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art history as cultural history

**warburg's
projects**

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CRITICAL VOICES IN ART, THEORY AND CULTURE

**urania redux: a
view of aby
warburg's writings
on astrology and
art¹**

kristen lippincott

*"Athen will eben immer wieder neu aus Alexandrien
zurückerobert sein."*

— Aby Warburg

AS DAUNTING AS ANY ATTEMPT TO summarize Warburg's thoughts and writings on astrological iconography might seem, the preliminary challenge lies in trying to disentangle Warburg's own ideas, motivations and conclusions from those scholars whom, if not following in his footsteps exactly, were led towards their own explorations of astrological images by Warburg's example. For better or worse, our understanding of Warburg's oeuvre has been highly coloured by the interests and research methods of later art historians who were inspired by Warburg's vision. Scholars such as Saxl, Panofsky, Sez nec, Wittkower and Wind all owe an enormous debt to Warburg, but what is was—exactly—about Warburg or his work that led these men into a particular line of academic inquiry is hard to uncover.

As early as 1957, Gertrud Bing pointed out that the term "Warburgian studies" was being used as "a descriptive label" for the "the achievements of a group of scholars, rather than those of the person whose name served them."² In Bing's mind, then, it seemed that there was already a general misunderstanding about who Aby Warburg was, what he had achieved personally and what was his connection to the group of iconographers who were being described as practising the "Warburgian method." Indeed, today—perhaps even more so than in Bing's time—there is a general tendency amongst art historians to label any aspect of academic writing on the iconography of works of art as "Warburgian" art history. It is a concept which is misleading on three counts. First, there was never a Warburg school. There were those young scholars who availed themselves of the resources of Warburg's library: an act which, in itself, probably influenced the manner in which they tended to address art historical problems, but it falls quite short of any claim that Warburg's ideas had permeated their thinking or beliefs. Second, although Warburg's writings cover many topics, he could never, strictly speaking, be considered an iconographer. Third, the brood of iconographers who did and do attach themselves to the Warburg Institute tend not to have been influenced by Warburg's own writings, but by those of the second generation of scholars, such as Saxl, Panofsky or Wind. By a curious series of circumstances, Warburg seems to have entered that no-man's land of the celebrity academic with its concomitant curse of his persona being so "well-known" that most art historians feel no need to read his work.

To expand a bit, among the most common errors made by those less familiar with Warburg's published and unpublished work is the assumption that he was primarily an iconographer or a decipherer of the significance or textual genealogy of specific details portrayed within a work of art. Whereas, in fact, Warburg himself was probably less interested in the specific significance of images within a painting or manuscript than in how those details might be interpreted if set within the context of the larger philosophical and sociological issues that he himself was attempting to address. Warburg likened the purely scholarly pursuit of tracing the textual and pictorial histories of iconographic details to being similar to "the services of a pig in rooting up truffles."³ He was primarily interested in ideas; facts were

merely a means by which one proved ideas. Of his many followers, the only scholar to have attempted to recreate this pursuit—the searching out of details to prove a larger, sociological point—was Panofsky, with his writings on ideas and aesthetics.⁴ But even here, the distance between mentor and pupil widened as the years passed.

When dealing with Warburg's writings on astrological iconography, however, the scholar with whom one finds the closest link is Fritz Saxl. If one considers, for example, the collection of Warburg's photographs that was displayed as part of the *Bildersammlung zur Geschichte von Sternglaube und Sternkunde* in the Hamburg Planetarium a year after his death, one can easily recognise Warburg's own intelligence and personality behind the collecting and grouping of these images.⁵ In particular, one finds the familiar grouping of the first decan-god of Aries from the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara with images from the *Tabula Bianchini* and the *Picatrix*,⁶ the comparison between the so-called "Finiguerra planet-gods" and the planet-gods taken from the set of Netherlandish *Hausbuch* woodcuts,⁷ and between the so-called "Tarocchi" of Mantegna and Arndes's *Nyge Kalender*.⁸ All of these are topics upon which Warburg lectured and published.⁹ But, with the exception of the figure of the Schifanoia decan-god (to which we shall return later), these are also all images and topics upon which Saxl published, repeatedly and copiously. If one compares the content of Warburg's *Bildersammlung* with the illustrations one finds accompanying Saxl's collected works, such as in the volume of his *Lectures*, originally published by Bing in 1957, or in the Italian selection of Saxl's writings published in 1985, the level of coincidence is extremely high.¹⁰ From the visual evidence, it would seem that both men shared not only a common, but similar, interest in and outlook on astrological iconography. Indeed, as Bing herself claimed, it was a common interest in astrology "that sealed the *synastria*" between Warburg and Saxl.¹¹ Nevertheless, if one examines the writings of each scholar a bit more closely, it does seem that there might be more to this "*synastria*" than meets the eye.

First and foremost, it must be recognized that for a scholar who seems to have made such an impact on succeeding generations of scholars and who, today, is apparently enjoying a resurgence in popularity, Warburg actually published very little. As Gombrich relates, Warburg had great difficulty in

writing—an inference with which one immediately sympathises when trying to wade through (let alone translate into English) Warburg's renowned "*Aalsuppenstil*."¹² It is quite clear from Warburg's notes, however, that he possessed a tremendous visual memory. Moreover, as he was looking specifically for recurring patterns and pointers, it is not surprising to note that he seems to have viewed art with two different sorts of lenses: one which saw the larger, formal structures of a work of art and the second which zoomed past the surface aesthetics to focus on the minutiae of a specific figure or detail. If one were looking for a word to describe this process or its intent, it would not be "iconography." Warburg was only fleetingly interested in the "*graphos*" or "written marks" of painting, sculpture and manuscript illumination. Instead, if one were to attach a term to it, one might borrow Panofsky's own "iconology." Scholars have described Warburg's attention to detail as related to the age-old adage that "*Der liebe Gott steckt im Detail*." It is a telling phrase that Warburg used once himself as the preface to his first public lecture.¹³ But, whereas it is true that Warburg was obsessive in his combing of sources, it is easy to forget that, in these details, he was always searching for something larger. One might go so far as to suggest that he was, as the saying tells us, looking for "God." Warburg used the stuff of art historical detail to weave his larger vision, his "*logos*," of the imagery of mankind as it relates to the verities of the human condition. Warburg was a visionary. Moreover, he was an intellectual evangelist. Art history was the means towards realizing and communicating that vision to others.¹⁴

Saxl, on the other hand, demonstrates a different temperament altogether. In Bing's words, Saxl was happiest when he was steeped in "the massive, anonymous record of material on which others might afterwards exercise their wits ... the small precise detail which is not open to doubt."¹⁵ He was a man who mistrusted the philosophical and recoiled from the well-informed guess.¹⁶ To make a comparison of the effect that the two men had on their pupils and followers, Saxl says of Warburg: "Warburg educated his pupils and successors to an absolute and unconditional submission of their whole existence to the demands of scholarship."¹⁷ Bing says of Saxl: "the result [of Saxl's attention] was a positive gain to those who submitted themselves to his influence."¹⁸ The sentiments are similar, but the differences of

emphasis are important to remember and may provide one small clue as to why there was no "Warburg school," but why there is still a small, yet thriving, Warburg Institute.¹⁹

When considering the work and working methods of the two men, one only needs to compare Warburg's rapid-fire citations and broad, sweeping conclusions in his works, such as the well-known paper on the Palazzo Schifanoia, with Saxl's careful discussion of the changing form of the constellations of *Hercules*, *Perseus* and *Eridanus* in his articles on Dürer's stellar maps of 1515, in the essays which formed the introductions to the first and second volumes of his *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer Handschriften ...*, or in the article published jointly with Panofsky in 1933 on "Classical Mythology in Medieval Art," to see that each scholar approaches the topic with a very different intent.²⁰ Moreover, one could cite similar differences between Warburg's work on the so-called "planet-children" and Saxl's later work on the same topic.²¹ The former bumbles with big thoughts and phrases like "*mit ihrem ... olympischen Pathos*," "*in diesem gravitätischen Gewande*," or "*unter der Schwelle naiver autochthoner Heiterkeit*."²² The latter notes "philological evidence to support this thesis," "systematic information" and "unsystematic scraps of information."²³

Warburg apparently referred to Saxl as "*Saxl à vapeur*." One recent biographer of Warburg has translated this phrase as "the Saxl steam-engine." A closer approximation might be "Saxl, Full-Steam Ahead," with both assuming that it was meant to characterise Saxl's restless energy.²⁴ Perhaps the nickname was meant to be appreciative, but one cannot help but sense traces of a certain categorization of Saxl as somewhat insubstantial and too restless, perhaps, to be a thinker of any great depth—which, one suspects, from Warburg's point of view, he may well have seemed.²⁵ At the same time, Saxl seems to have been intoxicated by Warburg's grander vision, but it was not a state of mind that comforted him or a state which he was able to sustain. To make a perhaps unfair analogy, it does seem that Saxl's first encounter was a *coup de foudre*, but that this intensity was dissipated—perhaps owing to the stress which Warburg's illness placed on both of them or, possibly, due to something else—but, as even the ever-faithful Bing relates, very early in his career, Saxl described his work with Warburg as sharing "the burden which he imposed."²⁶

It is somewhere within this apparent paradox that one begins to understand the difficulties surrounding any study of Warburg's writings and, in particular, his writings on astrological iconography. On the one hand, there is Warburg—a man with prodigious talents—mining for all sorts of material which he tries to model into a coherent world-view. The material he uncovers, however, is mere fodder for a larger beast and as ultimately unserviceable to him as the truffle is to the "*Trüffelschwein*." On the other hand, there is Saxl, who is amazed and delighted by the material Warburg discards—indeed, he and at least two generations of scholars built their careers on the material Warburg unearthed and failed to pursue²⁷. But, even though both men were committed to academic research, it would seem that neither understood (or, perhaps, accepted) the underlying motives of the other. Such situations are not uncommon, but this apparent disjunction between Warburg's purpose and Saxl's scholarship takes on new significance when one considers the fact that it was Saxl who was left to carry on Warburg's mission; Saxl who saved Warburg's precious library for future generations of scholars; and Saxl who, along with Bing, devoted his life to sustaining the Warburg heritage—that "burden which he imposed."

It is not difficult for those aware of the financial problems facing many academic institutions in the late twentieth century to empathise with Saxl's task of securing a future for the Warburg Institute in London; but what one might overlook is the extent to which the transplantation from Germany to England demanded a huge cultural adjustment as well. For whereas the principles according to which the Library was structured might have seemed slightly unusual to German-speaking academics, they would have recognized these ideas as pertaining to one of the intellectual currents circulating through a number of related disciplines on the Continent during the late nineteenth century. In Germany, Austria or, for that matter, in Italy, an inspired lecturer, such as Warburg, could be understood and appreciated both for the traditional and the innovative manner in which he approached his subject. In England, however, with its great traditions of pragmatism and positivism, such Germanic weavings would have seemed distinctly romantic and symptomatic of a way of thinking with which most English were decidedly uneasy.²⁸ In this context, then, one of Saxl's first tasks was to find a means by which he could demystify the workings of the Warburg Institute—

by helping to train young English scholars to widen their perspectives on art, but also in finding a way in which the Institute could prove useful to the sorts of research in which the English themselves were engaged.²⁹ Oddly, even though Saxl and his colleagues originally explored several areas in which they thought the Institute might prove useful—offering lectures and seminars on the history of religion and so on—it was only in the area of art history and, in particular, the iconography of artistic images where they met with immediate success. Here was an area in which the English felt comfortable and even though this had not been Saxl's original intention, the early slant of the Institute towards art history was made as a specific response to the demands of its new home.³⁰

In addition to this clash of cultures, however, Saxl faced the very real challenge of trying to find a way to make the work and thought of Warburg himself more accessible. Saxl saw this task very clearly. He felt he needed to simplify what now existed as the "Warburg Institute"—in the sense that both Warburg-the-Man and Warburg-the-Library had become encapsulated within a single *persona*.³¹ Bing and Wind had begun this process in Hamburg, when they established a permanent cataloguing system for the Library. Up until that point, Warburg had constantly shifted books between loosely-organized sets of topics as his perspective on the topics upon which he was working changed. In the same way he constantly re-organized his notes and his filing systems, Warburg had no concept of a library as a static structure to which one might add new books.³² Bing, Wind and Saxl brought structure to the Library and Saxl did his best to bring order to the *persona* of Warburg himself.³³ The problem with all this, however, is that one begins to question whether it is at all possible to uncover "the real Warburg" or if, perhaps, the image we have come to recognize as Warburg was put together in such a way that it completely obscures the original.

As far as Warburg's vision is concerned, the best study remains Gombrich's study, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography*, published in 1970.³⁴ In particular, Gombrich's chapter on "The Stars (1908–1914)" helps to set Warburg's writings on astrological iconography into a convincing intellectual framework.³⁵ Nevertheless Gombrich's own work was the product of a specific time and a quite specific set of circumstances. In particular, a deep

and abiding respect for Gertrud Bing no doubt inflected, if not influenced, some of the decisions he must have made about the manner in which he chose to portray "the Great Man." As he relates in the introduction, Gombrich had first been asked to London to edit Warburg's great miscellany or "Atlas," entitled "*Mnemosyne*." During the next decade, however, it became increasingly clear that any distillation of Warburg's thought from the massive jumble of notes and jottings he had left behind was impossible. He proposed, instead, to use the primary material in the Warburg Archive as the basis of a more distanced "intellectual biography." In one telling passage, Gombrich records that Bing "was not always happy to notice the critical detachment" in his early drafts. "It was in the nature of things that I could not share the identification with Warburg's outlook and research which for her was a matter of course."³⁶ In fairness, could it have been any different? Gombrich himself had never met Warburg. He did, however, work alongside Saxl for several years. Is it possible that Gombrich's "detachment" was heightened by his sensitivity to what must have been at least one of the underlying moods of the Warburg Institute at the time? Namely, that in the ongoing contest between a need to sustain the notion of Warburg's intellectual supremacy and the obvious and tangible merit of Saxl's solid scholarship, the former was showing signs of coming close to exhaustion. Perhaps Warburg's great vision was not sufficiently strong or its message was not sufficiently clear; or perhaps Warburg's vision no longer seemed relevant or convincing to a younger generation of scholars. Or, perhaps, Saxl had felt that it was essential to the success of the newly transplanted Warburg Institute that its foundations were set upon something more solid than "unsystematic scraps of information."

In this context, it might be telling to re-examine two examples of Warburg's writings about astrological iconography with the benefit, as it were, of academic hindsight. What were the issues? What insights are sustainable and which aspects of Warburg's work leave him most open to criticism? Is it really Warburg's work that endows him with the stature of a great cultural historian? Or does Warburg's greatness lie in the pointers he left for successive generations to follow and in the richness of the Library he assembled to enable them to carry out that process?

The first example is taken from Aby Warburg's paper delivered in 1912 on the fifteenth-century frescoes of the *Salone dei Mesi* in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara.³⁷ As Gombrich describes the event:

By all accounts, Warburg's appearance at the Rome Congress, where he presented his interpretation of the mysterious frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia [sic], was the climax of that meeting and of Warburg's public career. For these frescoes suited his purpose of driving home once more his view of the true meaning of the Italian Renaissance.³⁸

Arguing that the reintegration of classical form and content was a defining feature of the Renaissance, Warburg championed the appearance of the Olympian gods in the upper zone of the frescoes as a signal of coming enlightenment. In the middle zone of the frescoes, Warburg focused his attention on the first decan-god in the panel devoted to the month of March and the sign of Aries.³⁹ Warburg argued that, despite a few minor formal differences, there was a direct link between the Schifanoia decan-god and—working backwards in time—the representation of the first decan of Aries in the *Astrolabium Planum* of Johannes Angelus;⁴⁰ the talisman for the first decan of Aries in the Alfonsine *Primer lapidario*;⁴¹ and the decan-god depicted on the second-century *Tabula Bianchini*.⁴² According to Warburg, all of these images were distorted copies of a Hellenistic prototype depicting the constellation of *Perseus*, better preserved in a the ninth-century manuscript of Germanicus's translation of the *Phaenomena* of Aratus.⁴³ This image, he argued, had been contaminated at an early stage by the Egyptian constellations—the so-called *sphaera barbarica*—recorded by Teukros and illustrated in the “round zodiac” taken from the Temple of Hathor at Dendera;⁴⁴ and it is only with the Schifanoia frescoes that one sees the classical *Perseus* beginning to re-emerge from its “medieval” deformation.

Were this true, the Schifanoia decan-god would possess a remarkable pedigree. Unfortunately, it is not. Warburg's assumptions reflect three errors in judgement. The first error is the most minor of the three. For, whereas there is a traceable iconographic lineage between the striding man with a hatchet in the *Tabula Bianchini*, (Fig. 7.1) the angry man with the sword in the *Astrolabium planum* (Fig. 7.2) and the Schifanoia decan, none of these,

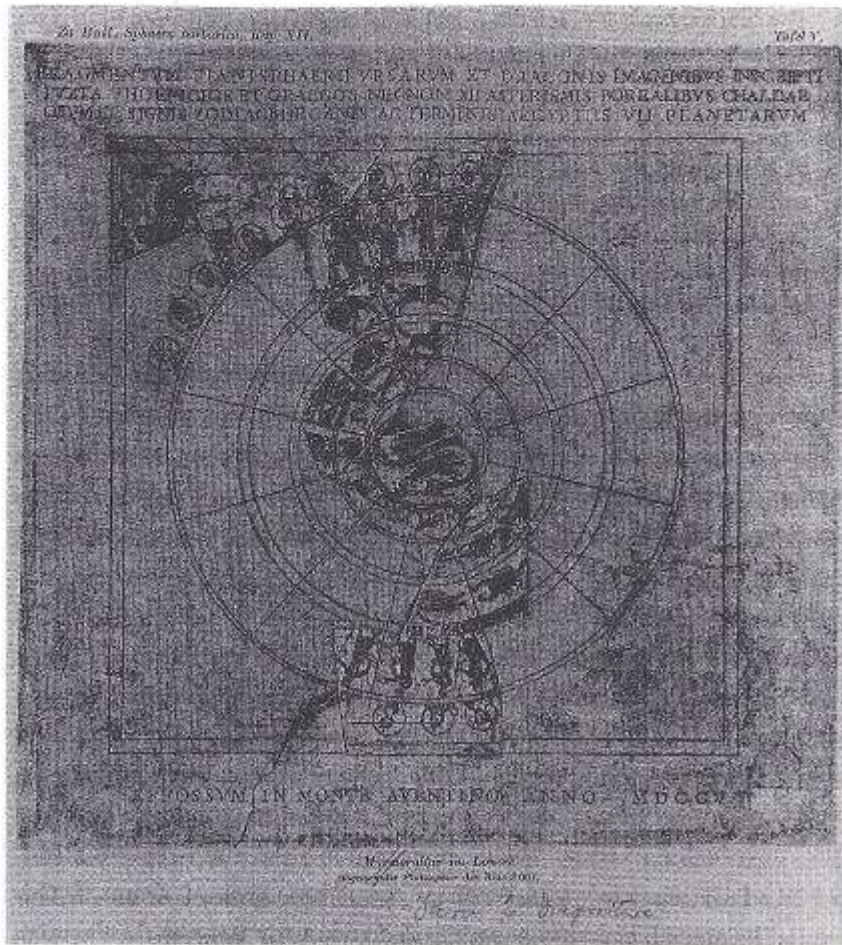


Figure 7.1 Reproduction of the *Tabula Bianchini*. Taken from Franz Boll, *Sphaera. Neue griechische Texte und Untersuchung zur Geschichte der Sternbilder*, (Leipzig, 1903) (Photo: Courtesy of The Warburg Institute)

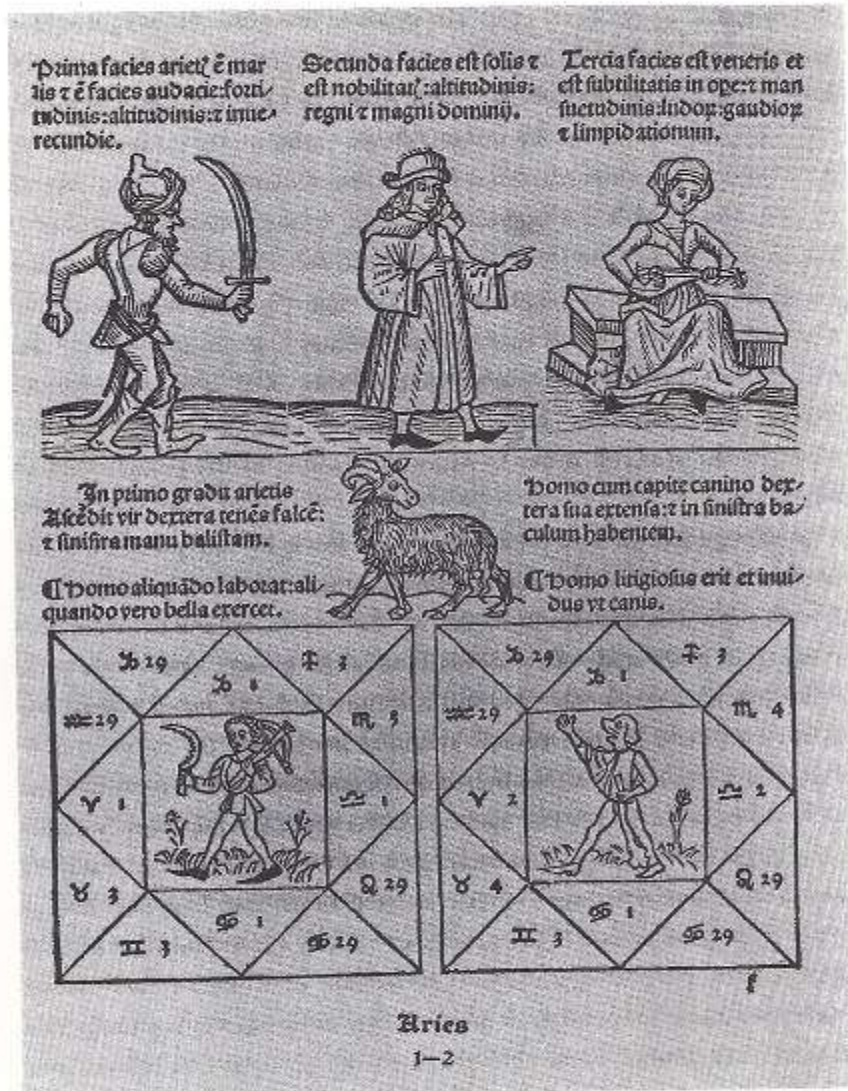


Figure 7.2 The three decans of Aries. From Johannes Angeles, *Astrolabium planum in tabulis ascendens*, (Angsburg: Ratdolt, 1488) (Photo: Courtesy of The Warburg Institute)

strictly speaking, is a decan-god. The figure in the *Astrolabium planum*, for example, represents an aspect—a “*prosopon*” or a “mask”—of the planetary ruler of the first ten days of the month, Mars. This fact is made clear by the text which accompanies the image: “*Prima facies arietis est martis et est facies audacie, fortitudinis, altitudinis et inuerecundie*” (“The first face of Aries is Mars, and it is a face which is bold, strong, tall and immodest”). The association here between planet-god and *facies* is quite clear: the *facies* is a mask behind which the planet acts. This figure is not a decan-god in its own right.⁴⁵ This point is made clearer, perhaps, when one is reminded that the fact that the *Primer lapidario* of Alfonso X el Sabio is a textbook for magicians. The dark man with an axe is an image that is to be carved on a specific stone in order to bring the powers of the planet Mars to bear.⁴⁶

Warburg’s second error is more major and lies in his interpretation of the Schifanoia decan as the iconographic remnant of the constellation of *Perseus*. This idea appears to be derived from a misreading or misunderstanding of Boll’s study of the Greek texts of the *sphaera barbarica*, a book which Warburg repeatedly cited in his lecture. Boll had noted one or two isolated incidents in the Dendera “round zodiac” where the Egyptian constellations seem to have been affected or contaminated by the more familiar Graeco-Roman ones. The fact that the Dendera zodiac is bordered by depictions of the thirty-six Egyptian decan-gods led Warburg to believe that there was a connection between Greek constellations and Egyptian decan-imagery. But, rather than being an attempt to show a continuity of tradition, Boll’s express purpose in this study was to show how little the two systems had in common. For example, if one considers those Egyptian constellations that are the astronomical equivalents to the classical constellations of *Perseus*, *Andromeda* and *Cassiopeia*, one finds the distinctly non-classical depictions of an eye set within a disc and a squatting ape with a sparrowhawk on his head seated back to back with a dog-like creature.⁴⁷ In addition, had Warburg read the text more closely, he would have noticed that the Graeco-Roman or Ptolemaic constellations rising with the first decan of Aries are *Cepheus* and *Eridanus*, and not *Perseus*. There is no classical or medieval source which associates the constellation of *Perseus* with the first degrees of Aries.

Third, Warburg cited the Latin translations of the Arabic astrologer, Abû Ma'shar, and the illustrated abridgements of these translations attributed to Georgius Zotori Zapari Fenduli to claim yet another link in the chain of decan-images from antiquity to Ferrara.⁴⁸ Whereas it is true that the Schifanoia decan-gods are based on a variant of the Abû Ma'shar tradition, the classical heritage of these figures is dubious. In Abû Ma'shar's text, the decans are described according to three different cultural traditions: the Greek, the Persian and the Indian. The iconography of the so-called "Greek" tradition ("*post Graecos*") is clearly compiled of bits and pieces of the well-known Ptolemaic extra-zodiacal constellations which are known to rise alongside the first 10° of the sign of Aries. Amongst the so-called Persian decans, one sees similar parts of constellations that appear to have become slightly muddled owing to their contamination by the mythologies of Persian astrology. The images described "*iuxta Indos*," however, have absolutely no connection to a classical antecedent. They are a wholly Indian invention, developed from strictly local astro-mythological traditions. The phrase from Abû Ma'shar's text, that Warburg so cleverly uncovered, actually describes one of these Indian astral-deities. In one way, then, Warburg was correct: the Latin translations of Abû Ma'shar do form the textual source for the representation of the first decan-god in the Schifanoia frescoes. At a more fundamental level, however, Warburg was mistaken: this figure bears absolutely no claim to an exalted classical past.

There is no doubt that Warburg's research skills led him to the right book, if not the right passage. His intuition was well-honed. His general ideas about the heritage of these Schifanoia images were not far wrong. The iconography of the Schifanoia decan-god does have a long and tortuous iconographic history. It can be traced through an astro-mythological chain back to a classical appearance in the *Tabula Bianchini*; but when one tries to break through the barrier between astro-magical mythology to astronomy proper, the arguments begin to fray. The appearance of a decan-god in the Schifanoia frescoes is a miracle of sorts—but it is not the sort which Warburg described. Warburg considered the decan-god to be a much-mutilated but triumphant recollection (an "engram," as he would later call it) of the classical hero Perseus. He presented the figure as an emblem of science and enlightenment, on the very verge of casting off its medieval garb and the

remnants of magic and superstition. The ultimate sadness of Warburg's conviction in the classical heritage of this figure, though, lies in the fact that, in later years, it took on additional personal connotations. It symbolized the potential for triumph over dehumanization by irrational fears; and we know, for example, that when Warburg was recovering from his first serious illness, he kept a large photograph of the decan-god on his desk—almost like a talisman that might help him to regain his strength and his sanity.

Very early on, it seems, Saxl recognised that Warburg's analysis of the Schifanoia decan-god was seriously flawed. In his published writings, he only mentions the Schifanoia decan-god twice: once, somewhat critically, in an early article in the *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* of 1922 and then in a lecture delivered in 1936, which, one supposes, he never intended to publish, where he merely repeats the standard Warburgian description of its iconographic descent from the *sphaera barbarica*.⁴⁹ Gombrich, in his biography of Warburg, remains somewhat oblique in his narration of this episode, stating simply that "the ingenious arguments that [Warburg] used in support of this theory have not convinced specialists."⁵⁰ But, in a more recent essay, his portrayal of the *Nachleben* of this figure is very different. In describing Warburg's belief that the Schifanoia decan-god was *Perseus*-reborn, he says: "In that theory, the wish was father to the thought; but Saxl told me that he found it impossible to convince Warburg of his error."⁵¹ Saxl may well have recognised that Warburg was fallible, but it still remains unclear to what extent or in what manner this knowledge might have coloured his appreciation of or belief in Warburg's talents and skills. One who possessed a harsh disposition might see Warburg's failings as unforgiveable. The circumspect, however, might be able to turn a blind eye towards the error in both method and conclusion and see it as a freak misadventure. One suspects that, as far as Warburg was concerned, Saxl was probably a bit harsh and that Bing remained forever circumspect.

It was into this arena that a young Gombrich came into the Warburg Institute. How could he not have inherited a certain "critical detachment" about aspects of Warburg's published work when it must have been clear that something as fundamental to Warburg's vision as the iconology of the Schifanoia decan-god was based on flawed research and misguided aspirations? As Gombrich himself recently remarked in conversation "... my

position at the Warburg was not to be envied because I was between the devil and the deep sea."

With the case of the Schifanoia decan-god, Warburg is shown to be the weaker vessel, but in a second case where Saxl's research skills met Warburg's innate talents, it is Warburg who comes out having demonstrated a clearer understanding of how works of art are formed. During a period of research on Peruzzi's astrological frescoes in the *Sala di Galatea* in the Villa Farnesina, I discovered some notes written in Aby Warburg's hand in the margins of his copy of a book rarely cited in the critical literature on the Villa Farnesina: Ernst Maass's *Aus der Farnesina*, published in 1902.⁵² What makes these notes particularly interesting is that they demonstrate how Warburg had successfully recognized the major structural premise of Peruzzi's ceiling and how Saxl, so convinced of his own abilities in this arena, failed to appreciate the true importance of the lead that Warburg had offered him.

The ceiling of the *Sala di Galatea* presents one of the most intriguing iconographic problems of Renaissance art. Painted by Baldassare Peruzzi around 1511, it is composed of twenty-six frescoed compartments, each of which contains one or more mythologized representations of the planet-gods, zodiacal signs or extra-zodiacal constellations. The least problematic aspect of the ceiling is the identification of the subject matter of the ten spandrels or *peducci* containing the zodiacal signs and planet-gods.⁵³ As early as 1912, Warburg had realized that the relationship between planet-gods and zodiacal signs was neither uniform nor haphazard;⁵⁴ and several years later, in publications from 1920 and 1927, Warburg suggested that the organization of the *Sala di Galatea* ceiling reflected the natal chart of the building's patron, the wealthy Siennese banker, Agostino Chigi, who, he thought, may have been born in December 1465 while the Sun was transiting Sagittarius.⁵⁵

In 1932—three years after Warburg's death—Fritz Saxl delivered a lecture in Rome which contained his own findings on the *Sala di Galatea* vault.⁵⁶ Saxl proposed that the arrangement of the planets in the ceiling demonstrated that Agostino Chigi had been born in 1466 between 8 AM on 30 November and 11 AM on 11 December. A birth-time of 7 PM on December 1, 1466 was offered as an acceptable mean. Saxl's only allusion to Warburg's previous study was to dismiss the way in which the

astronomer whom Warburg had consulted had calculated the breadth of each zodiacal sign.⁵⁷

Subsequent research on the *Sala di Galatea* vault has shown that the calculations Saxl had used were also inaccurate and that Chigi most probably had been born on 29 or 30 November.⁵⁸ This suggestion has been confirmed recently by the discovery of Chigi's baptismal record which states that: "Agostino Andrea son of Mariano Chigi was baptized on the thirtieth day of November 1466 and was born on the twenty-ninth day of the said month at the hour 21 1/2 and Giovanni Salvani was godfather."⁵⁹ The discovery of Agostino Chigi's baptismal record should have answered most questions concerning the astrological iconography of Peruzzi's ceiling. If the vault records Chigi's birthdate in a summary way—indicating his birth by means of the location of the planets alone—the baptismal record merely confirms what had already been deduced. But the presence of the extra-zodiacal constellations in the central compartment of the vault and in the fourteen triangular *vele*, suggests that Peruzzi intended his vault to convey more than just the zodiacal coordinates of the planets on November 29, 1466. As a proper natal chart records a rather specific picture of the relationship between the celestial sphere and a given point on the surface of the earth, it seemed likely that it was this aim that lies behind the overall plan of the ceiling. Indeed, among his jottings in the back of his copy of Maass's *Aus der Farnesina*, Warburg reconstructed his impression of the *Galatea* vault as a natal chart with Taurus at the Ascendant and Aquarius at Mid-heaven (Figs 7.3 and 7.4). To all intents and purposes, Warburg's sketch coincides with the information contained in baptismal records, matching Chigi's natal chart exactly.⁶⁰

Warburg made another note which escaped his followers. One astrologically important point in a Renaissance horoscopic chart is the *Pars fortunae*, or the Part of Fortune. This point is used by astrologers as an indication of beneficent power. Ptolemy states that, along with the Sun, Moon, and Ascendant, the Part of Fortune is one of the four "great authorities" of the natal chart.⁶¹ It was generally associated with inherited wealth and good fortune. Chigi's Part of Fortune falls within the zodiacal sign of Aquarius. As we have seen, Warburg had noted that the goddess "Fortuna" was placed next to Aquarius in Peruzzi's vault. It seems likely, then, that "Fortuna" appears here as an indication of Chigi's own *Pars fortunae*.

56 III. GESCHICHTLICHE BEDEUTUNG DER FRESKEN.

Wissenschaft ist sie zeitlos. Zeitlos sind die Werke in der Farnesina, nicht beschränkt auf Künstler oder Humanisten der Kreis, an welchen sie sich richten; es ist die Menschheit als solche, wie sie im Wandel der Jahrhunderte trotz allen Fortschreitens im inneren Grunde dieselbe bleibt. Die geoffenbarte Schönheit selbst, wirkt diese Schöpfung auf Auge und Herz mit allen ihren Stärken, frei von jeder Zeitgewalt, herrlich wie am ersten Tag. Sie wiederzusehn ist das Sehnen und die Hoffnung unseres Lebens.

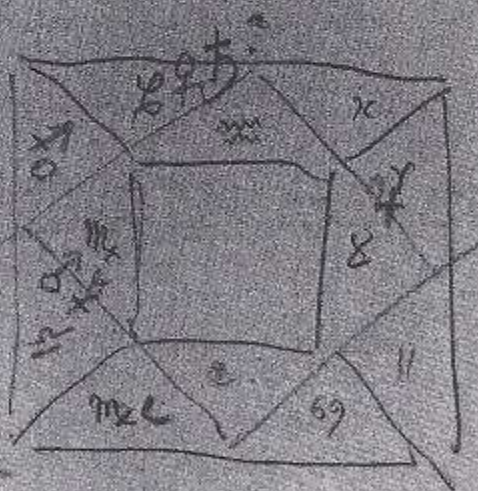


Figure 7.3 Warburg's notes in his copy of E. Maass, *Aus der Farnesina ...* (Marburg, i.H., 1902) (Photo: Courtesy of The Warburg Institute)

8/17-900 im Causi
Saturni Causi
Luna in Virgo
Venus in Capricornus
Mars in Capricornus
Jupiter in Capricornus
Mercurius in Capricornus
Causa (Mars)
H?
S?
C?
K?
XXX - Falsum
Phenomena

Figure 7.4 Warburg's notes in his copy of E. Maass, *Aus der Farnesina ...* (Marburg, i.H. 1902) (Photo: Courtesy of The Warburg Institute)

At this point, one may return to the issue of Warburg's notes on the *Sala di Galatea*. From the annotations on the frontispiece, we know that Warburg bought Maass's book in 1908.⁶² He did not read it, however, until 8 September 1912.⁶³ This information not only coincides with Saxl's characterization of Warburg when the two first met in the late autumn of 1911 as "hardly familiar" with the content of the numerous astrology books in his possession;⁶⁴ it also tells us within which context Warburg read Maass's book.

As we know, Warburg had been working on a number of problems generated by the iconography of the Palazzo Schifanoia since 1909.⁶⁵ It seems that he may even have read Maass's book as he was travelling on the train down to Rome to deliver his lecture on the *Salone dei Mesi* before the Tenth Annual Congress of Art Historians in October of that year.⁶⁶ As his later allusions to the *Sala di Galatea* suggest, the decoration of the room interested Warburg primarily for three reasons. First, the ceiling provided him with another example of "Perseus-regained," which, as we have seen, formed an integral part of Warburg's lecture on the Ferrarese frescoes centred on the figure of the first decan of Aries. Second, the presence of pagan deities—astral demons—in a cycle connected with the circle of Raphael provided Warburg with a perfect example with which to argue his thesis of conciliation: his belief that it was the "state of balance itself that represents the highest human value" and that a "psychology of compromise" underlies the greatest moments of civilization.⁶⁷ Finally, Warburg spotted the figure of *Fortuna* in the *Sala di Galatea*. She, too, symbolized a conciliation of opposites; a key by which the modern scholar might better understand how Renaissance man could reconcile in his own mind the apparent conflict between Christian belief and intellectual yearnings toward the art, literature and ideals of pagan antiquity. As a result of his previous research on the late fifteenth-century Florentine merchants, Sassetti and Rucellai, Warburg saw this figure of *Fortuna* as a kind of benign totem—a sort of talisman that helped Renaissance man to bridge the uncertain gap between predetermination and free will.⁶⁸

It is surprising that Warburg never published his findings on the *Sala di Galatea*; particularly since, in many ways, it could have served to support his theories with much greater force than, say, his work on the Palazzo

Schifanoia proved to be able to do. But Warburg seems to have been most tantalised by the intellectual half-light of the Quattrocento rather than by the full glare of the High Renaissance. To find the gods having regained their glory was, it seems, not as interesting as seeing them emerge newly-born and partially deformed.⁶⁹

For Saxl, however, it was not the compositional premise of the painting that was paramount. To him, the exact time of Chigi's birth was all that mattered. As far as Saxl was concerned, the fact that Warburg had got the date wrong nullified his insights. With damning precision, he records: "*ma il calcolo ... non condusse alla conferma che il Warburg aveva intuito.*"⁷⁰

There is a certain sadness in all this. Warburg's talent in uncovering the central premise of a work of art from its structure was a rare gift. Had anyone been listening, it would have been noted that he pointed the way towards an understanding of the iconographical premise of the *Sala di Galatea*. Gombrich has suggested that Warburg's discovery of the iconographic source for the Schifanoia decan-god came from a similar impulse. While reading Boll's *Sphaera*, Warburg noticed the tripartite structure of many of Boll's descriptions.⁷¹ This led him to see the tripartite structure in the title-page of each month of the *Astrolabium planum*, and, perhaps, in the layered structure of the outer zones of the *Tabula Bianchini* itself. For someone as visually conscious of patterns as Warburg seems to have been, such similarities in structure would have rung all the right bells. That is not to say, however, that such an approach was not without its pitfalls. Indeed, this knack for recognizing patterns ran awry when Warburg made the next step and tried to tie this specific tradition to that recorded in the illustrated Latin translations of Abû Ma'shar and when he saw further associations in the imagery of the Denderah zodiac.

One has lingered with these examples longer than, perhaps, either warrants. Similarly, one has focused attention on an intellectual relationship between two highly intelligent men with a more glaring light than even the best friendships would be able to withstand. Furthermore, the alleged purpose of this paper—to summarise Warburg's thoughts and writings on astrological iconography—has only fleetingly been addressed. What one hopes has been clarified, however, is that if one is looking for an excellent summary, one need look no further than Gombrich's study which is and,

one sees no reason to doubt, should remain the definitive work on the subject. If one is looking for a deeper understanding of Warburg's own thought processes, there are two alternatives. One avenue is to consult the Warburg Archive—the "drafts, jottings, formulations, and fragments abandoned on the way to the finished work"⁷²—although it would seem an enterprise into which any sane angel would hesitate to tread. The second alternative, however, is equally filled with the potential for misadventure. The clearest reflections of Warburg's influence remain the work of his disciples. But, as with all reflections, the wary reader should be conscious of both the inherent distortions and the reversals characteristic of any mirror. A fuller appreciation of Saxl and his contribution to the scholarly literature on astrological iconography may be an essential first step towards an understanding of Warburg's own work; but, then, one should hasten to add that it would be impossible to say if this would be a step in the right direction ... or not.

notes

- 1 This paper has benefited enormously from the information and advice I have received from a number of scholars who know and understand the history of the Warburg Institute and its personalities much better than I. In particular, I would like to thank Prof Sir Ernst Gombrich for all his time and patience spent on behalf of my text and ideas. Also, I would like to thank Miss Anne Marie Meyer and Prof Nicolai and Mrs Ruth Rubinstein for their insights and both Prof J. B. Trapp and Mr John Perkins for their help in searching out particularly vexing references.
- 2 See G. Bing, "Fritz Saxl (1890–1948): A Memoir" in *Fritz Saxl 1890–1948. A Volume of Memorial Essays from his Friends in England*, ed. D. J. Gordon, London 1957, pp. 1–46, esp. p. 28.
- 3 Quoted from Warburg's diary, 8 April 1907: "... zum Herausbuddeln der bisher unbekanntten Einzeltatsachen ... Trüffelschweindienste." Passage and translation taken from E. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography (with a Memoir on the History of the Library by F. Saxl)*, London 1970, p. 140. See also Gombrich's suggestion that this misunderstanding of Warburg as an iconographer may have dated as far back as the delivery of his lecture on the Palazzo Schifanoia in 1912: "But in certain respects Warburg's triumphal demonstration of these connections at the Art Historical Congress in Rome of 1912 has actually obscured his principal concerns. He was now considered the learned iconographer, the polymath who

- had succeeded in discovering an out-of-the-way source." Cited from E. H. Gombrich, "The Ambivalence of the Classical Tradition. The Cultural Psychology of Aby Warburg" (an address given at Hamburg University on 13 June 1966 on the centenary of Aby Warburg's birth), in *Tributes. Interpreters of our Cultural Tradition*, Oxford 1984, pp. 117–37, esp. p. 131.
- 4 See, for example, E. Panofsky, *Idea. Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie* [Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, V], Leipzig 1924 (English translation by J. J. S. Peake as *Idea. A Concept in Art Theory*, New York 1968); E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology. Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, New York 1939; and E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*, Stockholm 1960.
 - 5 For an excellent study of the project and a full set of photographs of the installation, see *Aby M. Warburg. Bildersammlung zur Geschichte von Sternglaube und Sternkunde im Hamburger Planetarium*, eds. U. Fleckner, R. Galitz, C. Naber and H. Nöldeke, Hamburg 1993.
 - 6 See *Bildersammlung ...*, as in n. 5 above, pp. 272–75 and pl. XI. For additional discussion of these images with bibliography.
 - 7 See *Bildersammlung ...*, as in n. 5 above, pp. 280–83 and pl. XIII.
 - 8 See *Bildersammlung ...*, as in n. 5 above, pp. 290–95 and pl. XV.
 - 9 For complete references and bibliography on Warburg's writings and lectures on astrology, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg ...*, as in n. 3 above, pp. 186–205.
 - 10 See F. Saxl, *Lectures*, ed. G. Bing [2 vols., Warburg Institute], London 1957 and F. Saxl, *La Fede negli astri. Dall'antichità al Rinascimento*, ed. S. Settis, Turin 1985. Eight of the lectures edited by Bing were republished as *A Heritage of Images. A Selection of Lectures by Fritz Saxl*, edited by H. Honour and J. Fleming, London 1970. An Italian selection, *La Storia delle immagini*, with an introduction by E. Garin, was published by Laterza (Bari 1965).
 - 11 See Bing, "Fritz Saxl...", as in n. 2 above, p. 6.
 - 12 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg...*, as in n. 3 above, *passim*. For the reference to Warburg's writing style, see pp. 14–18.
 - 13 For a discussion of this formula, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg...*, as in n. 3 above, p. 13. Professor Gombrich, who notes the reappearance of the phrase in French, once offered me five pence if I could trace its origin. I can only report that I have heard it rumored that the phrase can be found in Augustine, but have not yet found the opportunity to track it down. More recently, Gombrich has mentioned that he now believes that the phrase might be an inversion of another popular saying, "Der Teufel steckt im Detail", and that the inversion is Warburg's own invention. A. M. Sassi has suggested that the phrase can be more closely tied to Warburg's contemporary intellectual milieu and cites parallel evocations of the idea, if not the formula, in the writings of both Usener and Dilthey. See

A. M. Sassi, "Dalla Scienza delle religioni di Usener ad Aby Warburg," in *Aspetti di Hermann Usener filologo della religione*, eds. G. Arrighetti, et. al., Pisa 1982, pp. 65-91, esp. pp. 86-91.

- 14 See Gombrich, "The Ambivalence to the Classical Tradition..." as in n. 3 above, p. 135: "Like Winckelmann in the eighteenth century and Ruskin in the nineteenth he impressed his contemporaries not only as a scholar but above all as a prophetic figure."
- 15 See Bing, "Fritz Saxl..." as in n. 2 above, p. 14.
- 16 See Bing, "Fritz Saxl..." as in n. 2 above, pp. 39-40. In the opening lines of a lecture that Saxl delivered in Reading in 1947, he stated: "I am not a philosopher, nor am I able to talk about the philosophy of history. It is concrete historical material that has always attracted me in the field of literature, of art, or of religion" (see Saxl, *Lectures ...*, as in n. 10 above, p. 1). It is interesting that Saxl felt that he had to proclaim himself in such a manner at the outset of a public lecture. One cannot help but feel that what he was really saying was: "If you have come expecting a lecture by Aby Warburg, you might as well leave now." Nevertheless, that Saxl began his lecture thus—more than fifteen years after Warburg's death—is telling.
- 17 See Saxl, "The History of Warburg's Library" in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg ...*, as in n. 3 above, p. 335. The sentiment is echoed in Gombrich's description of the manner in which both Bing and Saxl devoted themselves to Warburg and his library: "... I had the opportunity to get to know the guardians of his heritage during the hardest times of its [the Library's] crisis and to witness how Fritz Saxl, the Director of the exiled library, and Gertrud Bing, his faithful helpmate, remained determined to accomplish the founder's mission regardless of what might happen to their personal lives. For Fritz Saxl and Gertrud Bing, Warburg was in no way part of history, he was their mentor, their colleague, the exacting and caring head of a private institute of research to whom, they had surrendered body and soul." Cited from "The Ambivalence of the Classical Tradition ...," as in n. 3 above, esp. pp. 117-18.
- 18 Bing, "Fritz Saxl ...," as in n. 2 above, p. 43. In a recent conversation, Gombrich pointed out how Saxl's influence was particularly keenly felt by a number of scholars with whom one might not, today, first associate Saxl. He stressed the extent to which art history, as a university subject, did not really exist in England during the years when the Institute was first finding its feet here; and how, for many, Saxl seems to have been a means towards the establishment of a method by which a number of bright young men were able to structure their thinking and research methods. See, in particular, Pope-Hennessy's descriptions of the debt both he and Blunt owed Saxl in J. Pope-Hennessy, *Learning to Look. An Autobiography*, London 1991, esp. pp. 71-72 and 138. For example: "The arrival in

London of the Warburg Institute in the 1930s had been a turning point in the development of art history in England. That this was so was due not so much to the Warburg library, fine as that was, as to the personality of its director, Saxl" (*ibid.*, p. 71).

- 19 The debt which the Warburg Institute owes to Saxl for its survival during the 1930s and 1940s has been well-documented; but few seem to appreciate the fact that it was Saxl who conceived the idea of turning Warburg's more or less private library into a scholarly institution. The point is well-made by Gombrich, in "The Ambivalence to the Classical Tradition ..." (as in n. 3 above, p. 133), where he points out the extent to which the "Warburg Institute" is, in fact, the brain-child of Saxl: "The actual foundation of the "Warburg library on the Science of Culture" as a research institute, with its series of public lectures and studies, is the work of Fritz Saxl, whom Aby Warburg's brothers provided with funds." The idea to open the Library to scholars seems to have matured during the years when Warburg was confined in Kreuzlingen: "Thus when Warburg had recovered, he found himself in a wholly changed environment ... [and] was now the admired creator of a respected research institute, which bore his name."
- 20 For Warburg's writing on the first decan-god, see A. Warburg, "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara," *L'Italia e l'Arte Straniera. Atti del X Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte in Roma, 1912*, Rome 1922, pp. 180-93. Repr. in A. Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften*. [*Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*], ed. G. Bing, Leipzig-Berlin 1932, pp. 459-81 and 627-44. See also the Italian translations of this essay, by E. Cantimori in A. Warburg, *La Rinascita del paganesimo antico. Contributi alla storia della cultura*, ed. G. Bing, Florence 1966, pp. 249-72; and M. Bertozzi, in *La Tirannia degli astri. Aby Warburg e l'astrologia di Palazzo Schifanoia*, Bologna 1985, pp. 81-112.
- For Saxl's articles, see F. Saxl, *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters in römischen Bibliotheken*, Heidelberg 1915, pp. v-xvii (see also the Italian translation by F. Cuniberto, "Immagini degli astri dal Medioevo al Quattrocento," in Saxl, *La Fede negli astri ...*, as in n. 10 above, pp. 155-61 and 467); F. Saxl, *Verzeichnis astrologischer und mythologischer illustrierter Handschriften des lateinischen Mittelalters der National-Bibliothek in Wien*, Heidelberg 1927, pp. 7-53, esp. pp. 19-40 (see also the Italian translation by F. Cuniberto in F. Saxl, "La carta del cielo: Dürer, gli arabi e la tradizione classica," in Saxl, *La Fede negli astri ...* (*op. cit.*), pp. 413-20 and 483-85); and E. Panosky and F. Saxl, "Classical Mythology in Medieval Art," *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, IV, 1932-33, pp. 228-80, esp. p. 237-41.

- 21 The content of Warburg's lecture is summarised in A. Warburg, "Die antike Götterwelt und die Frührenaissance im Süden und im Norden," *Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte*, XIV, December 1908 and "Über Planetengötterbilder im niederdeutschen Kalender von 1519," in *Erster Bericht der Gesellschaft der Bücherfreunde zu Hamburg, Hamburg* 1910 (both reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften* ..., II, pp. 451-54 and 626; and pp. 483-86 and 645-46). The focus of both lectures is discussed in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, pp. 186-91.

For Saxl's arguments, see F. Saxl, "Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Planetendarstellungen im Orient und im Occident," *Islam. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*, III, 1912, pp. 151-77 (Italian transl. by F. Cuniberto, "La raffigurazione dei pianeti in Oriente e in Occidente," in F. Saxl, *La Fede negli astri* ... (as in n. 10 above), pp. 63-146 and 455-66); F. Saxl, "Probleme der Planetenkinderbilder," *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, LIV (N.F. XXX), 1919, pp. 1013-21 (Italian transl. by F. Cuniberto, "I figli dei pianeti," in F. Saxl, *La Fede negli astri* ... (as in n. 10 above), pp. 274-79 and 473-74); and F. Saxl, "The Literary Sources of the 'Finiguerra Planets,'" *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, II, 1938, pp. 72-74.

- 22 Passages taken from "Die antike Götterwelt und die Frührenaissance ..." as in n. 21 above, as cited by Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, pp. 188-89.
- 23 See Saxl, "Finiguerra Planets..." as in n. 21 above, pp. 73-4.
- 24 The translation comes from R. Chernow, *The Warburgs. A 20th-century Odyssey of a Remarkable Family*, New York 1993, p. 246, citing from Max Adolf Warburg's "Speech at the Warburg Institute after the death of Gertrud Bing." Gombrich, however, feels that the "à vapeur" moniker might be tied more closely to the mercurial nature of Saxl's actions and the fact that he, often to the desperation of his friends and colleagues, could never be pinned down, never be made to stand still and always seemed to be slipping round corners and out of rooms.
- 25 Related to this, in a recent conversation, Gombrich echoed Bing's view, suggesting that there was no real ideological thrust to Saxl's researches, "Saxl just found things interesting." When asked if he thought that Warburg might have been disappointed in Saxl, Gombrich related a story told to him about Warburg by Bing. When Bing asked him why he had not yet finished a paper for the Schmarsow *festschrift*, Warburg replied that "the level of the underground water has not yet risen sufficiently." The idea was (quoting Gombrich) that "[Warburg] sort of drilled a hole and the water—which carried the relevant facts—had, in the end, to come out of this particular font. He wanted all the facts (*wasser*) to come out of one font or, to point to one result naturally." Saxl, on the other hand, was not a single hole-driller. He, according to Gombrich, "drilled everywhere."
- 26 See Bing, "Fritz Saxl ..." as in n. 2 above, p. 6. Both Gombrich and Meyer relate numerous instances of how Warburg entranced the scholars with whom he came

into contact. His eyes, in particular, seemed to possess a mesmeric effect. In a recent conversation, Gombrich recalled how Bing had described her first meeting with Warburg: "Bing said that meeting him the first time she felt that his eyes looked straight through her ... he had a sort of hypnotic look."

- 27 Panofsky has been quoted, more than once, as having claimed that he owed everything to Warburg and that he, Panofsky, was famous in the United States only because people did not know about Warburg whose works had not yet been translated into English.
- 28 I thank Professor Nicolai Rubinstein, in particular, for discussing this issue with me.
- 29 See the comments of Pope-Hennessy cited in n. 18 above. See also the perceptive comments in R. Hinks's unsigned review of Saxl's *Lectures* in *The Times Literary Supplement*, for 23 May 1958, pp. 1–2, where he states: "It was perhaps a devotion to the concrete instance, a respect for the unalienable individuality of facts and events, that Saxl found reassuring in the best English scholarship; just as Saxl's English friends often found their hesitations and inhibitions thawing and yielding to the genial warmth of his intuitive sympathy, and saw the recalcitrant atoms of their learning combine and transform themselves under the pressure of his creative imagination" (p. 2).
- 30 These insights have been gained thanks to Professor Gombrich's conversations with me on the topic.
- 31 In a recent conversation, Gombrich mentioned that Saxl constantly used the word "normalise" when it came to describing the task he faced when he first came to London: "In order for this not all to go to waste, he had to simplify the Institute. He didn't want all these intellectual knots to be tied and felt he had to iron out some of the quiriness in order to make the Institute intelligible to the average academic or scholar."
- 32 In Saxl's "History of Warburg's Library" (as in n. 3 above, pp. 325–38), he presents a glimpse into how Warburg's cataloguing system worked: "Often one saw Warburg standing tired and distressed bent over his boxes with a packet of index cards, trying to find for each one the best place within the system; it looked like a waste of energy and one felt sorry ... It took some time to realize that his aim was not bibliographical. This was his method of defining the limits and contents of his scholarly world and the experience gained here became decisive in selecting books for the Library" (p. 329). It might be mentioned that Saxl's quotation is presented out of context in Chernow's biography on the Warburgs, which makes this exercise sound pathetic, rather than inspired. See Chernow, *The Warburgs ...*, as in n. 24 above, p. 124 (where the note to this passage is also incorrectly cited).
- 33 Of all Warburg's disciples, it was probably Bing who was closest to him and who, most likely, felt that she understood—and perhaps more importantly, believed

in—the greatness of his thought. It had been the plan originally that Gombrich would edit the *Nachlass* and that Bing and Saxl would write Warburg's biography. This then developed into a scheme whereby Gombrich would write about Warburg's ideas based on the material preserved in his notes and Bing would write a study of Warburg's use of language, which, both as a close colleague and as a philosopher by training, she was perfectly placed to do. For reasons that are not altogether clear, Bing destroyed most of what she had written on the subject shortly before she died. The temptation is to suggest that she felt that she could not do it justice and that she would prefer not to continue, rather than mislead future generations due to her own perceived inadequacies.

- 34 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above. It might be mentioned that appreciation of Gombrich's volume is not universal and, in particular, Edgar Wind wrote a biting review of the book when it first came out. The review was first published in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 June 1971, pp. 735–6 and was republished as "On a recent biography of Warburg," in E. Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols. Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. J. Anderson, Oxford 1983, pp. 21–35. The numerous instances of unhappiness, which grew up between Wind and several of the scholars associated with the Warburg Institute, need not unduly concern us here, save to mention that there was sufficient venom packed into this review to suggest that Wind had his arrows aimed at more than one target. Nevertheless, having read Warburg's and Saxl's work myself, I would still advocate Gombrich's study as the best way into a study of the topic.
- 35 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, pp. 186–205.
- 36 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, p. 4.
- 37 See Warburg, "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie," as in n. 20 above.
- 38 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, p. 192.
- 39 Much of this material is drawn from my doctoral thesis, "The Frescoes of the *Salone dei Mesi* in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara: Style, Iconography and Cultural Context," University of Chicago 1987, esp. pp. 138–95. See also, K. Lippincott, "Gli dei-decani del Salone dei Mesi di Palazzo Schifanoia," *Alla corte degli Estensi. Filosofia, arte e cultura a Ferrara nei secoli XV e XVI* [Atti del Convegno internazionale di Studi, Ferrara, 5–7 marzo 1992], ed. M. Bertozzi, Ferrara 1994, pp. 181–97.
- 40 Johannes Angelus, *Astrolabium planum in tabulis ascendens*, Augsburg: Ratdolt, 1488. An illustrated version of the *Astrolabium planum* also exists in a German translation of ca. 1490 in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibl., cod. pal. germ. 832, ff. 36r–83v. See H. Wegener, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der deutschen Bilder-Handschriften des späten Mittelalters in der Heidelberger Universitätsbibliothek*, Leipzig 1927, pp. 102–06 and B. Haage, "Das *Astrolabium planum* des Codex

- palatinus germanicus 832. Ein Forschungsbericht," *Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, XXIX, 1985, pp. 87–105.
- 41 Madrid, Biblioteca Escorialensis, Ms h.1.15, ff. 12r–12v. See *Alfonso el Sabio: Lapidario and Libro de las formas e ymagenes*, eds. R.C. Diman and L.W. Winget, Madison WI 1980, pp. 165–71 and the facsimile edition of the manuscript, *Lapidario del Rey D. Alfonso X. Códice original*, ed. J. Fernández Montaña, Madrid 1881.
- 42 As Gombrich has pointed out, Warburg's awareness of the *Tabula Bianchini* was gained via F. Boll, *Sphaera. Neue griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder*, Leipzig 1903, pp. 299–305 and 433 ff. A record of the top right corner of the *Tabula* is preserved in drawings made during the seventeenth century by Nicolaus-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and the whole, therefore, is often referred to as the "*Fragmentum Peiresc.*" See B. de Montfaucon, *L'antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, Paris 1719, I, 2, pl. CCXXIV. See also W. Gundel, *Dekane und Dekansternebilder. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sternbilder der Kulturvölker*, Glückstadt and Hamburg 1936, pp. 184–87.
- 43 Leiden, Universiteitsbibl., Ms Voss. lat. 4/, 179, fol. 40v.
- 44 See Boll, *Sphaera*..., as in n. 42 above, pp. 159 ff. Warburg expanded this thesis in an unpublished lecture "Wanderungen der antiken Götterwelt vor ihrem Eintritt in die Hoch-italienische Renaissance," delivered in Göttingen on 29 November 1913.
- 45 The history of the decans and its various images is by no means clear, having been subjected to the sorts of mistakes, misunderstandings, confections and approximations common to much of the astro-mythological lore that was passed around and around the Mediterranean. In the *Tabula Bianchini*, for example, this relationship between the planet-god ruling each decan and the *prosopa* is made clear by their relative placements on the disc. The *prosopa* are placed between the planet gods and the zodiacal signs. What is unclear, however, is whether this intermediary band of images represents "masks" of the planet-gods or a subsidiary set of decanal demi-gods or messengers. Bouché-LeClercq, for example, argues that "*L'important, si quelque chose importe ici, c'est que, sans nul doute, les πρόσωπα portent les noms des planètes: ce sont les décans déguisés en planètes*" (see A. Bouché-LeClercq, *L'Astrologie grecque*, Paris 1899), pp. 225–26 (note). And Aulus Gellius quite specifically limits the meaning imposed on the Greek term: "*Sicuti quidam faciem esse hominis putant os tantum et oculos et genas, quod Graeci πρόσωπα dicunt, quando facies sit forma omnis et modus et factura quaedam corporis totius a faciendo dicta, ut ab aspectu species et a fingendo figura*" (see *Noctes Atticae*, XII, 30 (29), ed. C. Hosius, Stuttgart 1959, II, p. 98). By the fifteenth century, however, as seems clear from the text of the *Tabula ascendens*, the figures illustrated represent 'faces' of the planet-gods and are not demi-gods in their own right.

- 46 Madrid, Bibl. Escorialensis, Ms H. I. 15, fol. 94r. The text reads: "De la piedra que a nombre sanguina. DEla [sic] primera faz del signo de aries es la piedra aque llaman sanguina. Esta a tal virtud que, el que la trae consigo, fazel seer atreuyendo & orgulloso; vencedor de battalas & de lides. Et esto se faze mas complida miente seyendo mars en esta faz. & en su ascendente & en su hora & en su bon catamiento del sol. Et que descenda sobresta piedra la virtud de la figura de un onme negro que a los oios salidos a fuera. & tiene un cinto alquice. & in su mano un açadon." Cited from *El Primer Lapidario de Alfonso X el Sabio. Ms h. I. 15 de la Biblioteca de El Escorial*, eds. M. Brey Mariño, J.L. Amorós Portolès and A. Domínguez Rodríguez, Madrid 1982, p. 118.
- 47 Boll, *Sphaera...*, as in n. 42 above, p. 237. One of the important distinctions to remember is that the Egyptian system of decan-stars was based on an equatorial system of measurements. The Greeks always measured their stellar co-ordinates relative to the ecliptic. As soon as the Greeks adopted—or rather, adapted—the Egyptian system of decans to their own ecliptical system, the astronomical and time-keeping significance of these star-groupings vanished. All that was left were the astrological characteristics that may have been associated with each grouping. And, it would seem, even these astrological associations were doomed to a shortened life, since the Greeks very soon supplanted any native Egyptian myths with their own zodiacal and planetary astro-mythology.
- 48 The so-called "Fenduli Abridgement" is actually a compilation of extracts taken from the Hermannus of Carinthia (also sometimes known as Hermannus Dalmata) translation of the *Introductoriam* of Abû Ma'shar composed somewhat prior to 1200. The Fenduli text is unedited, but it exists in a number of sumptuously illustrated manuscripts. For a resumé, see V.A. Clark, "The *Abridged Astrological Treatise of Albumasar: Astrological Imagery in the West*," PhD thesis, University of Michigan 1979.
- 49 See F. Saxl, "Rinascimento dell'antichità. Studien zu den Arbeiten A. Warburgs," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XLIII, 1922, pp. 220–72, esp. pp. 235–36 and F. Saxl, "The Revival of Late Antique Astrology," in *Lectures ...*, as in n. 10 above, pp. 80–1. The description reads: "In the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, we find the members of the family of the *sphaera barbarica* again; accompanying the Ram, there is a strangely attired dark man, a seated woman with one of her legs showing and a man holding an arrow with a ring, who are all figures with an Oriental pedigree."
- 50 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg ...*, as in n. 3 above, p. 194.
- 51 See E.H. Gombrich, "Relativism in the Humanities: The Debate about Human Nature," in *Topics of our Time. Twentieth-century Issues in Learning and in Art*, London 1991, p. 52.
- 52 E. Maass, *Aus der Farnesina. Hellenismus und Renaissance*, Marburg i.H. 1902. Warburg's copy is still held by the Warburg Institute at shelfmark FAF 880. For a

- fuller version of the material presented in this article, see K. Lippincott, "Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl and the Astrological Ceiling of the *Sala di Galatea*," in *Aby Warburg. Akten des internationalen Symposions, Hamburg 1990*, eds. H. Bredekamp, M. Diers and C. Schoell-Glass, Hamburg 1991, pp. 213–32.
- 53 They are arranged in a clockwise fashion around the ceiling in the following manner: 1. Aries, Jupiter and Taurus with Europa; 2. Leda and the Swan and the Gemini; 3. Hercules with the Lernean Hydra and Cancer; 4. Hercules with the Nemean Lion (Leo); 5. Virgo and Diana (Luna); 6. Libra and Scorpio with Mars and Mercury; 7. Apollo (Sol) with Sagittarius; 8. Venus and Capricorn; 9. Ganymede (Aquarius) and 10. Venus and Cupid (Pisces) and Saturn.
- 54 Amongst the notes he wrote in his copy of Maass's *Aus der Farnesina*, Warburg observed that Saturn was conjunct with Venus; Luna was in Virgo; Venus was in Capricorn or, possibly, in Pisces; Apollo was in Sagittarius; and Jupiter was either in Aries or in Taurus (both signs are shown flanking the god). Mars and Mercury were in conjunction with the former in Libra and the latter in Scorpio; the zodiacal panel for Cancer contained a depiction of Engonasin (the constellation *Ophiuchus*) and Aquarius was near Fortuna and Phoenike (or *ursa minor*).
- 55 See A. Warburg, "Heidnisch-antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten," *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philos.-hist. Klasse*, XXVI [Abhandlung], 1920 (repr. in Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* ..., as in n. 20 above, II, pp. 489–558, esp. p. 511) and A. Warburg, "Orientalisierende Astrologie," *Wissenschaftlicher Bericht über den Deutschen Orientalistentag in Hamburg, 1926. Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, NF VI, 1927 (repr. in Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* ..., as in n. 20 above, II, pp. 561–65, esp. p. 563).
- 56 See F. Saxl, "La fede astrologica di Agostino Chigi," *La Farnesina* [Collezione. Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1], Rome 1934. A. Beer's calculations appear on pp. 61–67. Note esp. the conclusions on p. 65 and 67. Beer republished his findings in A. Beer, "Astronomical Dating of Works of Art," *Vistas in Astronomy*, IX, 1967, pp. 177–223, esp. pp. 189–99.
- 57 Saxl, "La fede di Agostino Chigi ...," as in n. 56 above, p. 29. In the 1934 version of his *Farnesina* lecture, Saxl did not mention Warburg's work at all. See Saxl, *Lectures* ..., as in n. 10 above, p. 197.
- 58 See W. Hartner, "Qusayr cAmra, Farnesina, Luther, Hesiod. Some Supplementary Notes to A. Beer's Contribution," *Vistas in Astronomy*, IX, 1967, pp. 225–228, esp. pp. 226–27.
- 59 Siena, Archivio di Stato, Pieve di San Giovanni 2, fol 69r: "Agostino Andrea di Mariano Chigi si batezò a dì 30 di novembre 1466 e naque a dì 29 di deto mese a ore 21 1/2 e fu compare Giovanni Salvani." See I. D. Rowland, "The Birth Date of

Agostino Chigi: Documentary Proof," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLVII, 1984, pp. 192–93.

- 60 It should be mentioned that the exact details of Chigi's natal chart remain the subject of debate. Rather than rehearse the arguments here, the reader is directed to the following articles (with the, perhaps, obvious caveat that the author of the present essay remains unconvinced by the arguments presented in the most recent contribution to the literature). See M. Quinlan-McGrath, "The Astrological Vault of the Villa Farnesina. Agostino Chigi's Rising Sign," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLVII, 1984, pp. 91–105; K. Lippincott, "Two Astrological Ceilings Reconsidered: The *Sala di Galatea* in the Villa Farnesina and the *Sala del Mappamondo* at Caprarola," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LIII, 1990, pp. 185–207; and M. Quinlan-McGrath, "Time-Telling, Conventions and Renaissance Astrological Practice," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LVIII, 1995, pp. 53–71.

In a private communication, Quinlan-McGrath has pointed out a number of misprints and minor errors in my 1990 text (such as the appearance of "Alessandro" for "Agostino" in more than one instance and of an inadvertent conflation of two parts of her argument) for which I apologise and thank her.

- 61 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, III, 128–29. See also Bouché-LeClercq, *L'Astrologie grecque*, as in n. 45 above, pp. 289–96.
- 62 The note reads: "08/214," indicating that it was the 214th book that Warburg bought in 1908. The corresponding entry in Warburg's ledger informs us that he paid DM 1.20 for it. I thank John Perkins for his assistance in tracing this information.
- 63 Note the heading of Warburg's annotations: "8/IX.[1]912 im Coupé."
- 64 See F. Saxl, "The History of Warburg's Library" in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 20 above, p. 327.
- 65 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, pp. 191–99.
- 66 This possibility was suggested to me by Anne Marie Meyer.
- 67 See Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, pp. 177 and 170 (for the formula "psychology of compromise").
- 68 A. Warburg, "Francesco Sassetis letztwillige Verfügung," *Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge August Schmarsow gewidmet*, Leipzig 1907, pp. 129–52 (repr. *Gesammelte Schriften* ..., as in n. 20 above, I, pp. 127–58. See also Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* ..., as in n. 3 above, p. 173.
- 69 Gombrich makes a similar point in another context, stating: "What attracted Warburg to this period of transition was precisely its divided self, which was anything but naïve." See Gombrich, "The Ambivalence of the Classical Tradition...", as in n. 3 above, p. 126.
- 70 See Saxl, "La fede di Agostino Chigi...", as in n. 56 above, p. 29.

- 71 In a recent conversation, Gombrich mentioned that he had once told Saxl of his suspicions that Warburg had discovered the source of the Schifanoia decan through musing on the textual layout of Boll's *Sphaera*, and that Saxl had agreed that it was probably true. If true, which there seems no reason not to believe, it is amusing to note that such a method happily coincides with the fact that Warburg's own motto was "*Das Wort zum Bild*" (see Gombrich, "The Ambivalence of the Classical Tradition . . .," as in n. 3 above, p. 123).
- 72 For the phrase, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg . . .*, as in n. 3 above, p. 3.