

# *The Edgar Wind Journal*



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# *The Edgar Wind Journal*

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## Introduction

Bernardino Branca

This fourth issue of the *Edgar Wind Journal* presents four articles, which can be divided into three categories, directly or indirectly related to different aspects of Edgar Wind's works. The first article—Jaynie Anderson's—is a straightforward art historical investigation of a unique documentary source concerning the lost frescoes by Giorgione in the Fondaco del Tedesco (which were also investigated by Edgar Wind). The second article—Bernardino Branca's—tries to reconstruct the common philosophical features of Wind's 1930–33 papers, which were written before he abruptly left Hamburg because of Hitler's ascent to power. The final two articles, Giulia Maria Paoletti's and Robert Pawlik's, take a distinctively comparative approach. Paoletti's article compares and contrasts the philosophy of Michael Psello, an eleventh-century Byzantine theologian, with that of Giordano Bruno, the latter seen through the eyes of Wind's 1938 letter to Frances Yates—recently published in this journal—with the aim of finding their common features. Meanwhile, Pawlik's article takes an historiographical and art historical point of view in comparing the respective writings of Walter Pater, Aby Warburg, and Edgar Wind on Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*.

Jaynie Anderson's article thrusts into the critical limelight a unique book on Giorgione created by the Venetian publisher Ferdinando Ongania in 1896, which was commissioned as a work of art for the museum in Castelfranco that bears the artist's name. It is an album, with some printed pages and some tipped photographs, recording all the works considered to be by Giorgione; most notable are the original watercolours by Venetian Impressionist Zaccaria dal Bò after the lost Giorgione frescoes in the Fondaco del Tedesco. You could call it an exquisite scrapbook. Though not entirely unknown, these copies have not to date received the attention they deserve. Dal Bò concentrated on the frescoes of the Merceria façade, the principal entrance to the Fondaco, which is located in a narrow *calle* (and has proven impossible to photograph). Anderson's article reconstructs an overview of the frescoes on the Merceria façade for the first time. Moreover, since the extensive documentation of the Fondaco commission only mentions Giorgione's name, Anderson reconsiders the attribution. Despite the extensive critical literature, one of the few art historians to have realised the significance of the Merceria façade was Edgar Wind in his monograph on Giorgione. It is, therefore, appropriate to reopen the question of attribution for this journal.

Bernardino Branca reflects on the fact that Edgar Wind never published a systematic treatise concerning his art theory. Wind's theoretical writings—some still unpublished—are scattered through a series of papers written primarily during the crucial period of 1930–33.

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Some of these papers, such as *Grundbegriffe der Geschichte und Kulturphilosophie* and the 1932 Letter to Giovanni Gentile, have never been published in English; excerpts from them are now being published through this journal for the first time. Branca's essay tries to reconstruct and interpret these papers, which share a common feature: the interpretation of the Italian Renaissance as an attempt to find a *balance* or equilibrium between 'the essential forces of the human mind and its history'. In striving to perceive these 'essential forces', Wind recognises the presence in the 'history of the European tradition' of an irreducible coexistence between the Apollonian and the Dionysian forces which drive the human experience. To put it in the words of Aby Warburg, this is a clash between 'Athens and Alexandria', 'Logos' and 'Magic'. In Warburg's footsteps, Wind continued the search for these 'essential forces' for the rest of his life.

Giulia Maria Paoletti's paper focuses on the long-debated relationship between philosophy and orthodoxy in the medieval world by discussing two of the most important figures in the history of philosophy from the Middle Ages to the sixth and seventh centuries: Michael Psellos and Giordano Bruno. Paoletti draws attention to some similarities between the two using Wind's recently published 1938 letter to Yates, in which Wind debates with Yates Bruno's relevance from a philosophical perspective.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Pawlik's paper, finally, focuses on two readings of Botticelli's *Primavera*: first, the one advanced by Warburg in his 1893 dissertation; and secondly, one that was presented over sixty years later by Wind in his 'Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance'. Pawlik situates his discussion of both readings against the background of Walter Pater's 1870 essay on Botticelli—a milestone in the history of the discovery of the Florentine master after 300 hundred years of oblivion. According to Pawlik, bringing Pater to the fore exposes the polemical dimension of Warburg's dissertation, as well as its entanglement in the debates on the nature of the Renaissance and its role in the birth of the modern era. Moreover, according to Pawlik, Pater also helps us see the respective positions of Aby Warburg and Edgar Wind more clearly.

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<sup>1</sup> The Edgar Wind Journal, 1 (2021), p. 36.