



photo from Die Unendliche Heilung

Now: we have come down to our cabin by lake *Kvitavatn* after a rather *wet* hike—over-cast, rain and fog—to the *Toreskyrkja* summit. Collected a *purple gentian* on our way down. It is now watered in a vase. It is a plant found all over Europe: e.g., in the alps. In Switzerland and Kreuzlinger, I am sure.

As often during complicated walks, few words were exchanged. And I was thinking about why *Aby Warburg* bespoke the water as '*costly/precious*' in his *washing-jingle*. Water is not exactly scarce in these waterfront terrains. And certainly not in the asylums of the 1920s. They were part of the therapy.

In *Hopi country*—in *Arizona*—however, water is *precious*: whether it pours, at rare occasions, from the sky, or is found in sources deep underground. The *snake ritual*, on which *Aby Warburg* gave his lecture, connects the *chthonian* and *celestial* waters: *snakes* live underground and symbolise *lightening*.

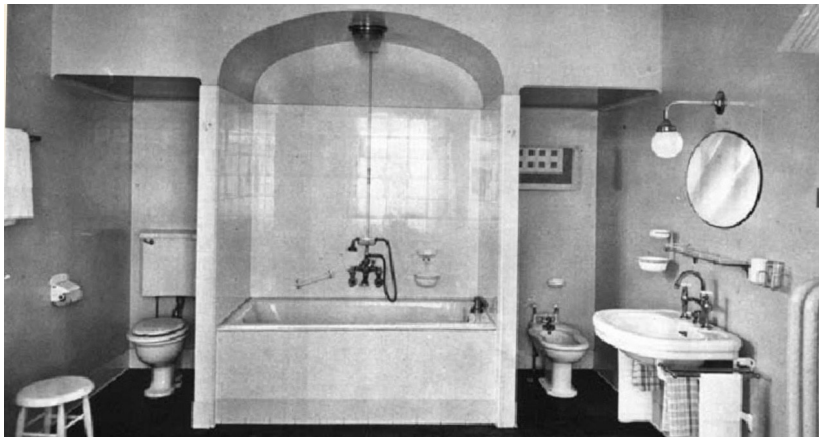


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Images have at once a *corporeal*, *mnemotechnic* and *votive* character, writes Georges Didi-Huberman in his book on the Mnemosyne-project (1905-1929). It is also the ensemble with which Aby Warburg is concerned in his *lecture*. That is, what which was paradoxically his *healing* lecture.

The lecture was given in 1923—he was discharged from Bellevue in 1924—and the journey took place in 1895/96 (3 years after the Geelmuyden atlas of Norway, that I brought with me to Kvitavtn, was published). So, we are talking about a long stretch of time: 27 years later, as my fieldwork to 2021.

Reading the lecture yesterday, I realised that I had already read it a number of years back. Maybe as early as in 1996—100 years after the lecture was given—during a short scholarship I had at the EHESS (Maison des sciences de l'homme) in Paris. At the time I thought it a vestigial *old-school* fieldwork.

However, in reminiscing his journey in the lecture, Warburg appears to be honest about the shortcomings—relating both to Hopi language, that he did not speak/understand, and to the time factor—and keenly aware of them. At the same time it clearly transpires what is at stake for him in his manuscript.

It is the human being that is existentially implicated in the *causation* that determines his vulnerability a life-conditions. He is explicitly concerned with causality as a *corporeal*, *mnemotechnic* and *votive* concern. And accordingly with a cluster relevant to communication in the auto-cluster.

There is little or nothing about how local Hopis came to terms with their lives, in social relationships and in the arid environment of Arizona. And has that weakness: the communication of the auto-cluster is readily available a *step off* the calls and cries of everyday life: the tetracluster is demanding.

It demands a physical, linguistic and mnemonic *investment* that became common in modern anthropological fieldwork. Yet, the contents of the lecture may be valuable in the sense that Claude Lévy-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques* is valuable. Reservations on *which grounds* people can meet.

An intermediary position is that the tetra- cluster does *not* trump the auto-cluster—nor vice versa—but that the forays into the auto-cluster, to which being foreign to a life-way facilitates, should be sufficiently articulated with a practical acquaintance (fieldwork) of the tetracluster to *contrast*.

Given that it is in the contrast that the work of time will appear in the *life-way*: the *work to live*. In this way, it is possible not to take a position for the one as authentic and the other as false, warped and excessive. This is a quarrel that our civilisation has with itself. And one which Warburg had too.

I am incline to ask in conclusion of this flyer: is the society of *reason* the child of running water? One in which human being presents itself as *clean*, or *tidied*, before the world. And in which s/he is privileged to look at the world in an *external* fashion: astonished, surprised and ever ambitious?