

ABY WARBURG, INTRODUCTION (Mnemosyne Atlas)

We may arguably denote conscious distant inaction between the self and the outside world an act fundamental to human civilisation. When this interspace becomes the soil in which artistic creation grows, the preconditions are met for this consciousness of distance to perform a permanent social rôle; in its rhythmic alternation between engaging with subject matter and disengaging to approach *sophrosyne* this rôle entails that orbiting between pictorial and symbolic cosmo-logic whose sufficiency or failure as an orienting, intellectual tool is in fact a reflection of the fate of human culture.

Memory, both of the collective body of humanity and the individual, comes to the aid of artistic man in a very specific way as he vacillates between religious and mathematical world views: it does not necessarily create *Denkraum*, but rather it intensifies, at the utmost poles of the psyche's behaviour, the tendencies towards calm contemplation and orgiastic abandon.

The faculty of memory activates the mneme of our enduring inherited constitution, but its intention in doing so is not primarily to protect: ratchet it employs the full force of the person—passionately fearful, unsettled by religious mystery, faithful—as stylistic records, retains and passes on the rhythmic structure in which the monsters of our imagination become the life-leaders that determine our future.

In the fathoming of the critical phases that take place over the course of this process, one expedient has not yet been exploited to the full extent of the interpretation made possible by the records of the images fashioned by artistic creativity: recognition of the rôle played in artistic creativity by polarity—between imagination that engages and reason that steps back. Between grasping with the object and the reflection of this as either sculpture or panting—what we denote the artistic act. The quandaries of intellectual man bring about this coupling between an anti-chaotic function (as we can call it, because the form of the artwork selects a single configuration, emphasising this with a clear outline and abandon to the idol created (as required by the eye of the beholder and demanded by religion), and it is these quandaries that would necessarily constitute the actual object as a science of culture that had selected as its subject an illustrated psychological history of the interspace between urge and action.

The process of dedemonising the body of inherited impressions formed by gear—a process that with its gestural language encompasses the whole gamut of possessed states from helpless introversion to gory cannibalism—lends the dynamics of human movement, even at the intermediate stages that lie between the extremes of the orgiastic (fighting, walking, running, dancing, gasping), that imprint of unearthly experience that cultivated Renaissance man, who grow up subject to the discipline of the medieval Church, viewed as forbidden territory, where only the godless unbridled disposition might frolic.

Through its image materials the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* intends to illustrate this process which one could define as the endeavour to assimilate intellectually performed expressive values in the depiction of life in motion.

In the later phase of the COVID19—the capitalisation of the word is automatic on my computer—the self-testing for the Δ -mutation of the virus, even after two vaccines, gives a good example of a clinical situation in which the *boundary* between the *Umgebung* and *Umwelt* is instantiated.

That is, a situation in which one is required to take a position within the one before the other—giving priority to the world *before* the environment—highlights the horizon on which *embodiment* takes place: though we associate this concern primarily with Merleau-Ponty, it is surely also Binswanger's.

In the case of self-testing the world (*Umwelt*) has regimes of readability and appropriation differing from the environment (*Umgebung*): “shall I do the test when I was at school the same day as a Δ -virus positive was tracked?” is a question of the *Umgebung*. The *Umwelt* says I *have* to.

If I comply on the account that someone who lectured the class in which a Δ -positive was identified, something that I identify in my *Umgebung* appears as an argument in support of the test demanded by the *Umwelt*. The *Umwelt* is the world of statistics, sanctions, news, messages to the public.

This *Umwelt* partakes of the perception of a global *situation* in which we the self-testing very tangibly asks us to *position* ourselves: negative/positive. As we perform the test on ourselves, we cross a invisible line between a citizen to a subject. Complying to the logic of confession studied by Foucault.

That is, the invisible line between being an *agent* and being a *patient*. Relinquishing agency is a serious thing to do—even as we become the charge of someone else's *care*: but once the self-test is en route, we have followed the instruction carefully, there appears to be no way back. We are liable.

We have placed ourselves in a situation where we might have to be quarantined and communicate with the world through a hatch. This is the clinical condition seen from the vantage point of the inmate. And, during the confinement, we domesticated this clinical and existential condition as normal.

Which is why Binswanger's query is relevant to us: because he is asking us how we are affected *psychologically*, how we can/will articulate the presence to our condition existentially, and how we will determine that we have completed the terms of our confinement, and move on with our lives.

The *current*, the *present* and the *completed*: these are semi-autonomous elements of how we determine readability, ownership and to be “one's own” in the traffic between the *Umgebung* and the *Umwelt*, which is more like a *edgeland/frontier* than a sharp border: as expressed by Aby Warburg [*recto*].

Moving between *confession* (Foucault), the *clinical* sample (Binswanger) and the *research* paradigm (Aby Warburg) corresponds with the *current* ill, the clinical *present* and the *completed* project (*Mnemosyne*) defining a process of communicative interaction at the *rim* of *Umgebung/Umwelt*.