

# Appendix

## On a recent Biography of Warburg

THE cultural significance of pagan revivals, as sources both of light and of superstition, may roughly be said to have been the theme of Aby Warburg's bold researches. A seemingly threadbare academic subject, the so-called 'survival of the classics', was here freshly attacked from such unexpected angles, and with such a wealth of new documentary evidence on the underlying social, moral, and religious forces, that it could justly be said by a famous German art historian, availing himself of a phrase of Dürer's, that Warburg had opened up 'a new kingdom' to the study of art.<sup>1</sup>

Today that kingdom is associated less with Warburg's own writings, which are virtually unknown in England, than with the great library which he built up in preparing them, and which is now the property of the University of London. A biography of the man could well have helped to redress the balance, on the assumption that it would introduce the reader to the large number and wide range of Warburg's factual discoveries and to his new method of compact demonstration, in which divergent disciplines are fused together as instruments for solving a particular historical problem. However, as the author of *Aby Warburg* explains at some length in the introduction, this book was conceived under an ill-omened star. The work was forced on E. H. Gombrich by circumstances beyond his control, and it is clear from the depressing tone of much of the writing that he found himself faced with an uncongenial task. It might well be asked whether it would not have been better to leave a book on such a difficult subject unwritten rather than to write it against the grain. But Professor Gombrich has made his choice, and one must discard one's sympathy, and say what has gone wrong.

Some of the weaknesses of the book are foreshadowed in its plan. It sets out to be three things at once and, consequently, never does full justice to any of them: first, a presentation of some of Warburg's unpublished notes and drafts in what purports to be a usable edition; second, a biographical history, to serve as a 'scaffolding' for the notes in place of regular annotation; and third, a conspectus of Warburg's research and of his growth as a scholar. That these three aims, although supposedly dovetailed, constantly get in each other's way may account, at least in part, for the dragging pace of the book. The claim that in this sluggish progress one of the most alert of historical explorers 'speaks in his own words' is absurd. The fragments quoted from unpublished notes, drafts, diaries, and letters, and indiscriminately mixed with pieces torn from finished works as if they were fragments, are drowned in a slow-moving mass of circumlocution which determines the tone and tempo of the book.

<sup>1</sup> E. Panofsky, 'Professor A. Warburg†', obituary notice in *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 28 October 1929.

A review of E. H. Gombrich's *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography* (1970), in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1971, pp. 735-6. Notes and references have been added from Wind's papers.

The following is a fair example of Professor Gombrich's attitude towards Warburg: 'He was like a man lost in a maze and the reader who attempts the next chapter should perhaps be warned that he, too, will have to enter the maze.' Strange to say, this inauspicious invitation refers to the years 1904-7, one of Warburg's great productive periods, in which he published the exquisitely fresh *Imprese amorose* (1905), the now classic discourse on Dürer's *Death of Orpheus* (1906), and the masterly treatise *Francesco Sassetti* (1907), perhaps his finest essay on Renaissance psychology. To Professor Gombrich the process of discovery underlying these works, which are exemplary in their union of new archival evidence with psychological demonstration, spells confusion, agony, and frustration: 'It might seem an impertinence to attempt to trace Warburg's wanderings through the maze, but it is possible at least to indicate why he found it so agonizingly hard to map it out.' This is the author's way of building up what he considers to be his subject's persona.

It is from his reading of the unpublished papers that Professor Gombrich has abstracted this tortured figure. However, 'the inside view', as he hopefully calls it, is not necessarily the most authentic. Rummaging in fragments, drafts, and other unfinished business easily gives a compiler, unless he is on his guard against that error, a disproportionate sense of tentative gropings, particularly if, as in the case of Warburg, too many preparatory scribbles have survived.

No doubt, there was some obsessional quirk in Warburg's over-extravagant habit of preserving all his superseded drafts and notes, thus swelling his personal files to gargantuan proportions, with comic side-effects that did not escape him. And yet this living tomb of superannuated memoranda was as indispensable to the exercise of his genius as, say, the smell of rotting apples was to Schiller's inspiration — not to speak of the inexhaustible battery of pills assembled and labelled by Stravinsky. As mechanical props in the operation of the spirit, such personal rituals, however odd, certainly merit the historian's attention; but when they protrude too far into the foreground of his narrative they are likely to falsify the picture. This is what has happened in the present book. The economy and elegance of Warburg's finished work, which mark it as that of a master-craftsman, are not seen here as an integral part of his personal character. The incisive style of the man is lost in the pullulating swarm of ephemeral notations, from which he emerges, like a spectre, in the now fashionable guise of a tormented mollusc: shapeless, flustered, and jejune, incessantly preoccupied with his inner conflicts and driven in vain to aggrandize them by some unconquerable itch for the Absolute.

Considering what Warburg thought of people who had 'a noisy inner life',<sup>2</sup> the fact that he himself is here portrayed in that fatiguing character, without any respite from its vulgarity, suggests some obtuseness in the author's outlook. After referring, as a matter of hearsay, to Warburg's reputation for 'epigrammatic wit', Professor Gombrich proceeds to disregard 'this more volatile side of Warburg's personality' because 'in the nature of things' it 'has left few traces in his notes'. But the distinction is much too facile, and the notes themselves do not bear it out, since they inevitably include examples of the aphoristic felicity which also illumines Warburg's published writings. To begin an 'intellectual biography' of this particular scholar by ruling the Comic Muse out of court is to lose sight of an important phase of his historical imagination. Unfailingly responsive to human incongruities, which he would re-enact in his own person with a disconcerting degree of verisimilitude, Warburg used his wit as an ideal instrument for refining and deepening his historical discernment.

<sup>2</sup> *ein geräuschvolles Innenleben.*

Despite a strong strain of melancholy in his temperament which rendered him susceptible, from early years, to fits of dejection and nervous apprehension, Warburg was not a splenetic introvert but very much a citizen of the world, in which, knowing himself favoured by intellectual and economic wealth, he played his part with expansive zest and with a glorious sense of humour, not to forget a substantial dose of personal conceit which always marked his bearing. Admired in his youth as 'a ravishing dancer', he became notorious, while he was studying at Bonn, as one of the most ebullient among the revelling students who took part in the carnival at Cologne. His animal vitality (which illness never quite managed to subdue) was at the root of his marvellously exact comprehension of folk festivals, whether in Renaissance Florence or among the Pueblo Indians. Even his pursuit of far-fetched allegories had an ingredient of festive participation. A phrase that he enjoyed using in speech and writing, 'das bewegte Leben', defines what Pope would have called his ruling passion.

Given Warburg's pleasure in miming, and the important role it played in his conception of art, it is understandable that he seized with delight on the theory of *Einfühlung* (empathy), introduced into psychology and aesthetics by Robert Vischer, who had coined the term in his revolutionary little treatise *Über das optische Formgefühl* (1873),<sup>3</sup> directed against 'die Herbartische Schule'. Warburg referred to this book in the preface to his first work, the dissertation on Botticelli,<sup>4</sup> listing it as the principal source for the study of *Einfühlung*, which he said had some bearing on his own method. In describing Botticelli's peculiar trick of animating his firmly-set figures with the help of flamboyant accessories, such as fluttering draperies and flying hair, reminiscent of ancient Bacchantes, Warburg thought he could show in what devious ways empathy became a force in the formation of style. In later years, when he studied the link between Olympian and demonic deities in the transmission of pagan imagery, he noticed a similar bifurcation to that which he had first traced in Botticelli's art: an 'idealistic' firmness of outline offset by a 'manneristic' agitation in the accessories.

It is a measure of Professor Gombrich's imperfect rapport with some of Warburg's chief sources of inspiration that he has taken no account at all of Vischer's work or of the reference to it in Warburg's dissertation. *Einfühlung* is a term regularly used by Warburg, and the word 'empathy' occurs quite often in Professor Gombrich's book. But he gives no indication that this term, so important in Warburg's thought, was a new coinage of the 1870s. A closer study of Warburg's method, with an exact analysis of his debt to Vischer and of the constructive ideas that grew out of it, might have led Professor Gombrich to revise his opinion, pronounced several times with an air of finality which would have been ill-judged even if the evidence had been less faulty, that Warburg's psychological concepts make no allowance for the creative imagination and are therefore of little use for an understanding of artistic traditions. He repeatedly asserts that Warburg based his conception of the human mind on an outmoded mechanistic psychology that only 'talked in terms of sense impressions and the association of ideas' — the very doctrine against which Vischer had written *Über das optische Formgefühl*.<sup>5</sup>

One phase of Warburg's psychological thinking embarrasses Professor Gombrich particularly: like Vischer, Warburg believed that the physiology of the brain would one day offer the means of giving a scientifically exact account of the workings of empathy and its ramifications. Professor

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in *Drei Schriften zum ästhetischen Formproblem* (1927), pp. 1-44.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p. 27 note 17.

<sup>5</sup> The lively debates on the nature of *Einfühlung* arising from Robert Vischer's spirited treatise still survive in

Croce's diatribe *L'estetica della 'Einfühlung' e Roberto Vischer* (1934). [On Vischer's aesthetic psychology in relation to Wölfflin, Berenson, and Geoffrey Scott, see Wind, *Art and Anarchy* (1985), pp. 127 f., also 111; and B. Buschendorf, *London Review of Books*, 14 November 1984, p. 4.]

Gombrich has looked with some despair on the ‘increasing’ number of notes devoted by Warburg to these reflections. Unfortunately none is quoted. It is to be hoped that this interesting phase of Warburg’s thought will eventually be studied by a historian who has mastered the physiological psychology of that period. The interest is more than antiquarian: for in Warburg’s concern with empathy and its operation lies the key to his later and more famous researches into magic and demonology, which led, for example, to his epochal discovery of oriental star-demons in the frescoes of the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, or of traces of pagan augury in Luther’s anti-papal policy of advertising animal monstrosities as authentic portents, illustrated in broadsheets. Indeed, some perhaps over-refined distinctions introduced by Vischer into the study of empathy — ‘Einfühlung, Anfühlung, Zufühlung’<sup>6</sup> — recur in one of Warburg’s earliest attempts to distinguish between various kinds of magical appropriation (‘Einverleibung, Anverleibung, Zuverleibung’).<sup>7</sup>

On Warburg’s skill in revising his drafts and refining his formulations, often with the help of astringent exercises in permutation, by which he liked to test the range and density of his terms, Professor Gombrich’s opinion is unfavourable: ‘The result was often paralysis.’ It is open to doubt whether the term ‘blockage’, also used by Professor Gombrich, is much too coarse to designate the uneven rhythm that Warburg noticed in the progress of his work. In a delightful autobiographical note on his *Trüffelschweindienste* (services as a pig for rooting out truffles) Warburg observed that, so far as his conscious awareness was concerned, his general ideas on historical psychology and his discoveries about particular historical situations had resisted the disclosure of their ‘intimate connection’ until he was forty.<sup>8</sup> To a reader of the important works that Warburg had published between 1902 and 1906, this would suggest that at the age of forty (1906), when he began composing *Francesco Sassetti*, Warburg suddenly felt a new freedom and clarity in his application of principles that had governed his previous writings in a more instinctive way. But despite the truffles, Professor Gombrich insists that this note, which has a good deal of self-parody in it, must be accepted as positive proof that Warburg had suffered in the years before 1906 from a protracted and very severe ‘blockage’ of his mental faculties of co-ordination. Given the humorous tone of the note, and considering the publications of 1902–6 (beginning with *Bildniskunst und florentinisches Bürgertum*, immediately followed in the same year, 1902, by *Flandrische Kunst und florentinische Frührenaissance*, both packed with new heraldic and iconographic discoveries of the widest psychological import), the inference seems a little hasty; but it adds to the splenetic gloom that Professor Gombrich has spread over his canvas.

In the biographical narrative, the impression that Warburg must have suffered from intense intellectual isolation is strengthened by an important source for his intellectual history being left untapped — his scholarly friendships. Time and again a name flits across these pages — ‘his friend Mesnil’, ‘his friend Jolles’, ‘his Florentine friend Giovanni Poggi’, ‘his friend, the Hamburg art historian Pauli’ — but beyond the bare fact that Mesnil was ‘a Belgian art historian’ or Jolles ‘a Dutch author-philosopher’, no attempt is made anywhere to characterize these men or to give even the slightest idea of their scholarly preoccupations or personal idiosyncrasies — particularly attractive in the benign anarchist Mesnil, author of Baedeker’s Italian volumes, who worked concentratedly, as did Warburg, on Botticelli and on artistic exchanges between Flanders and Italy.

Even Jolles, who appears as Warburg’s co-author in a *jeu d’esprit* (whose title, *Ninfa fiorentina*,

<sup>6</sup>R. Vischer, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Warburg’s Diary, 8 April 1907, quoted by Gombrich,

<sup>7</sup>Warburg in a note written at Santa Fé in 1896, quoted by Gombrich, p. 140.

by Gombrich, p. 91.

derives almost certainly from Boccaccio's *Ninfa fiesolana*), remains a mere shadow in this book; not to speak of the famous Poggi, to whom Warburg paid the odd compliment that while he himself was working through the dark tunnel of the Medicean *vita amorosa*, he heard 'friend Poggi knocking at the other end'. As for Pauli, it is a memorable fact, here unremembered, that the intimate friendship that united him and Warburg could hardly have been foretold from a scathing review of Warburg's dissertation, in which Pauli declared it absurd that this novice should apply to Botticelli a mass of learning that was much larger and weightier than Botticelli's own.<sup>9</sup> This brilliantly written critique, in which a well-worn paradox was stated for the first time, is not listed in the bibliography of 'Writings about Warburg' which Professor Gombrich has appended to his book. For no apparent reason this bibliography begins only with the year 1917 and so omits all that was written about, against, and in favour of Warburg at the time when his major discoveries first appeared in print.<sup>10</sup>

Considering that Warburg never assumed that he could understand a historical character unless he had meticulously related him to his intellectual surroundings, it seems extraordinary that he himself should have been made the subject of a monograph which ignores that fundamental principle in dealing with his mature years. It may indeed be doubted whether a biography which omits such an important part of a scholar's life as his intellectual friendships can itself be called 'an intellectual biography' at all. No reference is made, for example, either in the text or in the bibliography, to the long and eloquent tribute to Warburg, composed in the name of the community of learning that had found its centre in Warburg's library and person, which Ernst Cassirer prefixed as a sort of collective dedication to his book *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (1926).

By the time the biography reaches that final period in Hamburg (after 1924), when Warburg became deeply involved in the affairs of the new university, even names become scarce and tend to disappear in a shadowy phrase — 'the *entourage*' — rather ill-suited for a group of scholars except perhaps in a satirical sense, which is not intended here. Warburg's frequent confabulations with Cassirer, marked by a vivid contrast of personalities — Cassirer always impeccably Olympian in the face of Warburg's demonic intensity — are not even mentioned by Professor Gombrich, although Cassirer was among the first scholars to visit Warburg during his convalescence from a long mental illness. In memory of a clarifying exchange of ideas that they had at that time about Kepler, Warburg ordered the reading-room in his new library to be built in the shape of an ellipse.

Some five years later, reflecting on his association with Warburg and on the impression he had received at their first meeting, Cassirer wrote: 'In the first conversation that I had with Warburg, he remarked that the demons, whose sway in the history of mankind he had tried to explore, had taken their revenge by seizing him.'<sup>11</sup> Professor Gombrich, who has looked at the diaries that Warburg kept during his illness, has reached a different conclusion: 'Written in pencil in states of obvious excitement and anxiety, they are both hard to decipher and uninformative to the non-psychiatrist. They hardly sustain the legend which has grown up that the patient's main preoccupations at that time were connected with his past researches into demonology and superstition.' It is not quite clear how a script which Professor Gombrich found hard to decipher and uninformative enabled him to dispose of an existing account as legendary. In any case, 'the legend' did not 'grow up' at random but was apparently started by Warburg himself. It could of course be argued that

<sup>9</sup> G. Pauli, 'Antike Einflüsse in der italienischen Frührenaissance', a review of A. Warburg, *Sandro Botticellis 'Geburt der Venus' und 'Frühling'* (1893), in *Kunstchronik* N.F. 5 (1894), pp. 174-7.

<sup>10</sup> See below, note 13.

<sup>11</sup> From Cassirer's address at Warburg's funeral, in *Aby M. Warburg zum Gedächtnis* (privately printed, Darmstadt, 1929).



this may well have been Warburg's way of looking back on his illness after he had recovered from it, and that during the illness itself he would have had other and perhaps less elevated preoccupations; but two facts speak against taking Warburg's retrospective judgement too lightly. It is generally agreed, and Professor Gombrich admits, that Warburg's astounding insight into the nature of his obsessions contributed to his cure; and it is known that the crucial test he proposed to his doctor, by which he hoped to show that he had freed himself of the terrors that beset him, was that he would manage to give a coherent lecture on 'Pueblo Serpent Rituals' — and he delivered it to the patients of the hospital. By a strange irony, it is the only work of his that has appeared in English (translated by W. F. Mainland).<sup>12</sup> He, of course, never published it himself.

In an essay 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', Nietzsche remarked that an apt cultivation of forgetfulness is indispensable to mental health. It is certain that Warburg was never mentally healthy in that respect. Although he knew the dangers of excessive empathy and of all-too-passionate recollection, he exercised these powers without thrift. Having entered deeply, as a witness of contemporary political history, into the spirit of a whole cluster of quite calamitous decisions that left the comity of nations in a shambles, this good European went out of his mind in 1918, and it took him six years to recover. During his illness Warburg wrote more or less constantly. In the hands of an experienced physician these papers ought to be an extremely valuable source for studying the progress and recovery of an exceptionally gifted psychotic. Professor Gombrich decided to leave those six years untouched, on the ground that he was not competent to deal with them. Warburg would not have favoured that decision: for he held, and always vigorously insisted, that whenever a scholar runs up against a problem which he has not the professional competence to handle, he must call in the help of an expert and make the work a joint investigation. It is fair to say that if those six years had been studied as they deserve to be, the darkness which has spread over the whole of Professor Gombrich's presentation would have been concentrated in the right place.

Understandably, Professor Gombrich was unable to close his eyes and mind completely to some of those papers that he did not feel qualified to interpret. In a casual way he has even made some use of them. Thus his account of Warburg's childhood rests in part on notes written by Warburg during his illness: that is, written some fifty years after the events on which they reflect, and under decidedly abnormal circumstances. As they stand, they impart to the chapter entitled 'Prelude' a psychopathic ingredient that somehow sets the tone of the book. Professor Gombrich says, in the introduction, that 'the precarious balance of Warburg's mental health' has enabled 'the biographer often to discern the reasons for his personal involvements more clearly than would be the case with more extrovert scholars'. To judge from this remark, and indeed from the book itself, the biographer's terms of reference have not been kept free from medical connotations, and this makes it all the more regrettable that this province was not surrendered to more competent hands.

A few words must be said about the workmanship of *Aby Warburg*. The bibliographies are careless, even with regard to Warburg's own writings (*Gesammelte Schriften*, for example, is listed without its title, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike*, and without the names of the editors: G. Bing assisted by F. Rougemont). Works published in periodicals are given without pagination, so that it is impossible to distinguish between major studies and short notes. The bibliography of writings about Warburg, besides omitting everything written before 1917, is also incomplete after that date. If a selective bibliography was intended here, a good deal could have been left out to make room for Ball-Bezold's *Sterngläuberei und Sterndeutung*, Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin*

<sup>12</sup> See above, p. 27 notes 19 f.

*Middle Ages*, Mesnil's *Botticelli*, or Pauli's reminiscences, to mention only a few works.<sup>13</sup> The extracts from Warburg's unpublished papers are printed without annotations. Thus, when Warburg reflects on 'contemporary artists such as Philipp, Niels, Veth',<sup>14</sup> these obscure names are left unexplained. Where it is said that Warburg's brothers bought 'two paintings by Consul Weber', it is more likely that they brought them *from* Consul Weber, who was a well-known collector in Hamburg. In one of the fragments from the *Ninfa fiorentina*, Warburg quotes a poetic phrase by Jean Paul ('auf Einem Stamme geimpfet blühte'); but no reference is here given to the text (*Vorschule der Ästhetik*, II, ix, 50) or to the important role it played in Warburg's later reflections on the nature of metaphor. The index not only fails to list this early quotation under the name of Jean Paul, but is altogether an uneven instrument, apparently omitting names on which the editorial work has been deficient. The illustrations at the end of the book are coarsely arranged. A plate on which a portrait of Warburg is juxtaposed to Max Liebermann's painting of old-age pensioners in Amsterdam is unintentionally hilarious. Captions are often incomplete and occasionally incorrect: 'Death of Alcestis' is inscribed under an image actually representing 'The Death of Meleager'.

Professor Gombrich is content to cite Edmund Wilson, *To the Finland Station*, as his sole source for a ranting letter by Michelet, from which he quotes, inaccurately and lengthily, on the ground that it 'might have been written by Warburg'. Fortunately it was not. An old and so far unverified supposition that Warburg's famous adage, 'Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail', might be a translation from Flaubert is repeated here without any reference to an authentic sentence in Flaubert, whose writings are not inaccessible.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, while Professor Gombrich never misses an opportunity to inveigh against the notion of *Zeitgeist*, he continues to use the concept in the guise of 'period flavour'. Thus the aura of Isadora Duncan is supposed to be discernible in Warburg's *Ninfa fiorentina*, an analogy so completely off-key that it is not surprising to learn from a footnote that Warburg found Isadora Duncan ludicrous; but this fact has not induced Professor Gombrich to question the pertinence of his construction. Indeed, the author's certainties appear at times excessive. The truculent Karl Lamprecht, for example, whose historical courses Warburg attended for three terms in Bonn, is confidently declared to be the 'one man who may be called Warburg's real teacher'; but unlike Usener and Justi, whose lectures Warburg had likewise heard in Bonn, Lamprecht is not mentioned in any of Warburg's publications. Can this fact be left out of the reckoning?

Misjudgements of scale occur quite regularly when analysis of personal motivations is attempted. Sentences like 'he wanted to prove to himself, to his family, and to his in-laws that he had something to offer' belong, on the evidence of their vocabulary alone, to a mentality and a milieu that are smaller than Warburg's; not to speak of the touch of humour in the Lilliputian statement that Warburg 'never failed to attend congresses to counteract his isolation in the academic world' — a sentence that has the undeniable quality of 'period flavour'. Warburg was in fact extremely proud

<sup>13</sup>[A comprehensive bibliography has now been published by Dieter Wuttke in his edition of *Aby Warburg. Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen* (1979), pp. 521–81, who lists Warburg's complete writings, critical opinion of his work from the dissertation of 1893 onwards, and other material in the archives of the Warburg Institute, London, and elsewhere.]

<sup>14</sup>[On Jan Veth, Dutch portrait painter and Rembrandt scholar, see D. A. Delprat, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 30 July 1971, p. 903.]

<sup>15</sup>[Wuttke, pp. 614–25, traces the confused history of Warburg's phrase, from Cassirer's mention of it as Warburg's own (see above, note 11) to its reappearance in print

in Ernst Robert Curtius's classic work *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1948). But as Wuttke notes, so apt a formulation, and one that has slipped into common parlance, sent later scholars looking for sources; the unsuccessful attribution to Flaubert is one of several examples. In Wind's view, Warburg's adage was a tough precept of historical demonstration: all his major papers from 1902 onwards were composed on the principle that his general psychological insights must appear in and through the historical particular, *universalia in re*, and this accounts for the density of Warburg's writings. The *contiguum* (as he called it) is at least as important as the *continuum*.]

of exercising the 'adventurous prerogatives of the independent private scholar'. To suggest, as Professor Gombrich does twice without producing any evidence, that a momentary dissatisfaction with the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, on whose board Warburg worked most energetically, would have 'increased his eagerness to demonstrate through a rival institution how he saw matters' is not only out of character but objectively absurd, since Warburg never conceived of his own library and that of the Florentine institute as comparable, let alone as 'rival undertakings'.

Another unfounded speculation, which turns historical order upside down, is that Warburg's style was 'probably influenced' by Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, a book Warburg cherished because its 'Philosophy of Clothes' contained some penetrating remarks on the nature of symbols: for example, that in a good symbol, as in a good costume, concealment and revelation are combined. As for style, Warburg's language, with its sharp twists and cumulative periods, belongs to a familiar tradition of German prose which Carlyle parodied in *Sartor Resartus*, drawing on his intimate knowledge of Jean Paul, 'that vast World-Mahlstrom of Humour, with it heaven-kissing coruscations, which is now, alas, all congealed in the frost of death'.<sup>16</sup> As a parody this sort of language has its merits, but it is hardly a source of Warburg's style. He was never tempted to imitate, even as a spoof, Carlyle's brusque Germanic mannerisms. They are, indeed, notably absent from a cunningly phrased draft for a mock dedication, in which Warburg meant, with proper irony, to express his sense of affinity with the absurd professor of the philosophy of clothes: 'Dem Andenken Thomas Carlyles in Ehrfurcht ein Weihgeschenk von Teufelsdröckh dem Jüngeren.' Professor Gombrich, in discussing Warburg's affection for *Sartor Resartus*, has made no use of this priceless piece, perhaps because it belongs to the 'more volatile side of Warburg's personality'.

There is a danger that, despite its shortcomings, the book will be used and quoted as a surrogate for Warburg's own publications, which are still unavailable in English. A translation of those incomparable papers, lucid, solid, and concise, which Warburg himself committed to print, would have formed, if not a lighter, most certainly a shorter volume than the book under review. It appears, however, that among Warburg's followers it has become a tradition to regard his literary formulations as a sort of arcanum, as an exceedingly fine but all too highly concentrated elixir of learning which should not be served to British consumers without an ample admixture of barley water. Though the chances of an English translation may now seem diminished by the sheer bulk of Professor Gombrich's inadequate treatment, the set-back is not likely to be permanent. Since an authorized Italian translation has been published<sup>17</sup> the justified desire to read Warburg undiluted in English cannot be ignored in perpetuity.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, I, iv.

<sup>17</sup> *La rinascita del paganesimo antico*, ed. G. Bing and trans. by E. Cantimori (1966).

<sup>18</sup> [On the relationship between Warburg and Wind, in

the context of the development of Wind's thought, see Buschendorf's detailed examination of their encounters: "Es war ein sehr tüchtiges gegenseitiges Fördern": Edgar Wind und Aby Warburg', *IDEA*, IV (1985), pp. 165-209.]



# THE ELOQUENCE OF SYMBOLS