⁹².

- 28 The illustration that accompanies the description in the manuscript, discovered only in 1965⁹³, reflects in an ultimately more faithful manner the author's intention⁹⁴. The recovered body of Antonio Gritti's *impresa*, namely, represents Atlas kneeling. Giovio comments that this is indeed the way in which "poets" represent Atlas⁹⁵. But which poets is he referring to?
- 29 In this case, too, one must look for an answer in Boll's inexhaustible work. As in the case of Schifanoja Warburg had found the key to the fresco of the months in its pages, so it will be perhaps possible to find in *Sphaera* the key to another mystery, whose solution is also so obvious that it therefore escapes our notice: which name is hidden beneath the anonymity of the Engonasin, the constellation whose name has been simply transliterated from Greek into Latin and does nothing but describe the posture of the Kneeling one, the one on his knees⁹⁶. In *Sphaera* Boll had noticed the presence of a constellation called Atlas in Anthiocus's list, which did not figure however in any other list, and had discarded it as just a peculiarity in the work of this astrological poet of late Antiquity. At the same time, he had suggested a possible identification of this constellation with the Engonasin, but had considered it as at most a "late metamorphosis" of his (*eine späte Umgestaltung des Engonasin*)⁹⁷. In a review of Boll's work, Cumont, another tutelary god of Warburg's studies, had noticed however that the figure of Atlas corresponds to a much earlier Oriental type, which is well represented in the religious iconography of Mesopotamia⁹⁸. In an essay on Manichean mythology⁹⁹, Cumont had then observed that Mani still envisions the cosmos as held up by two colossal genii: in Augustine's terminology, the *Splenditenens*, who keeps the luminous sky suspended from above¹⁰⁰, and the *Homophoros*, who supports the earth from below. Augustine calls the latter ironically "Atlas laturarius" and describes him as he tries "genu fixo scapulis validis subbaiulare tantam molem"¹⁰¹. On the basis of Cumont's remarks, Boll himself had then reversed the chronological order of his previous hypothesis and explicitly suggested, in his first publication after *Sphaera*, a possible identification of the more archaic Oriental Atlas with Engonasin¹⁰², the constellation without a name. The image best suited to solve the riddle of the sphynx Mnemosyne¹⁰³, I would argue, is therefore not the awkwardly standing Atlas of the printed illustrations to Giovio's work, nor that, however extraordinary, drawn by Francesco di Giorgio, who "spins" the celestial spheres and is probably meant to illustrate Virgil's Atlas¹⁰⁴, but rather the Atlas of the Oriental cosmographers¹⁰⁵, who still appears on Mithraic bas-reliefs, with his knee firmly grounded¹⁰⁶. The body that deserves to appear in Warburg's *impresa* along with the motto *Mnemosyne* is the Atlas Engonasin, the kneeling Atlas, to whom it is now perhaps time to render his proper name. That he could have lost it is understandable enough when we consider that, once in heaven, he was compelled to lose his burden: how could he carry the sky of which he was now a part?¹⁰⁷ As a result of an apotheosis that is rather a *mise en abîme*, he remains suspended upside down, with empty hands and open arms, a gesture without a cause, an end unto itself, which seems to suggest the posture of prayer¹⁰⁸.

- 30 As he returned to the issue in *Stern Glaube und Sterne Deutung*, several years later, Boll emphasizes the “almost frightening number of interpretations” that have tried to identify the constellation of the “tired” and “tormented” man¹⁰⁹: the list includes “Heracles (as it is now usually called), Theseus, Orpheus, Prometheus, Tantalos, only to mention the best known names, and also the Wanderer or the Dancer”¹¹⁰, even if now he omits from this list precisely that which had been his hypothetic solution¹¹¹. Paradoxically, as Boll observes, the constellation ended up assuming the name of Heracles (or Latin Hercules), with which it is still known, and the Oriental Atlas, if he is the figure who hides under the anonymity of the Kneeling one, was replaced by his nemesis in the starry sky. As Heracles fools him in the *mythos*, by stealing from him the Hesperidian apples thanks to a trivial trick, which is perhaps just a play of words¹¹², so he fools him in the domain of the *logos* by appropriating his name. But even before Heracles replaced him, the Kneeling one was already no longer recognized as Atlas, and his gesture had become his pseudonym. The univocity of the name, however, does not suffice to resolve the ambivalence of the gesture. As the solution to the riddle of the Sphinx is the *homo erectus*, yet not the man proudly stationed between sky and earth, but rather the man who stands in the different ages of his life on the always precarious support of four, two or three legs, — thus the solution to the riddle of the sphynx Mnemosyne is the kneeling Atlas, the man not yet (or no longer) standing straight, the man who had to renounce the erect posture that would make of him the natural axis between sky and earth, and who is on the verge of raising up, or perhaps has just fallen down. His is only the expression of a conatus, the as yet unheeded beginning of a motion¹¹³, but certainly the gesture it prefigures is not the circular motion of Francesco di Giorgio's Atlas, who is turning on his heels, but rather that of Mani's Atlas, who will rise at the end of time¹¹⁴. Even if no longer legible on the vault of the sky, the name “Atlas” is still inscribed on our body, and survives in exile in the language of anatomy, as the common noun of the first vertebra, a residue of the ancient planetary melothesia, which assigned each part of the body to a ruling planet¹¹⁵. Atlas has been therefore not only condemned to the oblivion of anonymity, but also to the confusion of synonymy. The first vertebra, in Goethe's interpretation, is the last ring in the chain of metamorphosis that led to the formation and differentiation of the various bones of the skull¹¹⁶.
- 31 With an image that, one is tempted to say, seems almost to have naturally blossomed, Goethe compares this Atlas to the chalice of the flower (*Atlas, gleichsam der Kelch der Blüte*), on which the sphere (or corolla, to stay with the image) of the skull rests. In that which must have been his last *boutade*, a few hours before his sudden death, Warburg took pleasure in the realization that all was well “above the collar”¹¹⁷. Contrary to Swift, who had started to wither from the top¹¹⁸, as customary with trees, he could boast of the fruits brought forth by his “late maturity [*späte Reife*]”¹¹⁹ happily unaware that the end was near at hand.

NOTES

1. Warburg Institute Archive [henceforth: WIA], General Correspondence [henceforth: GC], Fritz Saxl to Alfred Doren, 11 June 1924. The catalog, later on planned as a complement to the "Gesamtausgabe" (cf. F. Saxl, "Anlage der Gesamtausgabe," in A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Teubner, Leipzig 1932, vol. 1, p. V, reprinted as vol. I.1 of the *Studienausgabe*, ed. H. Bredekamp and M. Diers, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1998 [henceforth: SA, followed by the volume number] was published only in 1961 (*Catalog of the Warburg Institute Library*, Hall, Boston 1961) in two volumes, and then in twelve volumes in 1967 for the same publisher.
2. Cf. M. Diers, *Warburg aus Briefen: Kommentare zu den Kopierbüchern der Jahre 1905-1918*, VCH, Weinheim 1991, pp.3-4.
3. Cf. C. H. Landauer, *The Survival of Antiquity: The German Years of the Warburg Institute*, Yale University Ph.D. dissertation, New Haven 1984, p. 78: interview with Hermann Vogts. See Georges Didi-Huberman's insightful remarks on the various senses of Warburg's *Nachleben* in his *L'image survivante: histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Minuit, Paris 2002.
4. P. Valéry, *Tel Quel I*, Gallimard, Paris 1941, pp. 154, 160.
5. G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* (1550), Einaudi, Torino 1991, vol. 2, p. 547: "Trovati che Lionardo per l'intelligenza de l'arte cominciò molte cose e nessuna mai ne finì."
6. R. Klein, "La théorie de l'expression figurée dans les traités italiens sur les *Imprese*, 1555- 1612," in *La forme et l'intelligible*, Gallimard, Paris 1954, p. 147: "[l'impresa può dirsi] vera e propria operatione e impresa dell'intelletto humano," quoted from A. Farra, *Settenario de l'humana riduzione*, Venezia 1571, fol. 269v.
7. This characterization also captures the entrepreneurial spirit, so to speak, of Warburg's enterprise (that is the English calque on *impresa*): it always pleased him to extol the mercantile side of the versatile figures of the Renaissance patrons, on whom his own persona was in part 3 avowedly modeled (cf. WIA, GC, Warburg to Adolph Goldschmidt, Florence, 11 April 1929: "we are both offsprings of a family of merchants and we know what *merchant adventurer* [English in the original] means. Fortune with the sail vs. Fortune with the forelock [*Fortuna mit dem Segel gegen Fortuna mit dem Schopf*]"); and also, as we will see, their shared predilection for the artistic genre of the *impresa*.
8. K. Blixen, "On Mottoes of My Life," in *Daguerrotypes*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1979, p. 1. Karen Blixen was born in 1885, hence belonged to an even later generation than Aby Warburg, born in Hamburg in 1866
9. The German word that writers in that language can use instead of the Romance loan *motto* means, literally, "saying of choice, elective saying."
10. According to H. Meurer, "Navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse," *Pädagogisches Archiv* 45 (1903), pp. 74-78, the motto was fixed in such form by Antonio Tudertino's translation of 1478. As Meurer remarks, the motto is included for the first time in the twentieth edition of Georg Büchmann's *Geflügelte Worte*, revised by Walter Heinrich Robert-tornow, Haude & Spener, Berlin 1900; see below, n. 25.
11. K. Blixen, *Daguerrotypes*, p. 5. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this motto is enjoying quite a revival as the name for websites either devoted to nautical questions or advocating the necessity of navigating the internet.
12. According to the Danish critic Bo Hakon Joergensen, whom I thank for this communication and his permission to quote it, Blixen could have easily found the Plutarchean motto in the school edition of Latin readings prepared by the great Danish philologist Johan Nikolai Madvig. I

have not been able to confirm this assertion. I also wish to thank Mette Shayne (Chicago) for her help.

13. G. D'Annunzio (born 1863), *Versi d'amore e di gloria, incipit of "Alle Pleiadi e ai Fati"* (1903), then in *Laus vitae*, IX, vv. 290-291, XVIII, vv. 944-45 and conclusion.

14. Although he immediately contradicted it: "*Navigare è necessario...* / Mejor: ¡vivir para ver!" A. Machado (born 1875), *Poesías completas*, ed. Manuel Alvar, Espasa Calpe, Madrid 1996, p.294, from the section "Proverbios y cantares" of the collection *Nuevas canciones (1917-1930)*.

15. Which, like Machado, Pessoa (born 1888), reformulates: "*Viver não é necessário; o que é necessário é criar,*" *Obra poética* (1960), Nova Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro 1990, p. 15, undated annotation, according to the editor of the volume Maria Aliete Galhoz, who quotes it as the motto to her introduction.

16. One has only to be reminded of the invitation addressed to the philosophers in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Book IV, § 289): "*Auf die Schiffe, ihr Philosophen!*" I am convinced, although it is in all likelihood only a paramnesia, that I found the motto quoted by Nietzsche in one of his letters, but I could not confirm this *déjà lu*, as it were.

17. *Popolo d'Italia*, n. 1, 1 January 1920, in B. Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, La Fenice, Firenze 1954, vol. 14, p. 231.

18. As we know thanks to the solicitous Giuseppe Fumagalli, *Chi l'ha detto? Tesoro di citazioni italiane e straniere, ottava edizione riveduta ed arricchita, aggiunte le frasi storiche della Grande Guerra e della rinascita nazionale*, Hoepli, Milano 1934, p. 241, who was pleased to have included so many quotations by Mussolini that the *duce* was only surpassed by the Bible, Dante, Horace, Virgil, Cicero, Petrarch and Tasso, although he would have "liked (and could have easily) quoted as many sentences" (p. XVIII). The quotation is, of course, expunged, like all the others by Mussolini, from the postwar reprints, which are hence much thinner, but it uncannily survives in the index. On p. X of the first edition (Milano 1894), Fumagalli already avows his indebtedness to Büchmann.

19. Cf. A. Warburg's letter to his brothers Paul and Felix, 15 May 1926, in T. von Stockhausen, *Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg: Architektur, Einrichtung und Organisation*, Dölling und Galitz, Hamburg 1992, p. 174.

20. *Ich muss und will froh sein, dass das Institut jetzt auch in der äusseren Form so steht, wie das pflichtgemässe Verhalten zu der kommandierenden Idee es gebot.*" Saxl is perhaps taking up Warburg's point when he compares the new building to a ship in his unfinished "History of Warburg's Library, 1886-1944," in E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography*, Warburg Institute, London 1970, p. 334.

21. Freud quotes the motto as "*Wahlspruch der Hansa*" in *Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod*, published for the first time in *Imago*, 1915 (and which I quote from the *Gesammelte Werke*, Imago, London 1946, vol. 10, p. 343).

22. I thank Werner Schriefer who confirmed to me its presence over the entrance gate.

23. M. M. Warburg, *Aus meinen Aufzeichnungen*, private edition 1952, p. 2

24. The witty definition is due to W. S. Heckscher, "The Genesis of Iconology" (1967), in *Art and Literature*, Koerner, Baden-Baden 1994, p. 260.

25. G. Büchmann, *Geflügelte Worte: Der Zitatenschatz des deutschen Volkes*, Haude & Spener, Berlin 1907; revised and enlarged after the death of the author by Walter Robert-tornow and his Eduard Ippel. Warburg could find the motto on pp. 462-463. The first edition goes back to 1864. Only four years earlier, Wilhelm Wackernagel had devoted his address for the jubilee of the University of Basel to clarify the origin of the Homeric expression: "*EPEA PTEROENTA: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Mythologie*" (Basel 1860). Büchmann's work is programmatically devoted to establishing the identity of authors of quotes with the same degree of certainty with which one would like to identify the perpetrator of a crime, a goal that is clearly consistent with the objectives of large part of art history at the time and the positivist project in general. In its most

pedestrian formulation, like a cinematographic “whodunit,” the goal is to provide an answer to that basic question, “whosaidit.”

26. See A. Warburg, SA, vol. VII: *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, ed. K. Michels and C. Schoell-Glass, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2001, pp. 75 (27 March 1927) and 107 (3 April 1927). A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*, Teubner, Leipzig 1890, in which the Plutarchean motto finds no place because of the difference in category between proverb (in German *Spruchwort*) and “winged word” that the editor feels the need to justify in his introduction (yet another proof of Büchmann’s popularity): winged words are “die Sprichwörter der Gebildeten” (p. XXI), since they are “mehr oder minder als Citate empfunden,” hence they spur, so to speak, to detect their author’s identity, whereas the proverb is universally recognised, according to the Latin grammarian Donatus’s distinction, as a sentence *sine auctore*, and accepted as such. In the late ‘20s, André Jolles will reaffirm that the “winged word” is a totally different genre from the “simple form” of the proverb (*Einfache Formen*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1930, p. 162).

27. In a letter to Gertrud Bing on December 8, 1929, Max promises to send her now and then “sayings [*Aussprüche*]” by Aby or to recount for her experiences that the two brothers had shared in view of a planned biography (WIA, III.134.1.1). It is interesting to note that Max had already started to appropriate his brother’s mottoes on the occasion of his memorial (cf. “Rede, gehalten bei der Gedächtnis-Feier für Professor Warburg am 5. Dezember 1929,” in *Mnemosyne: Beiträge zum 50. Todestag von Aby M. Warburg*, ed. S. Füßel, Gratia-Verlag, Göttingen 1979, p. 26), when he quoted as by Emile Boutroux a sentence that in reality is by Alfred de Vigny: “Qu’est ce qu’une grande vie? Une pensée de jeunesse exécutée par l’âge mur.” Aby had found this quote in an essay by Boutroux on the “Fondation Thiers” (one of the models for his Institute still *in fieri*, along with the Institute for Universal History founded by Karl Lamprecht at the University of Leipzig: cf. Ulrich Raulff, “Von der Privatbibliothek des Gelehrten zum Forschungsinstitut,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 23, 1997, pp. 28-43, 36) in the *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft Kultur u. Technik* 35, 1909, col. 1085, as we know from an annotation that gives the entire bibliographical reference (WIA, III.12.5.2, fol. 35); but he had already transcribed the sentence and attributed it to Boutroux in his collection of maxims for Christmas 1926 (WIA, III.17.1, fol. 10a). An enlightening example of how difficult it may be to establish “intellectual property” in the case of Warburg’s “winged words.”

28. *Warburgismen*, WIA, III.17.2.

29. G. Contini, “Tombeau de Leo Spitzer,” *Paragone*, February 1961, p. 8.

30. L. Spitzer, “Wortkunst und Sprachwissenschaft,” in *Stilstudien*, Hueber, München 1928, p. 519.

31. The most proximate, of course, would be Goethe’s letter to Lavater on September 20, 1780, which was then to provide the motto to Friedrich Meinecke’s *Entstehung des Historismus*.

32. E. H. Gombrich, *Tributes: Interpreters of Our Cultural Tradition*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1984, p. 165.

33. One may see its delightful visualization [fig. 1] in the primer drawn by Max Adolph Warburg for his father in 1927 (WIA, III.18.1, *ABC Aby Warburg zu Ehren für 1927*), in sharp contrast with a caricature of the *duce*.

34. Cf. the overview by Giovanni Mastroianni, “Il buon Dio di Aby Warburg,” *Belfagor* 55, 2000, pp. 413-442, and my introduction, “Tinctura Warburgii,” in L. Binswanger-A. Warburg, *Die unendliche Heilung. Aby Warburgs Krankengeschichte*, ed. C. Marazia and D. Stimilli, diaphanes, Berlin 2007, p. 12.

35. WIA, GC, Aby Warburg to Johannes Geffcken, 16 Januar 1926.

36. Cf. A. Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. D. Wuttke, Koerner, Baden-Baden 1992, p. 618. In the letter to Geffcken I just quoted, Warburg suggests that Usener’s example led him to formulate the second maxim, thus confirming, *pace* Mastroianni, the hypothesis already advanced by Maria Michela Sassi, “Dalla scienza delle religioni di Usener ad Aby Warburg,” in

Aspetti di Hermann Usener filologo della religione, Giardini, Pisa 1982, pp. 86-91, with no need, on the other hand, to take it as a literal quote: "It is not in the least the example of the great German philologists, in particular that of Usener, which I could experience if only from a spiritual distance, that has led me to the formulation of the second maxim. It sets the stylistic conditions of the struggle against our ignorance, which I pleaded for ad 1 [*Es ist nicht zum wenigsten das Beispiel der grossen deutschen Philologen, besonders Useners, den ich persönlich, wenn auch nur aus geistiger Ferne erleben durfte, dass mich zur Formulierung der zweiten Maxime führte. Sie bedingt den Stil des Kampfes gegen unsere Ignoranz, den ich ad 1 forderte*]."

Warburg attended Usener's lectures on mythology at the University of Bonn in the Wintersemester 1886-1887 (cf. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, pp. 33-34, and B. Roeck, *Der junge Warburg*, Beck, München 1997, pp. 51-53).

37. Warburgismen, WIA, III.17.2, fol. 33.

38. WIA, III.1.2.3, p. 7.

39. *Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern: / Vom Harz bis Hellas immer Vettern becomes Es ist ein altes Buch zu blättern, / Athen-Oraibi, alles Vettern.*

40. According to C. Bezold, "Die Astrologie der Babylonier," in F. Boll and C. Bezold, *Sternnglaube und Sterndeutung*, Teubner, Leipzig 19263, p. 15. M. Löbe, *Wahlsprüche, Devisen und Sinnsprüche deutscher Fürstengeschlechter des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1883, p. 100, records it as a motto of Count August von der Lippe (died 1701).

41. WIA, GC, Warburg to his family, 26 December 1923 (I quote from the typescript with handwritten corrections and interventions by Gertrud Bing.)

42. WIA, III.12.3, fol. 12.

43. WIA, GC, Saxl to Larisch, 19 September 1924.

44. Cf. A. Warburg, "Delle 'Imprese Amoroze' nelle più antiche incisioni fiorentine" (1905), in SA, vol. I.1, p. 85. Here Warburg is probably dependent on an intuition by Filippo Sassetti in his second *Lezione sulle imprese* (Cod. Riccardianus 2435, fol. 65b), transcribed and preserved among Warburg's papers (WIA, III.70.4, p. 6).

45. Cf. Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, p. 587. Included also in the maxims for 1926 (WIA, III.17.1, fol. 27), from the first volume of his *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Bonn 1889, p. XI.

46. G. Bing, "A. M. Warburg," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 28 (1965), p. 304.

47. W.S. Heckscher and A.B. Sherman, *Emblematic Variants: Literary Echoes of Alciati's Term Emblemata: A Vocabulary Drawn from the Title Pages of Emblem Books*, AMS Press, New York 1995, p. 1.

48. Published just two days after Warburg's death, on Oktober 28, 1929, in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, then collected with Saxl's obituary, published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on November 9, then among the *Nachrufe* bound together with the *Worte zur Beisetzung von Professor Dr. Aby M. Warburg*, Darmstadt 1929, p. 3. Now in *Mnemosyne: Beiträge zum 50 Todestag von Aby M. Warburg*, p. 29.

49. Cf. L. Reti, "'Non si volta chi a stella è fisso'. Le 'imprese' di Leonardo da Vinci," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 21, 1959, pp. 7-54.

50. A. Warburg, "Francesco Sassetti's letztwillige Verfügung" (1907), SA, vol. I.1, pp. 152, 146; trans. David Britt, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunctions to His Sons," *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles 1999, pp. 247, 240.

51. In his speech of 1918 "In memory of Robert Münzel," director of the Stadtbibliothek in Hamburg, another long-time friend and associate, Warburg describes the ex libris that "Fritz Schumacher has devised at my request — for Menzel did not possess one": "It shows a blazing ancient torch, surrounded by the Latin inscription 'Serviando consumidor'" (A. Warburg, SA, vol. I.2, p. 608; *Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, p. 726). The symbolism is in this case transparent. Schumacher is the architect who was first charged with designing the new Library and the material author of

the inscription on its entrance: cf. T. von Stockhausen, *Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*, pp. 58, 159-160, 215.

52. See here above. And one should not forget that the ex-libris he devised for his own libra [Fig. 7], although the motto is here lacking, is much more than a simple monogram: cf. D. McEwan, "Arch and Flag: Leitmotifs for the Aby Warburg Bookplate," *Bookplate International* 3, 1996, pp. 95-109.

53. See the very instructive account of its invention in *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, pp. 23-25, 21 December 1926, and in particular the openness with which Warburg defends "the bad old Latin" of the motto, which is precisely for that reason "good modern German" (p. 24). Cf. U. Raulff, *Wilde Energien*, Wallstein, Göttingen 2003, pp. 72-116.

54. I quote from the most commonly available edition: *Dialogo dell'impresa militari et amorose*, Lyon 1574, and see below note 91.

55. WIA, GC, Aby to Max Warburg, 13 June 1928.

56. WIA, III.133.3.3, p. 5 (annual report on the Library for 1925, December 1925).

57. WIA, III.97.1.1, fol. 10, notes relative to the Ovid exhibition (1927).

58. On Mercator's biography, see N. Crane, *Mercator: The Man who Mapped the Planet*, Henry Holt, New York 2002.

59. G. Mercator, *Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura*, Duisburg 1595. In another sense, already in antiquity Atlas had been multiplied in the figures of the "atlases" that served as architectural elements and that the Greeks already called by that name, whereas the Romans, according to Vitruvius (*De architectura* VI.7.6), preferred to use another transliterated Greek term, "telamones".

60. Cf. K. Berger, "Erinnerungen an Aby Warburg," in *Mnemosyne: Beiträge zum 50. Todestag von Aby M. Warburg*, p. 53.

61. As an historian of geography has rightly observed, it is largely due to chance that a book of maps is today called an "atlas" rather than a "theatre" (P.v.d. Krogt, "Mercators Atlas: Geschichte, Editionen, Inhalt," in H. H. Blotvogel, R. Vermij, *Gerhard Mercator und die geistigen Strömungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Brockmeyer, Bochum 1995, pp. 49-64, *ivi* p. 55, to which I refer for a discussion of the editorial vicissitudes of Mercator's work).

62. According to Gertrud Bing's correct description: several tables from the period 1919-1929 have been collected under the signature WIA, III.118.

63. WIA, III.118, fol. 28.

64. The fitting characterization is Gombrich's, *Aby Warburg*, p. 288.

65. "The influence of the *Sphaera barbarica* on the attempts at cosmical orientation of the West [*Die Einwirkung der Sphaera barbarica auf die kosmischen Orientierungsversuche des Abendlandes*]," WIA, III.94.2.1, fol. 55, even if the typewritten words were later crossed over by Warburg. I have edited the text of this lecture in A. Warburg, "*Per Monstra ad Sphaeram*": *Stern Glaube und Bilddeutung. Vortrag in Gedenken an Franz Boll und andere Schriften 1923 bis 1925*, Dölling und Galitz, Hamburg 2008.

66. F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, Leroux, Paris 1906, p. 239.

67. In the invitation to Karl Reinhardt's lecture on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (WIA I.9.8.5., fol. [2], which must have therefore been sent out before October 24, 1924, and contains a list of events for the forthcoming year), Warburg's lecture is listed under the title "*Per monstra ad sphaeram*," while the overall title of the event is "Gedächtnisfeier für Franz Boll," and still includes Herbig's lecture "Die Bronzeleber von Piacenza — Zur Frage nach der Herkunft der etruskischen Religion und Magie." The liver had been discovered in 1877. Boll had contributed to Carl Thulin's volume, *Die Götter des Martianus Capella und der Bronzeleber von Piacenza*, Töpelmann, Giessen 1906.

68. It appears, for instance, in the conclusion of the Boll lecture: WIA, III.94.2.1, fol. 76.

69. F. Boll, *Sphaera. Neue griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder*, Teubner, Leipzig 1903.

70. "Beiträge zur 'Dialektik des Bildes'" was to have been the subtitle of the atlas, according to an annotation of September 2, 1928 (WIA, III.105.1.3, fol. 11), dictated by Warburg to his assistant, Walter Solmitz.

71. It will be enough to refer to the German edition of the pioneering essay by Matteo Fiorini, "Le sfere cosmografiche e specialmente le sfere terrestri" (1893-94), translated and enlarged by Siegmund Gunther: *Erd- und Himmelsgloben, ihre Geschichte und Konstruktion*, Leipzig 1895, but above all to the posthumous work by Alois Schlachter, *Der Globus. Seine Entstehung und Verwendung in der Antike*, Teubner, Leipzig 1927, which one may well call a posthumous work of Boll, as well, as he died before seeing it published: Boll had taken up its edition after the death of his author, who was a student of his, during the First World War. In Boll's case, his scholarly itinerary led him backward, one may say, from the *Sphaera* to the *Globus*.

72. Transmitted, among others, by Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, III.60.1-2: "Atlas had worked out the science of astrology to a degree surpassing others and had ingeniously discovered the spherical arrangement of the stars [fasi d'ahut'on tà perì t'jn hastrologían hexakrib'wsai kai tòñ sfairikòn lógon ehiß hanqr'wpouß pr'wton hexenegkein], and for that reason was generally believed to be bearing the entire firmament upon his shoulders [toü múqou t'jn t'jß sfáiraß e'uresin kai katagraf'jn ahinittoménu]."

73. And described him, at once, as contemporary of Moses, brother of Prometheus, greatgrandfather of Mercurius Trismegistus (*De civitate Dei*, XVIII.xxxix).

74. Mercator, *Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura*, "Praefatio in Atlantem," p. 1, and "Stemma Atlantis," p. 2.

75. Cf. H. Usener, *Götternamen: Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung*, Cohen, Bonn 1896, pp. 39-40.

76. Even if Warburg himself does not seem to have used it alone in the numerous versions of the title of the work, for which see Martin Warnke, "Der Leidschatz der Menschheit wird humane Besitz," in W. Hofmann, G. Syamken, M. Warnke, *Die Menschenrechte des Auges. Über Aby Warburg*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt a.M. 1980, pp. 168-169. It will be useful to remember that the translation "atlas" often erases that which in German is a plurality of terms, as in the case of Adolf Bastian's "atlas" (Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, p. 242), which is, more modestly, an *Ethnologisches Bilderbuch* for "more mature youth" (Berlin 1887).

77. WIA, GC, Aby to Max Warburg, 13 June 1928.

78. G. Leopardi, "Dialogo d'Ercole e d'Atlante," in his *Operette morali*.

79. The image had been published and interpreted by Arthur McComb as an "Allegory of Fortune" in "The Life and Works of Francesco di Giorgio," *Art Studies* 2, 1924, p. 23. The criticism of this erroneous interpretation constitutes the premise of Saxl's reappraisal: "Atlas, der Titan, im Dienst der astrologischen Erdkunde," *Imprimatur* 4, 1933, pp. 44-55.

80. "the suffering expression of the face [*der pathetische Gesichtsausdruck*] [...] links the image with the tragic figures of antiquity (Laocoon)," *ibid.*, p. 53.

81. "Nur weil der Zeichner [...] sich selbst mit dem Atlas, nicht als Träger des Weltalls, sonder als Träger des Weltgeschehens und damit seines persönlichen Schicksals identifizieren konnte, konnte er der Gestalt den Ausdruck äußerer Bewegung und innerer Qual verleihen," *ibid.*, p. 51.

82. The fourth rule in his list sounds: "[l'inuentione ò vero impresa] non ricerca alcuna forma humana" (Giovio, *Dialogo dell'impresie militari et amorose*, p. 12). Cf. also A. Farra, *Settenario de l'humana riduzione*, fol. 273v: "non sta bene nelle perfette Imprese alcuna humana figura, se non fauolosa, historica, o che per qualche monstruosità habbia bisogno di perfettione."

83. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'impresie militari et amorose*, p. 139. "A fiction" is the translation provided in *The Worthy tract of Paulus Iouius, contayning a Discourse of rare inventions, both Militarie and Amorous called Imprese*, trans. Samuel Daniel, London 1585, fol. G.iii.2.

84. A. Warburg, "Der Eintritt des antikisierenden Idealstils in die Malerei der Frührenaissance" (1914), text first published in A. Warburg, *Werke in einem Band*, ed. M. Treml, S. Weigel, and P. Ladwig, Suhrkamp, Berlin 2010, p. 301.
85. Dieter Wuttke rightly observes that in this essay Saxl "verdeutlicht Warburgs Forschungsanliegen an einem selbstgewählten Beispiel" (Warburg, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, p. 548.)
86. W. Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.2, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1980, p.410.
87. F. Kafka, *Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit*, Fischer, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, p. 466; postcard of September 20, 1913, which a few days later, back in Prague, he will define as "an impotence, not a postcard [*eine Ohnmacht, keine Karte*]," p. 467. Two years later, Kafka will revisit this experience in his journal (4 November 1915).
88. Hesiod, *Theog.* 519, describes Atlas simply as carrying the heavens "with undefatigable head and arms." Cf. Aeschylus, *Prom.* 350-352, and Pindar, *Pit.* IV.289-290.
89. Rather than the "Crucified," whose posture Saxl believes to recognise in "the stretched arms, the head painfully reclined" of Francesco di Giorgio's Atlas (Saxl, "Atlas," p. 53.)
90. Up to the most recent repertory, the *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, Artemis, Zürich 1981-1997, vol. III.1, pp. 2-16.
91. According to Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, vol. 2: "A Bibliography of Emblem Books," Warburg Institute, London 1947, p. 70, it is the Roviglio edition: *Dialogo dell'impresa militari et amorose* (Lyon 1574), from which I quote, and which reproduces the illustrations inserted in the first edition with figures of the treatise, published by the same Roviglio in 1559, simplifying the background, but without modifying in any way, in the case in question, Atlas's pose.
92. *The Worthy tract of Paulus Iovius*, fol. G.iii.r.
93. See the introduction by Mariagrazia Penco, in *Pauli Iovii Opera*, vol. 9: "Dialogi et descriptiones," Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma 1984, pp. 353-371; the text is reproduced at pp. 427-443.
94. With the troubling exception of one detail: the kneeling leg is not the left, but the right one. In this the illustration is however more faithful to the tradition of astrological poetry on which Giovio depends, see below, n. 108.
95. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'impresa militari et amorose*, pp. 138-139: "e fu il Cielo col zodiaco e' suoi segni, sostenuto dalle spalle d'Atlante, come figurano i poeti, che stà inginocchiato con la gamba sinistra, e con le mani abbraccia il Cielo con un breve, che riesce di sotto via, che dice: SUSTINET, NEC FATISCIT." The clause "come figurano i poeti" is left out in Daniel's translation.
96. Cf. A. Le Boeuffe, *Les noms latins d'astres et de constellations*, Belles lettres, Paris 1977, pp. 100-102 and 193.
97. Boll, *Sphaera*, p. 261.
98. Review of *Sphaera*, *Revue archéologique* 1903, p. 442, in reference to *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra*, Bruxelles 1899, vol. 1, p. 90. In a long and never reprinted essay, "Frühes Christentum und spätes Heidentum in ihren künstlerischen Ausdrucksformen," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 2, 1923, pp. 62-121, Saxl reaches the analogous conclusion (independently from Cumont, in his words) that we are in front of "the result of a syncretism of forms from the East and the West" in the Mithraic reliefs that represent a carrier of the solar disc (p. 83). This may also help us to understand why the presentation of "antike Götter in orientalischer Fassung" had to be preceded by the Farnese Atlas, according to the elliptic caption to Tab. 21 of the atlas (Warburg, *Mnemosyne*, p. 32.)
99. F. Cumont, *Notes de mythologie manichéenne*, "Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses", 12, 1907, pp. 134-149.

100. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XV.5: “Splenditenentem ponderatorem [...] dicis capita elementorum tenere mundumque suspendere” (quoted in F. Cumont, *Notes de mythologie manichéenne*, p. 144).

101. It may be interesting to remember the unusual etymology proposed by Usener in *Götternamen*, p. 40, according to whom ‘Atlaß is not formed by adding, for reasons of euphony, the prefix a to the participle tláß, “he who carries,” but is rather related to, and differs only for a syncope from the adjective hatálantoß, properly said of the arms of a scale that hold an equal weight. From this point of view, then, Atlas does not support the sky like a column, nor keeps it in circular motion, like Martini’s Atlas, but balances it on his shoulders.

102. F. Boll, “Die Erforschung der antiken Astrologie” (1908), in *Kleine Schriften zur Sternkunde des Altertums*, Koehler & Amelang, Leipzig 1950, p. 24: “der als orientalischer Atlas gefaßte Engonasin.”

103. Georg Thiele presents, even if cautiously, the suggestive thesis that the most ancient representation of Atlas with the sphere, on a vase preserved in Neapel, portrays him engaged in conversation with the Sphynx (G. Thiele, *Antike Himmelsbilder*, Berlin 1898, p. 19).

104. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV.481-482: “ubi maximus Atlas / axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum”; and the almost identical VI.796-797: “ubi caelifer Atlas / axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum.” On the other hand, the contradiction between this type and the static one, so to speak, that serves simply as column (or column-carrier) of the universe has been noticed and variously interpreted: cf. M. C. Nussbaum, *Aristotle’s De Motu Animalium*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1978, pp. 304-305.

105. Whose teacher had been the “maximus Atlas” also according to Virgil’s truly unimpeachable authority (*Aeneid* I.740-741; cf. W. Kranz, “Das Lied des Kitharoden von Jaffa,” *Reinisches Museum* 96, 1953, pp. 30-38).

106. One should remember that the Farnese Atlas is the result of a Renaissance restoration, and in a work certainly known to Warburg, Thiele’s *Antike Himmelsbilder*, in which the statue was for the first time photographically reproduced from multiple points of view, the author had argued that the right knee, in particular, was originally resting on the ground, rather than on the current pyramidal support (Thiele, *Antike Himmelsbilder*, p. 23), in such a way that it would correspond much more closely to the Oriental type.

107. Engonasin appears, for instance, on the sphere that the Farnese Atlas supports (and it is fully visible in the photo of its detail chosen by Warburg for the atlas, which reproduces Tab. VI in Thiele: see fig. 13); his posture in the heavens was probably its mirror image, before the Renaissance restoration of the sculpture would hide the homology between the two kneeling figures.

108. Cf. above all the description by Germanicus, *Arati Phaenomena*, vv. 67-68: “dextro namque genu nixus diuersaque tendens / brachia, suppliciter passis ad numina palmis.”

109. To which one may add the recent, even if cautious, identification with the first decan of Aries, proposed by Marco Bertozzi, *La tirannia degli astri*, Sillabe, Livorno 1999, pp. 44-45, and “Il funambolo e la sua corda: Aby Warburg e il primo ‘decano’ dell’Ariete,” in *Aby Warburg e le metamorfosi degli antichi dèi*, Panini, Modena 2002, pp. 20-35. In spite of Manilius’s suggestive passage, the Kneeling One seems to me hardly recognizable in the figure of the “vir niger.”

110. “Wenn man sich nur vorstellt, daß das Sternbild des Engonasin, des ‘müden’ und ‘gequälten’ Mannes, als Herakles (so heißt es jetzt gewöhnlich), Theseus, Orpheus, Prometheus, Tantalos, um nur die bekanntesten Namen zu nennen, auch als Laufender oder Tänzer ausgelegt wurde, so steht man vor einer fast erschreckenden Fülle von Deutungen” (Boll-Bezold, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung*, p. 55.)

111. His final word on the matter, however, admits again the possibility “that the Kneeling one may have his model in the East” (in the posthumously published article “Sternbilder, Sternglaube

und Sternsymbolik bei Griechen und Römern,” included in the sixth volume of W. H. Roscher's *Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Teubner, Leipzig 1924-1937, col. 900.)

112. See the account in Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* II.11 (trans. Frazer): “at the advice of Prometheus he begged Atlante to hold up the sky till he should put a pad [speiran, hence probably the paronomastic play with sfairan] on his head.” The gathering of the Hesperides's apples is Heracles's penultimate labor. According to Diodorus Siculus's rationalizing account, *Bibliotheca Historica*, IV. 27.4-5, the Hesperides, Atlas's daughters, were kidnapped by pirates and freed by Heracles; in exchange, Atlas not only helped him to complete his labor, but also generously instructed him in the astrological doctrine he had developed. Atlas had in particular discovered “the spherical arrangement of the stars (t`jn t`wn `astrwn sfairan) [or: the disposition of the stars on the celestial sphere] and for that reason was generally believed to be bearing the entire firmament upon his shoulders. Similarly in the case of Herakles, when he had brought to the Greeks the doctrine of the sphere (tòn sfairikòn lógon), he gained great fame, as if he had taken over the burden of the firmament which Atlas had borne, since men intimated in this enigmatic way what had actually taken place (a`nittoménwn t`wn hanqr`wpwn tò gegonóß).”

113. Hence it ideally corresponds to the declared intention of the atlas: to offer “a psychological history in images of the interval between impulse and action [*illustrierte psychologische Geschichte des Zwischenraums zwischen Antrieb und Handlung*]” (A. Warburg, “Introduction,” in *Mnemosyne*, p. 3).

114. Cf. Mani, *seine Lehre und seine Schriften. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Manichäismus. Aus dem Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Leipzig 1862, p. 90.

115. Cf. H. E. Sigerist, *A History of Medicine*, vol. 1: “Primitive and Archaic Medicine,” Oxford University Press, New York 1955, pp. 277-278: “We still call the first cervical vertebra that carries the skull Atlas [...] these are not poetic images but reminiscences of an old system of mythical anatomy.” Tab. B of the atlas is devoted to this mythical anatomy. Cf. also my *The Face of Immortality: Physiognomy and Criticism*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2005.

116. Cf. Goethe's *Werke* (Grosse-Sophien-Ausgabe), II. Abtheilung: *Goethes Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1904, vol. 13, p. 18: “Apperçu daß das Haupt aus verwandelten Wirbelknochen besteht.”

117. H. Liebeschütz, *Aby Warburg (1866-1929) as Interpreter of Civilization*, “Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute”, 16, 1971, p. 236.

118. Cf. R. Kassner, “Stil und Gesicht. Swift, Gogol, Kafka,” *Merkur* 8, 1954, p. 743. I thank Francesco Rognoni for having helped me to trace down the ultimate source of the sentence uttered by Swift standing before a “noble,” though decayed elm-tree (*I shall be like that tree, I shall die at top*), to *Conjectures on Original Composition* by Edward Young (1759).

119. *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, p. 554, entry on October 23 or 24, 1926, two days before Warburg's death. On the importance of the figure of Atlas in relationship to Warburg cf. now G. Didi-Huberman, *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet (L'Oeil de l'histoire, 3)*, Minuit, Paris 2011.

INDEX

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