

CONCEPTS OF ICONOLOGY: FROM VISUAL LEXICON TO SOCIAL MEMORY

Introduction to *Atlas Mnemosyne* by Aby Warburg
(1866–1929)

STRUCTURE of The Presentation

Pre-word

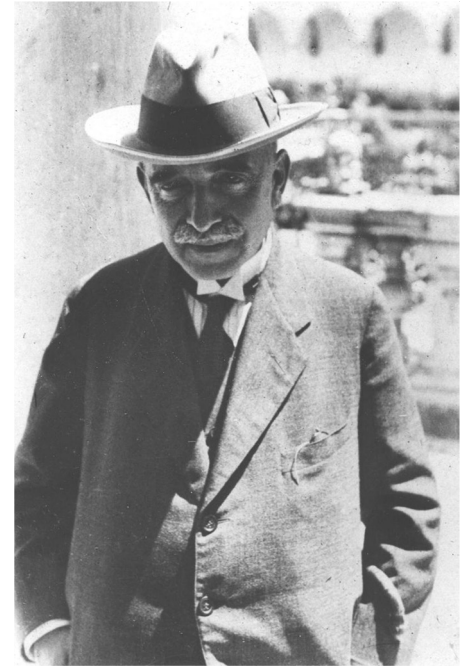
- Who was ABY WARBURG?
- Introduction to The *Oeuvre: Atlas Mnemosyne*
- Key Terms and Notions

Main concepts discussed in the Introduction

- The Subject of Rituals
- Apollo & Dionysus duality / theory of opposites
- Imperial Pathos, Transmission of the Process, Mode of Expression

Conclusion

Aby Warburg (1866-1929)



The library of Aby Warburg

In 1909 he wrote to his assistant, Wilhelm Waetzoldt (1880–1945):

“I have now got a library for cultural sciences (with a focus on Italy) of ca. 9,000 volumes, to which 600 are added every year, several thousand photographs and a few hundred slides. The aim: a new methodology of cultural science based on the ‘reading’ of the pictorial work. Area: Europe in the fifteenth century. This library will now slowly become a laboratory that works like an institute and welcomes fellow researchers”.



Mnemosyne Atlas



A “comparative view” of objects and visual perspectives to highlight the “afterlife of antiquity,”

- Begun in 1924 and left unfinished at the time of his death in 1929
- consists of 63 panels
- Using wooden boards, measuring approximately 150 x 200 cm and covered with black cloth

KEY NOTIONS AND TERMS

- “Iconology” according to Aby Warburg
- Theory of Cultural / Social memory (engrams, dynamograms, semantic transformation)
- Nietzsche and the concept of the Dionysus–Apollo duality / Theory of Tragedy
- Why Renaissance?
 - Antiquity → Renaissance → Present
 - juxtapositions → metamorphoses (structures of repetition)

Nietzschean Theory of Apollo-Dionysus Dualism



Birth of Tragedy by Friedrich Nietzsche (1872)

“only as an aesthetic phenomenon is an existence and the world eternally justified”

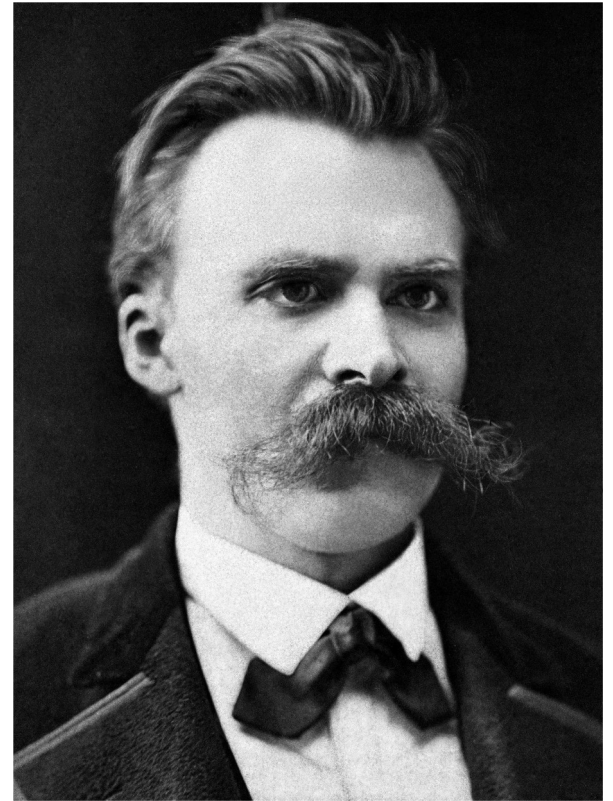
- 2 opposing tensions in art:

1) Apolonian

represents a calm, reasoned, and structured form of art
Dream-world

1) Dionysian

Represents a deeply emotional and ecstatic form of art
Drunkenness or intoxication





TRANSMISSION OF THE PROCESS

- concept of mobile vehicles
- the relationship between the “South” and the “North” of Europe

“Woodcutters with Arms of Nicolas Rolin”
Tapestry (Fragment), Tournai (?)
before 1462
Wool and Silk, 315×495 cm
Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs,

MODE OF EXPRESSION & GESTURES



Antonio del POLLAIUOLO
Hercules and the Hydra
c. 1475
Tempera on wood, 17 x 12 cm
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Q: Why does Aby Warburg give so much emphasis on social memory and psychology to the understanding of iconology?