

Abstract

## Aby Warburg as a pioneer of Image-Science

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With the increasing recognition of the power of Image that coins the way of perceiving and structuring the world, the images have recently become the central object of the scholarly concern. In this context, Art History as a scholarly discipline began to extend to Image Science, expanding the objects of study to all the image products of humankind. In this new orientation of Art History, the German scholar Aby Warburg is regarded as a pathfinder and became the center of scholarly interest.

Warburg researched the Images not according to their aesthetic criteria but rather in the cultural anthropological perspective. For him the images are the results of the effort of mankind to solve the basic existential conflict with the nature in which they are thrown to live. According to Warburg there are two basic polar dispositions of human mind facing the unknown natural force, namely the rationality and logos on one hand and the affect and mythos on the other hand. The human beings oriented themselves in the world, antagonistically oscillating between these two poles. Warburg explained that the psychosocial dispositions between these two poles are reflected in the human made Images, so that the images should be regarded as a symptom of the psychosocial development in every historical period. For that reason Warburg didn't limit his objects of study to the fine art, but dealt with all kinds of human made images. So he proclaimed himself as an image historian instead of art historian.

According to Warburg, the classical ancient world provides the archetypes for the expression of the affect in the following historical periods, which he called "Pathosformel". Warburg understood the "pathosformel" as an engram of intensely excited state of mind, which was originated in the ancient Dionysian ritual. When the psychical state of given historical period becomes too rigid due to the suppression of affect, ancient "pathosformel" provides the energy for the antagonism. In this way, classical ancient archetypes constantly run in the European image world. These archetypes however get modified and transformed through history, as the original intense affect were sublimated into an acceptable form according to the needs of the given historical period. Therefore for Warburg, the way how the recalled pathosformel is reprocessed and transformed is an important clue for the reconstructing the psychosocial history.

In his later years he invented a new method to present the result of his lifelong research about the

reception and transformation of ancient archetypes as a symptom for the psychosocial state. He produced systematical image atlas, called "Mnemosyne Atlas", which remained unfinished due to his death. The Mnemosyne Atlas consists of 66 boards with more than 1000 montaged images, which encompass all kind of visual symbols including painting, illustration, scientific schematic drawing, news photos and stamps. So it is the history of human psychosocial development pursued not by descriptive written words but by images. Warburg arranged each image and board in a way that various significant connections of meanings occur between images and boards. In this way, Mnemosyne Atlas leads the viewer to understand our history openly.

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