

Wandering towards Bruno: *synderesis* and “synthetic intuition”

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Wenn irgend jemand, so muss es *Ihnen* gelingen,
uns den Weg zu diesen merkwürdigen Mann zu weisen.
Ernst Cassirer, letter to Aby Warburg¹

This essay contemplates the “way” Aby Warburg takes in his revelatory if fragmentary reading of Giordano Bruno, and how Erwin Panofsky may be said to accompany and abandon him on this *Wanderstrasse*. It considers how and why Warburg in 1928-29 treats a fairly obscure concept from medieval theology, *synderesis*, as a dynamic, decidedly unsynthetic form of intuition that enables him to situate Bruno (and himself) in the ever-oscillating history of word and image. Such *synderesis*, I contend, invites comparison also with more programmatic, less subjective forms of intuition promoted in roughly the same years by Panofsky and Cassirer, especially as they, mining the riches of Warburg's library in Hamburg, likewise make Bruno a test case for their methods of interpreting Renaissance thought and art. Indeed, all three men make Bruno an exemplary figure, both for the ways his intuitions fuel his extraordinary writings and, effectively, for how they variously resemble their own versions of “symbolic” thought.

With his penchant for daring metaphor and elaborate allegory, his nearly hieroglyphic use of images in the mnemotechnical works, to say nothing of his self-conscious, historicist appropriation of classical and scriptural motifs, Bruno leans heavily on forms of intuitive thought (Gentile [1912]: 354; Ciliberto [2013]²). In all his works, that is, Bruno

¹ E. Cassirer, WIA, GC/30530 [29.12.28].

² Here Michele Ciliberto stresses how the mnemotechnical works facilitate a «bi-directionality» between induction/intuition and deduction/analysis in Bruno's thought.

consistently tries to find, to intuit, unity between contraries (*coincidentia oppositorum*), no matter the particulars at stake (Ordine [1987], Eng. 17-24, 115). «To think is to speculate with images», affirms Bruno; images, I might add, that form polarities whose resolution tends to occur not on the level of inductive or deductive reason, but on the higher, more mystical plane of what Cusanus calls *intellektion* (Yates [1966]: 298). Bruno's imagination, Frances Yates concludes, at once fuels and undermines his analytic claims³.

La cena de le Ceneri (1584) exemplifies Bruno's labors to find unity within multiple perspectives. From its title playing on the Eucharist supper, to its diagrams depicting the old and new astronomy, this nimble dialogue paints a now empirical, now hermetic vision of a Post-Copernican, infinite universe and humanity's place in it. Specifically, the *Cena* interprets Copernicanism to promote both a confessional and conceptual reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics. Here, in brief, *scientia* becomes a vehicle to reach new metaphysical truths but also to secure ethical *sapientia* (Ordine [2003]: 158-161). And, as in the two texts that will fascinate Warburg, the problem of infinity proves to be the lynchpin of Bruno's thought, one that requires all the resources (mnemnotechnics, metaphysics, rhetoric) that he can bring to bear. Trying to reconcile the material, spatial, and thus infinite *explicatio* of the cosmos with the divine *complicatio* that necessarily informs it, an ever ingenious, often bombastic Bruno tirelessly adduces mythic, quotidian, Petrarchan, geometric, and cosmological images, even as he acknowledges the impossibility of finding real and not just nominal correspondences. In sum, for all its metaphysical claims, Bruno's cosmological system ultimately turns away from God and back towards fallen nature. Or, as Michele Ciliberto observes, Bruno intuitively mediates the enigma of infinity by the «shadow», «image» and the «portrait» (Ciliberto [2013]: 48-54).

In Italy from September 1928 through June 1929, Warburg and Gertrud Bing work on the *Atlas*, and concurrently think, read, and write about Mithraism, Manet, and, above all, Bruno, who becomes an exemplary "antenna" for their understanding of late Re-

³ Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of Warburg's *Auseinandersetzung* with Bruno is the omission of any reference to Brunean mnemonics (e.g. in *De umbris idearum*), which of course gives images a constitutive role. That Warburg laboring to complete his encyclopedic project dubbed *Mnemosyne*, should not have seen Bruno as a *Vorläufer* in these efforts is as striking as it is inexplicable (save that he did not live long enough to read all the books that he had the foresight to purchase for his library). But that Frances Yates, working in London in Warburg's library, was to become the principal avatar of Bruno as an imaginative mnemotechnician surely redeems this omission. See esp. Yates (1992): 257-58, 305.

naissance intellectual culture⁴. Surveying the scattered trail left in the *Tagebuch*, *Zettelkästen*, books (as marginalia)⁵, correspondence, & the *Giordano Bruno* notebook, it seems indeed that Warburg is seized by Bruno's own *furor* as he tries first in Italy, then, fitfully, in his last months back in Hamburg to interpret works like *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante* (1584) and *De gli'eroici furori* (1585). Still, as with all his late projects, this *Auseinandersetzung* never leads to a finished text. So to plumb his intuitions concerning Bruno, «Chevalier / errant / v. d. Unendlichkeit Begriffes», the fragments must be pieced together⁶.

Soon after arriving in Rome, prompted by Leonardo Olschki's article, Warburg declares: «Wir müssen Giordano Bruno lesen». (Warburg [2001]: 350)⁷. He then acquires for the KBW some 350 books by and about Bruno⁸. As was his long-standing habit, he also gathers bibliography, quotations, and begins recording his insights on notecards, all of which are arranged in Zettelkasten 10 (*Ikonologie Problemen*), into sections labeled: *Bruno*, *Synthese*, *Furor*, *Mania / Furor*, *Mithras*, etc. Significantly, Warburg also incorporates in ZK 10 numerous cards from ZK 51, thus revisiting, or, if you like, remembering notes he took on Neoplatonism circa WWI, but also as early as 1890 when he was studying in Strasburg. On one *Strasburger Zettel*, for example, he had copied a long passage from *De la causa, principio, et uno*; but now he redates it «Rom 1928»⁹. This helps explain the letter Warburg later writes to the great Romanist Karl Vossler which recalls «40 years» of thinking about Bruno, looks forward to a «new theory of the function of human pictorial memory», and links his Bruno revelations to work on the *Mnemosyne Atlas*¹⁰. ZK 10 also conveys his fascination with Bruno the poet, and thus with a thinker who intuitively relies on (verbal) images to express the world. Especially moved by a verse found from *Eroici furori*, he ob-

⁴ Warburg, WIA, GC/22284, fol. 1.

⁵ Mainly, this means marginalia Bing and Warburg scattered in P. de Lagarde's edition of *Opere Italiane* (Göttingen, 1888).

⁶ A. Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, WIA, III.121.1.2, fol. 24. The notebook has been published and edited by M. Ghelardi and G. Targia in "Cassirer Studies", 1, 2008: 13-58. See also Mann (2003): 25-37.

⁷ The article is *Giordano Bruno*, "Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", 2, 1924, pp. 1-79.

⁸ See *GS*, VII: p. 387.

⁹ WIA, ZK 10, 051 028927. The passage is from Bruno, *Opere Italiane*, ed. Lagarde, I, p. 211.

¹⁰ A. Warburg, WIA, GC/24737 (10/12/29), fols. 3-4. Tellingly, in a letter from 23/07/1915 (WIA GC 6444), Warburg writes that he is glad to be reminded of Bruno, though he is too preoccupied by the war to engage with him: «... ist mir Brunos Reformation des Himmels ziemlich aus dem Gedächtnis entschwunden; ich will jetzt hineingucken, obgleich mich immer noch in erster Linie des politischen Problem Italien und wir in Bann hält».

serves in the *Tagebuch*: «[M]an muß eben durch die Katakomben der temperamentvollen Unberechenbarkeit seiner Logik der Gedanken zu dieser überpersönlichen logischen Tapferkeit seines heliotropen Herzens durch: “Chi quel ch'annoia, et quel che mi piace”»¹¹. Alternately, we know from notecards and letters that, fascinated by the twenty-eight emblems and *imprese* ekphrastically described in *Eroici furori*, Warburg – such was his conviction in the plasticity of Bruno's thought – plausibly, but mistakenly intuited that the first edition of the book had to contain actual emblems¹².

The *Tagebuch* and *Bruno*-notebook further confirm that without Bing's intellectual companionship, without her curiosity, encouragement, and increasingly pointed observations, Warburg would never have gone as far (or deep) as he did with his «Bruno-Reise»¹³. Warburg also discusses Bruno or corresponds about him with various characters: Giovanni Gentile and Benedetto Croce in Rome¹⁴, as well as Cassirer¹⁵, Panofsky, Vossler, and Fritz Saxl back in Hamburg. Though attentive to this chorus of voices, nonetheless, his *Bruno-Lektüre* is dominated by a single melody. Early in their stay in Rome, reading the *Spaccio*, Warburg and Bing (despite feeling unwell) have a revelation:

Trotzdem wird Nachmittags durch Bruno durchgepflügt und die entscheidende Bedeutung der “Syntheseris” unverzagt... herausgekriegt. Momo als europäisches ironisches weltliches Gewissen.¹⁶

¹¹ GS, VII: p. 391. The verse comes from a poem in the first dialogue of *Eroici furori*. It actually reads: «Chi quel ch'annoia e quel che sì mi piace / [...] / farà lungi disgiunti, / per gradir le mie fiamme et gli miei fonti?». See Bruno, *Opere Italiane*, ed. G. Aquilecchia. Unione Tipografico-Editrice, Turin, 2002, 2, p. 535 (except where indicated otherwise all references to Bruno's Italian works are from this edition). Warburg also inscribes it, dated 01.01.29, on the title page of Lagarde's edition; it also appears in the *Bruno* notebook (fol. 18).

¹² See Warburg's letter GC/24915 [03.01.29]; also Rowland (2013), Mansueto (2002).

¹³ It is Bing, for instance, who read Schelling's *Bruno*. Back in Hamburg at the KBW, Saxl, too, proves invaluable.

¹⁴ When he and Warburg met, Gentile had already written *Giordano Bruno nella storia della cultura* (1907), *Giordano Bruno e il pensiero del rinascimento* (1920) and edited Bruno's *Opere italiane* (1925). As for Croce, ZK 10 indicates that Warburg seemed particularly interested in the essay *Shakespeare e la critica shakesperiana* (Croce [1919]), and thus how Bruno and Shakespeare might be read together.

¹⁵ In WIA GC/19962 [27.11.28], Warburg writes that Bruno's «Erkenntniskritik, die sich hinter dem Symbol eines Feldzuges der Götter gegen die Himmelsdämonen verbirgt, ist doch in Wahrheit eine Kritik der reinen Unvernunft». Cassirer responds enthusiastically to Warburg's interdisciplinary approach to Bruno in WIA GC/30530.

¹⁶ GS, VII: p. 428.

Warburg alludes here to the role Bruno assigns Momus in the *Spaccio* – probably in imitation of Alberti's satiric play – as the sharp-tongued, allegorical mediator between old and new gods, between demonic, astrological ignorance and ethical, astronomical knowledge¹⁷. This crucial mediating role is confirmed when, in the 1888 Lagarde edition of the *Opere Italiane*, Bing highlights a passage from the *Eroici furori*, where in one of the sonnets a «capitano» yearns for unity: «Un oggetto rigurado, / chi la mente m'ingombr', è un sol viso, / ad una beltà sola io resto affiso, / chi sì m'ha punt' il cor è un sol dardo, / per un sol fuoco m'ardo, / e non conosco più ch'un paradiso». As Bruno's gloss reads: «Questo “capitano” è la voluntade umana che siede in poppa de l'anima, con un picciol temone de la raggione governando gli affetti d'alcune potenze interiori, contra l'onde de gli émpiti naturali»¹⁸. Seizing upon this refashioning of the commonplace cybnaut-metaphor, Warburg/Bing write in the margin: «Sinteresis / siehe / ed. Gentile / II, p.13. n. 2»¹⁹. Gentile's note, in turn, which equates *sinderesis* with «la coscienza nel senso etico-religioso», signposts arguably the key passage from the *Epistola esplicatoria* of the *Spaccio*, where Bruno ingeniously refigures the classical gigantomachy to make Momus the leader of the rebellion²⁰. Goaded by Momus as *synderesis*, Jove, now representing “intellectual light”, resolves to methodically purge the «celestial temple» of the Triumphant Beast, to replace, that is, all moral vices with corresponding virtues and so metaphorically, ethically transform the constellations from being *Bilderfahrzeuge* of astrological superstition. Formerly a notion dear to medieval philosophy and theology which denotes a kind of prelapsarian, innate conscience that, nonetheless, tries to operate in a fallen world – the faculty of *synderesis* functions here as a mystical form of ethical intuition that as “conscience” or “will” balances the competing claims of “emotion” and “reason”²¹. Giovanni Aquilecchia thus compares *synderesis* to Cusanus's *intellectio*²². It names that ability to discover the one in the many, to mediate *coincidentia oppositorum*, to glimpse in light of cosmological infinity and infinite freedom the possibility of actualizing the unity of the human and divine. As I have rehearsed elsewhere, in *Individuum und Kosmos* (1927), Cassirer – mining the

¹⁷ See *Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2, p. 186, n. 33.

¹⁸ *Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2: p. 533 sg.

¹⁹ See the *Epistola esplicatoria*, in *Opere Italiane*, ed. G. Gentile, Laterza, Bari 1908, 2, pp. 12-13. Gentile's note cites a passage from Bruno's *Lampas triginta statuarum* where the cybnaut image also occurs.

²⁰ *Ivi*, p. 13.

²¹ On *synderesis*, see English (2007): 80, 114 n. 64.

²² See Aquilecchia, *Opere Italiane*, 2:p. 186 n. 32; also Warburg, *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 30.

KBW, leaning on Warburg's notion of the *pathos-formula*, and thus also eagerly forging analogies between the visual arts and philosophy – finds that Bruneian *synderesis* is synonymous with «consciousness» itself (Cassirer [1927]: 79 sg., 127 sg.). In the *Spaccio*, «[e]ine neue Moralphilosophie» replaces astrology and myth. There «[d]ies Prinzip des Gewissens und des Selbstbewußtseins: das Prinzip der “Sinderesis”, wie Bruno es nennt, tritt an die Stelle der unbewußt wirkenden, kosmisch-dämonischen Kräfte»^(Ivi: 128). In this manner, Bruno's vision is made to compete with the Cartesian *cogito*, but in a way that ethically confronts its own rich, if conflicted origins as well as the contingencies of being a subject in a mutable, infinite world. In brief, Cassirer ultimately interprets Bruno as a philosopher of symbolic forms who develops an image-rich discourse to reconcile his bold cosmological and metaphysical intuitions with ethical contingencies and a thirst for self-knowledge: «Die *Ethik* Brunos insbesondere, die es nicht sowohl mit der Form des Universums, als mit der des Menschen zu tun hat, greift überall nach diesem spezifisch-menschlichen Ausdrucksmittel. Brunos *Spaccio* ist die allseitige Entwicklung jener ethisch-allegorischen Formelsprache, die die Verhältnisse der inneren Welt durch Gestalten des sichtbaren, des räumlichen Kosmos zu verdeutlichen sucht»^(Ivi: 78). *Synderesis* thus helps Cassirer explain how Bruno confronts the problem of infinity as posed by Copernicus's new cosmology; with it, Bruno transcends what «der Sinn und die Anschauung» can know, and thus empirical and mathematical reason as well: «Wir erfassen vielmehr das Unendliche mit dem gleichen Organ, mit dem wir auch unser eigenes geistiges Sein und Wesen erfassen: das Prinzip seiner Erkenntnis ist nirgends anders, als im Prinzip des Ich, im Prinzip des *Selbstbewußtseins* zu suchen»^(Ivi: 198 sg.). Thus Cassirer's brilliant coda, now intuitively, now synthetically, resolves the subject/object dichotomy, since in the *Eroici furori*, «das Raumproblem» belongs «dem Kreis der *ethischen* Grundfragen»^(Ivi: 198). By trying to secure our own infinite, «innere[] Freiheit» we perforce confront the necessity and thus the pathos of an infinite universe^(Ivi: 199). In this manner, *synderesis* becomes a key element – perhaps the decisive one – in the kind of *Geistesgeschichte* that Warburg never would or could undertake²³.

In general terms, then, by appropriating Bruno's (and Cassirer's) *synderesis* and the satiric, allegorical figure that embodies it, Warburg finds both a concept and an image to represent his own attempt to navigate polarities, to grasp, if you will, an ethical, exemplary hermeneutic to read the *Nachleben der Antike*, especially as it concerns cosmo-

²³ He writes in his dedication to Warburg (unnumbered page) that the KBW promotes the «idea of the methodological unity of all fields and all currents of intellectual history».

logical images²⁴. More specifically, by seizing upon these passages in the *Spaccio* and *Eroici furori*, while surely recalling, but never explicitly acknowledging, Cassirer's crucial interpretation of the term, Warburg makes *synderesis* the principal lens for his intuitions about how Bruno fits within larger *geistesgeschichtlichen* constellations.

Following a suggestion by Saxl, he posits the *Poeticon Astronomicum* of Hyginus (ca. 64BCE-17CE) as the immediate source for the *Sideralis Abyssus* of Tommaso Radini Tedeschi (1488-1527), a text adorned with vivid woodcuts of the constellations as mythological, but virtuous figures, and which, Warburg surmises, directly influenced the verbal images in Bruno's cosmographic works²⁵. Though no direct evidence is provided for this claim, Warburg does indicate a philological trail. In ZK 10, he queries: «Sinteresis (Giord. Bruno, Eroici Furori, I.5.34, Kühlenbeck S. 115) identisch mit Sinesis / Radinus, Syderalis Abyssus, Cassiopeia, Caput XII, fol. XIV v.)?»²⁶. However, in allegorizing the constellations and, more particularly, Cassiopeia, Radinus translates «Sinesis» as «prudential», even as he sends us to Aristotle (1143a13-15), where the term *sunesis* (understanding) is distinguished from *phronesis* (practical wisdom)²⁷. Warburg, who took notes on the *Nicomachean Ethics*²⁸, and apparently read Friedrich Zucker's 1928 lecture which traces the convergence of the terms *syneidesis* and *conscientia* in antiquity, reads Bruno as marrying in the cosmological sphere the pagan and Christian notions of ethical, intuitive understanding (Zucker [1928]). Never able or willing to fully traverse the *circulus methodicus* that Panofsky, Wind, Spitzer, and others will champion, Warburg, with this inversion, makes Bruno paradigmatic for his own hermeneutics (Agamben [2008]). As he suggests in a letter written towards the end of their Italian sojourn²⁹, it is Bruno's «Paralogik» that comes to rule his fascination with Mithraism in Ostia and his interest in

²⁴ For Bruno as a thinker of polarities, see Gatti (2011): 8.

²⁵ On seeing the frescoes in San Domenico in Naples where Bruno was a young monk, Warburg comments in the *Tagebuch*, 17.05.29: «Ohne Zweifel Hygin Vorbild». Though in the *Giordano Bruno* (fol. 29), he expresses some doubts.

²⁶ ZK 10, 045906. In Lagarde's edition another passage is marked [2: p. 681] [in Aquilecchia's edition, 2: p. 626 sg.]: «Si trova in noi certa sacrata mente et intelligenza cui subministra un proprio affetto che há il suo vendicatore, che col rimorso di certa *sinderesi* al meno, come con certo rigido martello flagella il spirito prevaricante». Then in the margin, Bing/Warburg write: «Radino / Cassiopeia / (Sinesis)».

²⁷ Norman O. Dahl writes: «*Sunesis* is like a purely intellectual or speculative grasp of moral ends, for it is primarily exercised when one passes judgment on the advice or moral pronouncements of someone else». See Dahl (1984): 46.

²⁸ ZK 10 contains a folder titled: *Aristoteles Nicom. Ethik*.

²⁹ WIA, GC/25005, fols. 3-4.

Duccio's reliefs of zodiacal symbols in Rimini³⁰. Further, the striking claims that Bruno represents an «Aufklärungs Psychagogie» and an «Engrammvermittler[]» are at first intuited and then deductively tested; and that Warburg ultimately decides that Bruno, «auf ganz ergreifende Weise mit dem eidolon verhaftet bleibt», confirms how his insights into the cosmographer's «Katechismus für Aufständische gegen das Regime der monstra am Himmel» remained thoroughly labile and heuristic.

Back in Hamburg, Warburg exults how he has persuaded Cassirer of the correctness of his interpretation of the central, complex role Bruno plays in late Renaissance thought:

Gestern Nachmittag Cassirer da: hörte mit deutlicher innerer Zustimmung von unserer Bruno-Reise. Und, was das erwünschteste war: Er war der "Synderesis" auch als Schlüsselwort nachgegangen und zwar in Verknüpfung mit Shakespeare. Was wollen wir mehr? Heil! Gott im Detail!³¹

The figure of Bruno thus becomes the last significant permutation in Warburg's combinatory *Kulturwissenschaft*³². Brunean *synderesis* signals a kind of ethical syncretism: it allows him to make intuitive connections between dramatically different objects, texts, and ways of seeing the world. And if, as I have suggested in my book, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Johnson [2012]: 116-136, 194-229), the implications of such metaphorical «Verknüpfung» or *Verdichtung* are not always explicated (or perhaps even explicable), clearly *synderesis* becomes the *Begriff* beneath which Warburg triumphantly joins a bevy of figures to indicate how a «perspective» on «interior seeing» is won.

Beiderseitiger Müdigkeit abgerungene Bruno-Lektüre führt zur magnifiken Aussicht ins weiteste: der Jäger Aktaeon wird (Eroici Furori) in die seelische Beute der inneren Schau verwandelt [...] Diese phobischen Monstra durch den Nolanischem im Norden gestählten Luther!! Marcello Palingenio Josanawillen zum Stehen gebracht die Sonne der Vernunft. (Synderesis!) der innere Heliotropismus entspricht dem Kopernikanischen System.³³

³⁰ Ostia has an underground Mithraeum whose mosaics and wall paintings are still partially extant. As a reader of Franz Cumont, Warburg was long fascinated with Mithraism. Saxl publishes *Mithras: Typengeschichtliche Untersuchungen* in 1931. Warburg refers to Agostino Duccio's reliefs of zodiacal symbols in the Cappella dei Pianeti; see *Atlas*, panel 25.

³¹ *GS*, VII: p. 484.

³² The *Tagebuch*, correspondence, and Zettelkasten 10 confirm that even as Warburg and Bing study Bruno they are reading him with and against Goethe, Shakespeare, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Spenser, Florio, Montaigne, and others.

³³ *GS*, VII: p. 451.

Fueled by memory, books, *Bilder*, newspapers, photography, and especially by being *in situ* (which meant visits to Mithraeum, to San Domenico in Naples where Bruno was a young monk, conversations with Gentile, Franz Cumont, and witnessing celebrations of the Latern Treaty in Rome), such «Synderesis!» is propelled, too, by Warburg's metaphoric, neologicistic, fragmentary writing style. And, as letters and numerous entries in the *Tagebuch* confirm, it is further sharpened by the combinatory (il)logic of arranging the *Tafeln* for the *Atlas*.

Had Warburg lived longer, the Bruno *Auseinandersetzung* would have resulted at the very least in a paper for the 1930 Aesthetics Congress. It also, I think, would have helped him fill the large, puzzling gap between Tafel 8 and Tafel 20 in the "letzte Fassung" of the *Atlas*. As for the Aesthetics Congress, the *Tagebuch* entry for 09.10.29 relates that Cassirer was pleased with Warburg's proposed title, «Aesthetik als logische Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno». But Bing objected to the word "Aesthetik": «Finde "Aesthetik" ist kein glücklicher Ausdruck, weil er etwas vom Kunsttheorie enthält. "Bildhaftigkeit" oder so scheint mir besser...». Eventually, then, two days before his death, Warburg hits upon: «Die ethische Verurteilung des Aesthetischen als logische Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno»³⁴. (This, given what we have seen above, might be glossed as: *Synderesis as Cosmologic in Bruno*.) Even this formulation, however, invites permutation. Warburg's last entry on 26.10.29, made hours before his death, reads:

"Perseus" oder "Energetische Aesthetik als logische Funktion im Geschäfte der Orientierung bei Giordano Bruno" / dazu gehört die Entwicklungstypentafel "Perseus" / So würde meine Rektoratsrede gelautes haben. / Kant: Was heisst sich im Raume orientieren (Titel ungenau).³⁵

This suggests, as do many entries in the *Bruno* notebook, that had Warburg's intuitions about Bruno attained, on the one hand, more concrete, detailed form, and, on the other, a more synthetic, a priori character, they would have been integrated into the *Atlas* via the cardinal figure of Perseus³⁶. As Claudia Wedepohl, Alice Barale, and others have argued, Perseus comes to symbolize for Warburg in the 1920s the ethical if not also metaphysical aim of self consciously reconciling humanity's demonic, astrological im-

³⁴ *Ivi*, p. 550 sg. See also Warburg's 17.10.29 letter to Saxl [WIA GC/25068].

³⁵ *Ivi*, p. 555. Warburg confuses the talk he was to give at the Aesthetics Congress with the Rector's Lecture that Cassirer was slated to give in November.

³⁶ See also *Ivi*, p. 457. In *Giordano Bruno*, Perseus is evoked in fols. 7, 27, 31, 32, 33; Perseus also figures in a loose sheet between fols. a and 1 that reads like a subtitle for the notebook: «*Giordano Bruno. / Auffahrt 1929 / (Mithras, Rimini, Perseus)*».

pulses and its more enlightened, astronomical perspectives (Wedepohl, Bredekamp [2015], Barale [2010], Cieri Via [2009]). He symbolizes the conscience that drives *Mnemosyne*. He becomes, if you will, Warburg's Momus. Further, that Kant is evoked here suggests that the ideal telos adumbrated in *Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?* and *Kritik der Urteilskraft* remain unreconciled with Bruno's legacy, with the historical and material contingencies that might be expressed in an «Entwicklungstypentafel» or *Tafeln*. More particularly, as the series of two unnumbered *Tafeln* from the *erste Fassung* and the five unnumbered *Tafeln* from the *zweite* (or “vorletzte”) *Fassung* of the *Atlas* confirm, Perseus was a constant spur for pictorial combinatory logic for Warburg³⁷. Perseus, for instance, appears in one of Dürer's 1515 woodcuts from *Imagines coeli septentrionales cum duodecim imagines zodiaci*, which in turn functions as the fulcrum for the *zweite Fassung*³⁸. Joining astrological myth with astronomical verisimilitude, this celestial map serves as the perfect emblem for the «Erkenntniskritik» Warburg envisioned beginning with the 1912 Schifanoia essay up to his last hours spent contemplating a title for the Bruno lecture. Surely, then, had there been world enough and time, Warburg would have found a way to integrate into the *Atlas* not just Radinus's woodcut of Perseus in the *Sideralis Abyssus*, but also some of the diagrams Bruno presents in the *Cena*³⁹. More particularly, the Perseus-Bruno panels would have been, probably in still more dilated form, placed in the “gap” between Tafel 8 & 20. For Bruno, as the great «Engrammsvermittler», was closely related in Warburg's mind to Mithraism, the subject of Tafel 8⁴⁰. While Tafel C, whose Überschrift begins «Entwicklung der Marsvorstellung», contains the image of Perseus (#4) from the *Kalendarisches Hausbuch des Meister Joseph* (ca. 1475), an image that appears just above Dürer's cosmological map in one of the “Perseus” panels in the “vorletzte” *Fassung*. Conversely, another panel depicting the “development” of a motif, Tafel 20 «Entwicklung der griech. Kosmologie zur arab. Praktik», contains the image, labeled from a 1927 exhibition at the KBW, «Perseus nach arabischer Vorstellung»⁴¹. In sum, Warburg was poised to use Brunean *synderesis* to finish the task of combining the ever-proliferating variations on his *pathos-formulas*, into a single artefact of memory.

³⁷ WIA, III. 105.1.2.5-6; WIA, III. 108.1[108.2][108.3].1-5.

³⁸ It is also an image Warburg uses elsewhere. See *Bilderreihen und Ausstellungen*, ed. U. Fleckner and I. Woldt, *GS*, II.2: p. 446 sg.

³⁹ Radinus, *Sideralis Abyssus* (Paris, 1514), fol. XVIIIv.

⁴⁰ See *Giordano Bruno*, fols. 9, 11; also *GS*, VII: p. 457.

⁴¹ See *GS*, II.1: p. 30 sg.; II.2: p. 214.

Panofsky's writings in the 1920s are indebted to Warburg's in numerous, often profound, sometimes oblique ways. Panofsky began teaching at Hamburg Universität in 1920. So while Warburg was away battling his demons in Kreuzlingen, Panofsky became a ubiquitous presence at the KBW and collaborated with Saxl on various projects. Yet around the time Warburg returned to Hamburg, the much younger Panofsky, as Dieter Wuttke observes, also developed a more theoretical «Typenlehre, in der Ikonographie und Formanalyse versöhnt sind», which diverges markedly from Warburg's *Ikonographie* and «Konzept einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Kunstgeschichte»⁴². Another divergence: after Warburg returns to Hamburg from Rome, the two men fruitfully discuss Bruno; but this occurs just after Panofsky finishes an essay in which the Nolan plays a crucial role, an essay that serves as a test run for his *iconological* method and that, more particularly, reveals crucial differences concerning their respective versions of intuition⁴³.

«“Signum Triciput”. Ein hellenistisches Kultsymbol in der Kunst der Renaissance» forms the first of two parts of *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (1930)⁴⁴. It interprets an enigmatic Titian painting portraying three humans heads (a youth, a middle-aged man, and an older man) perched, respectively, above three animal heads (a dog, a lion, and a wolf). Provoked by the way Titian's invention fuses a typically medieval, moral representation of *prudentia* with a more arcane image of Time, Panofsky offers a swift, wonderfully erudite iconographic exegesis that adduces possible Egyptian and Hellenistic visual representations informing the image of the animal heads, along with numerous possible textual sources. Concluding that the animal heads have primarily a textual *Vorbild*, he traces two «Wege» its iconography could have taken: the archaeological and the hermetic⁴⁵. The latter tends toward the hieroglyphic, thanks in part to Piero Valeriano; while the former, as Cesare Ripa's transparently allegorical version confirms, points eventually toward a version nearly contemporary with Titian's by a unique "Geist": Giordano Bruno. Echoing, intentionally or not, Cassirer's more general interpretation of Bruno's thought, Panofsky contends the ap-

⁴² Wuttke (1997): 24. The exact nature of his debts to Warburg are beyond the scope of this essay, though clearly his 1923 monograph with Saxl on Dürer's *Melancholia I* owes more to Warburg's methods and interests than does the 1927 *Perspektive als symbolische Form*, which follows Cassirer's Neo-Kantian lead more closely. Wuttke also argues that Warburg's efforts in the *Mnemosyne Atlas* are synonymous ultimately with Panofsky's *Typengeschichte* [25].

⁴³ See *GS*, VII: p. 479 [26.07.29]. Several *Tagebuch* entries in 1929 confirm that Warburg urged Panofsky to stay at the KBW (and not accept a position in the US).

⁴⁴ See Wuttke (1997): 9-11 on the genesis, scope, and afterlife of the text.

⁴⁵ Warburg is cited to help explain Petrarch's *imitatio* (*Ivi*: 16).

appropriation of the image in the *Eroici furori* indicates «dieselbe neue Freiheit (die zugleich eine Entwurzelheit ist), dieselbe *neue Subjektivität*, aus der heraus der *bildende Künstler zu einer ästhetischen Distanznahme vom überlieferten Bildmotiv* und der *metaphysische Dichter zu einer fast romantischen Vermischung des individuellen Ich-Erlebnisses mit dem traditionellen Schilderungsinhalt* gelangt». (Wuttke [1997]: 34)⁴⁶. By ascribing the «neue Freiheit» of the metaphysical poet and Baroque painter to Bruno, Panofsky underscores the *pathos* involved in such imitation even as Bruno is hailed for achieving Kantian «*ästhetische[] Distanznahme*», that great intellectual–psychological–spiritual prize which, despite his best efforts, almost always eluded Warburg. Conversely, the autobiographical manner that Bruno «sees», intuitively, and thus transforms the Egyptian statue with the three animal heads (an image he probably found in Macrobius⁴⁷) is so informed by historical contexts, and so conceptually daring, that it – like the depiction by the «Manierist» Giovanni Stradano of Apollo with the *Signum triciput* – is removed from the very «Affekt» it would produce (Wuttke [1997]: 34 sg.)⁴⁸. Further, Bruno's dialogue and the *sonetto codato* he imagines inscribed on the statue emblemize «die Haltung des recht eigentlich “modernen” Genies». (*Ibid.*)⁴⁹. Bruno is thus made to participate in the same dialectic between the subjective and objective that Panofsky in his later, more programmatic writings will make the engine of his *iconological* method. Indeed, that Bruno's imagery is verbal and never realized in material form seems to aid Panofsky's synthetic attempt to read it as symbolizing the dawning «Epoche» of modernity (*Ibid.*).

Signum Triciput is preceded by a brief theoretical *Vorwort* introducing the entire book. Dated «Hamburg, im Oktober 1929» (the same month Warburg dies), the *Vorwort* deftly adumbrates how text and image interact in the Renaissance. Specifically, it considers two «Humanistische Themen» that originate in the fifteenth century, «so daß die Entstehung “neuer” Bildertypen gewissermaßen *in statu nascendi* beobachtet werden kann». As for method, Panofsky underscores the necessity of interdisciplinarity, yet he also historicizes how the «*Verbindung von textbedingter Neuschöpfung und anschauungsbedingter Analogiebildung*» originate in the Renaissance (*Ivi*: VII). In other

⁴⁶ *Ivi*: 34. The passage in question is from the *Eroici*, first dialogue, second book (*Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2: p. 644 sg.) and concerns «den Rhythmus des Weltgeschehens». Though Panofsky does not say so, Bruno could have seen the Titian painting when he was in Venice in 1577.

⁴⁷ See *Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2: p. 644 n. 6.

⁴⁸ Alternately, one could say that Panofsky offers a kind of metaphorology in the manner of Hans Blumenberg.

⁴⁹ The sonnet, *Un alan, un leon, un can appare* ends with three additional lines.

words, we have here an implicit, historical justification for his own reliance on intuition, be it analogical or synthetic⁵⁰.

Chronologically, *Signum Triciput* comes four years after a short essay co-written with Saxl in English on the same topic, which appears in the *Burlington Magazine*, but that does not mention Bruno (Panofsky, Saxl [1926]). Twenty-five years after the publication of *Hercules am Scheidewege*, however, Panofsky takes another bite out of the Titian-Bruno apple. Or, as Panofsky recounts in the headnotes to *Titian's Allegory of Prudence: A Postscript*, published in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955): «I may be forgiven for acting upon the advice of Goethe's Mephistopheles: "Du musst es drei Mal sagen"» (Panofsky [1955]: 147)⁵¹. Panofsky, it seems, was determined to keep his intuitions fresh in the face of new particulars and, perhaps, objections to his method.

In any case, the description there of Bruno's appropriation of the image in the *Furori* closely resembles that in *Hercules am Scheidewege*, but for this: «[Bruno] concludes with a *sonetto codato* which, in an crescendo of despair, piles metaphor upon metaphor in order to describe the state of the soul for which the three "modes of time" mean nothing but as many forms of either suffering or disappointment [...]»⁵². But instead of letting Bruno's affect-laden, enthusiastic appropriation of this «symbol» have the last word as it did in the 1930 text, now Panofsky concludes with a biographical account of Titian's own prudence and thus an explanation of what might have inspired the artist to make one of the human heads in his painting a self-portrait. In his later years, then, Panofsky offers a more dialectical, prudential iconography, one that sublates Bruno's *furor* and irony.

But to further grasp how Warburg's (and Cassirer's) *synderesis* might differ from Panofsky's intuition, we should consider the latter's seminal, programmatic *Introductory to Studies in Iconology* (first published in 1939, revised slightly for *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, where it was retitled as *Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art*). Here of course he succinctly explicates how iconology concerns itself with «subject matter» or «meaning» rather than «form». To this end, he identifies three

⁵⁰ Tellingly, Panofsky uses the same metaphor as Warburg of the «Bohrversuche», though here to explicate how deeply to drill for iconographic meaning [x]. The first reviews of *Hercules am Scheidewege* stressed Panofsky's debts to Warburg and the KBW, as well the book's importance in showing how the iconographic method should work (Wuttke: 20).

⁵¹ This is one of the essays that is, as the Preface notes, «completely rewritten and, as far as possible, brought up-to-date by incorporating both the subsequent contributions of others and some afterthoughts of my own».

⁵² *Ivi*, p. 162.

kinds of meaning to be sought: 1) «Primary of Natural Subject Matter, subdivided into Factual and Expressional»; 2) «Secondary or Conventional Subject Matter» where «we connect artistic *motifs* and combinations of artistic *motifs (compositions)* with *themes or concepts*»⁵³; and 3) «Intrinsic Meaning or Content. It is apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work» (Panofsky [1962]: 3-7). Thus it is the art historian's apprehension or what Panofsky later coyly refers to as «“synthetic intuition”» that grasps «those basic principles which underlie the choice and presentation of *motifs*, as well as the production and interpretation of *images, stories and allegories*, and which give meaning even to the formal arrangements and technical procedures employed» (*Ivi*: 14 sg.). Further, such intuition discerns individual stylistic traits «symptomatic» of an artist's «attitude», and only then does it – with philological care and conceptual audacity–transform or translate these into elements of a larger historical narrative or *Geistesgeschichte* (*Ivi*: 8). Put otherwise, Panofsky thirsts for hermeneutic clarity, for synthetic solutions to the ever-recurring problem of finding conceptual unity in material multiplicity: «In thus conceiving of pure forms, motifs, images, stories and allegories as manifestations of underlying principles, we interpret all these elements as what Ernst Cassirer has called “*symbolical values*”». More problematically, though:

[W]e deal with the work of art as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as more particularized evidence of this “something else”. The discovery and interpretation of these “*symbolical*” values (which are generally unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call *iconography in a deeper sense*: of a method of interpretation which arises as a synthesis rather than as an analysis (*Ibid.*).

The agency here lies more with the iconologist than the artist. But who is the former and how does he diagnose the «symptoms» that lead to a «synthesis»⁵⁴?

Remarkably, Panofsky notes that such synthetic intuition «may be better developed in a talented layman than in an erudite scholar». (Panofsky ([1962]: 15). For apparently such an idealized creature may be better able to apply those, unnamed but necessary «correctives and controls» that he immediately prescribes: «for every intuitive approach

⁵³ This would converge, I think, with Warburg's hunt for *pathos-formulas*.

⁵⁴ Germain Bazain characterizes Panofsky's iconology as treating «the work of art as a “symptom”». See Bazain (1986): 216-225, 217.

will be conditioned by the interpreter's psychology and "Weltanschauung"» (*Ibid.*). In the next breath, though, Panofsky changes tack; now he ascribes such intuition to a *Gelehrter* like himself: «[J]ust so, or even more so, has our synthetic intuition to be controlled by an insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, the *general and essential tendencies for the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes and concepts*. This means what may be called a history of *cultural symptoms* – or "*symbols*" in Ernst Cassirer's sense – in general». (*Ivi.*: 16). Not content with the kind of details and *topoi* that constitute Warburg's *pathos-formulas*, Panofsky would excavate what his 1924 book describes as the intuitive ideas that riddle artistic creation⁵⁵. Indeed, with appropriate cautions in place, Panofsky insists that such intuition for «the *intrinsic meaning* of the work» should form the basis of all comparative scholarship (Panofsky [1962]: 16)⁵⁶.

Of course, many readers – including Panofsky himself – have tried to decrease (or increase) the conceptual tensions in this account between what the artist «unconsciously» does, and what the iconologist, now a «talented layman», now a psychologically-astute, erudite scholar, does to synthetically intuit the meaning of an artist's work. The most convincing of these readers, to my mind anyway, is Georges Didi-Huberman, who offers an acute critique of Panofsky's thirst for synthesis in art-history (Didi-Huberman [1990]). Examining, beginning with Vasari's *Lives*, «*the inventive power of a discourse over the objects it purports to describe*», Didi-Huberman skeptically scrutinizes how art historians proffer synthetic or "simple" reasons that allow them to intuitively reconcile the vast heterogeneity of material, sensuous content with what Kant calls the Idea (*Ivi.*: 87). Hence if the «simple reason» for Vasari is mimesis, then for Panofsky it is consciousness: «If there is a methodological principle, almost an ethical one, to which Panofsky always remained faithful, it is indeed that of *consciousness*, not specular (in the sense of captation [Lacan] by the object) but rather reflexive (in the sense given the word in classical philosophy), which the art historian must revisit constantly, in the humblest as in the noblest operations of his practice» (*Ivi.*: 94). To make his case Didi-Huberman then compares the *Introductory* with an earlier German version of the text which contains key differences from its more, if you will, synthetic successor (Panofsky [1932]). Briefly put, he argues that the German version is far more volatile, more dialectical; whereas the American version too optimistically leaps for synthetic solutions to problems that Panofsky,

⁵⁵ See Panofsky (1960): esp. 36-39, where he discusses how «die Idee» in the Renaissance «leistet... intuitiver Synthesis» and an exemplary claim of the «fast Kantische Giordano Brunos».

⁵⁶ See Braider (2006), Ginzburg (1986).

and not necessarily the artist or artwork, has posed (Didi-Huberman [1990]: 102)⁵⁷. «Here, then the history of art accedes to its *end*: to see in an individual work or in an entire style the “underlying principles” that condition its very existence, and a fortiori its meaning» (*Ivi*: 98). Blaming Panofsky's Kantianism in this way, Didi-Huberman charges that «*the synthesis was inscribed within the critical discourse from the outset*» (*Ivi*: 103). Granted, such circularity, or *circulus methodicus*, with its redemptive, metaphysical aims, facilitates Panofsky's brilliant hermeneutic performances; it allows him, as we have seen, to put Titian and Bruno in conversation because they seem to speak the same symbolic language. But if Didi-Huberman suggests a psychological as well as philosophical motives for constructing this circle – i.e. Panofsky tried to «*resolve the question of loss*» – I am more concerned with how the «*abracadabrous movement*» of Panofsky's «*synthetic intuition*», which seems to know its answers before particular questions have even been formulated, helps us evaluate Warburg's *synderesis* (*Ivi*: 106 sg.)⁵⁸.

Considering the second edition of *Idea* and its anachronistic Kantianism, Didi-Huberman asks why more generally did Renaissance humanism and art become Panofsky's foci. Not only did Panofsky need to invent «a Kantian Vasari» to justify his own synthetic ideal, but, more importantly, he saw the Renaissance as a paradigmatic time of synthesis: «[W]e might also say that humanism articulated a synthesis of dialectical antinomies» which include nature and culture, the sensible and the intelligible, above all (*Ibid.*:109-112). And if Panofsky is rightly blamed for the construction of a naïve beholder, the «*talented layman*», then this is because his «*consciousness*» (in French, *conscience*) really belongs to a historically situated observer who learnedly collects «*symptoms*» to diagnose his own times as much as the historical ones he studies. If Panofsky, revising *Idea* in the 1940s, had good ethical reasons for thirsting after such syntheses, then at least, pleads Didi-Huberman, he should have granted that the history or art is «*not a science, but at best something like an ancient sapience*» (*Ibid.*:116). In this, I would add, he might also have emulated more Warburg and Bruno. For Warburg repeatedly affirms that the aim of his *Kulturwissenschaft* was to glimpse if not attain *Besonnenheit*, an ethical as well as an intellectual perspective that in the end is much more subjective than objective or representative of an age. As he writes in *Giordano Bruno*: «*Der Akt der heroisch-erotischen Hingabe an das Chaos und die Hyle /*

⁵⁷ So, for instance, the English version excises "the violence" of Grünewald's *Resurrection*.

⁵⁸ Also: «it is *synthetic intuition* that, paradoxically, took over all the trivial intuitionisms of the history of art» (Didi-Huberman [1990]: 106).

der schöpferische Urakt der Denkraum schaffenden Besonnenheit»⁵⁹. As for Bruno, emblematic of his search for unity is how in the concluding scene of the *Eroici furori*, we glimpse divine and cosmic infinity through a *Canzone de gl'illuminati*. Though for all this, the «song» and indeed all of Bruno's writings mark only an intuitive «beginning» [*principio*]⁶⁰.

In his necrology for Warburg, Panofsky – before underscoring how «den Weg “per monstra ad sphaeram”» that Warburg mapped both in his life and his work included wrestling not only with his own «Dämonen» but also figures like Luther, Kepler, Rembrandt, and Bruno – makes this agonistic claim: «Denn er hatte die Kraft, in der *Rezeptionsgeschichte der Antike*, wie er sie verstand, die *Selbstverwirklichung des europäischen Bewußtseins* zu sehen»⁶¹. Echoing Cassirer's reading of Bruno as an avatar of the «principle of conscience and of consciousness, the principle of “sinderesis”», Panofsky transforms Warburg into a hero of his own method. Yet while Warburg in his last decades ceaselessly tries to distill a historical psychology of styles, tries, that is, to grasp after larger structures of meaning, nonetheless, his fragmentary, decidedly unsynthetic reading of Bruno also speaks to the values that Didi-Huberman finds wanting in Panofsky. Warburg and Bruno grant the demons of the past new afterlives, even if these disruptive symptoms are barely mastered by *Besonnenheit* or *Prudentia*⁶².

Synderesis for Warburg, we saw, signals the will to balance the competing claims of emotion and reason, to interpret the monuments and documents of the past all the while remaining hyper-conscious that this balance is precarious, ephemeral, forever *in statu nascendi*. Tellingly, later in life Panofsky worried that iconology might have become too mechanical a method, too confident that it could always produce «intrinsic meanings» out of any object and its attendant texts and contexts, that, if you will, it was in danger of becoming a kind of astrology (Didi-Huberman [1990]: 124)⁶³. If, in the end, Panofsky was in danger of becoming «trapped» in his own idealism and thus losing sight of the image per se, privileging too much *scientia* over *sapientia*, repressing what cannot or should not be repressed, then his *conscience* might have remembered Warburg's dynamic version of Brunean *synderesis*.

⁵⁹ *Giordano Bruno*, fol. 41.

⁶⁰ *Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2: p.752.

⁶¹ Panofsky, *A. Warburg*, p. 31.

⁶² See *Opere Italiane*, ed. Aquilecchia, 2: pp. 188, 256.

⁶³ Thus, perhaps, his later emphasis on *Entwicklungsgeschichten*, brings him, as it were, full circle to the *Vorwort* of *Hercules am Scheidewege*.

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