# The Edgar Wind Journal

Volume 8

8/2025

ISSN 2785-2903

www.edgarwindjournal.eu

# The Edgar Wind Journal

ISSN 2785-2903

*Contacts*

info@edgarwindjournal.eu
submissions@edgarwindjournal.eu

The Edgar Wind Journal is a biannual, peer-reviewed and international journal, in open access format.
Authors are invited to follow the instructions on the website:
https://www.edgarwindjournal.eu/submission/

*Publisher*

**Bernardino Branca**

Contact: Route de Verbier Station 11, 1936 Verbier, Switzerland

Phone: 0041 799318816

Email: publisher@edgarwindjournal.eu

# *Table of Contents*

# The Pictorial Language of Michelangelo:

# An Investigation by Edgar Wind[1]

Pablo Schneider

**Abstract**

In September 1935 Edgar Wind was staying at Glengarriff near Cork in Ireland. From these charming natural surroundings he wrote to his colleague Gertrud Bing; apparently the 'Spirit of God' had come over him. The reason for this was his work on the manuscript for *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos* (The pictorial language of Michelangelo), which was nearly complete.[2] In this manuscript Wind advanced a new interpretation of the Sistine Ceiling, an interpretation that went beyond mere visual identification to describe the active connection between beholding and meaning.[3] The following deliberations attempt to explain why Wind was gripped by an almost holy fear as he worked on this manuscript.[4]

**Keywords**

Prefiguration; Typology; Iconology; Aby Warburg; Picture Act; Exiles

## Introduction

As the last remaining member of the tight-knit circle from the Warburg Library in Hamburg, Edgar Wind abandoned Germany for London on 27 December 1933. In January 1933 the balance of power had changed; the rise of the National Socialists had begun to look ominous, and so the migration of the *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg* (KBW) had to be carried out in all haste. Wind was largely responsible for securing the

---

[1] This article was translated from the German by Jonathan Blower.

[2] The following deliberations are based on Edgar Wind, *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos*, ed. by Pablo Schneider (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), the first publication of the manuscript of that name, which has not yet been translated into English.

[3] The recent literature on Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel is vast. Here I shall mention only Ulrich Pfisterer, *Die Sixtinische Kapelle* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013) and Frank Zöllner, Christof Thoenes and Thomas Pöpper (eds), *Michelangelo. Das vollständige Werk* (Cologne: Taschen, 2014).

[4] Edgar Wind, 'Untersuchungen über die Platonische Kunstphilosophie', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1932), 349–373; reprinted in Edgar Wind, *Heilige Furcht und andere Schriften zum Verhältnis von Kunst und Philosophie*, ed. by John Michael Krois and Roberto Ohrt (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2009), 41–82, esp. 50.

*The Edgar Wind Journal* 8: 71-84, 2025
DOI: 10.53245/EWJ-000041

library's new location in London.[5] From January 1934 he served as deputy director of this research institute, which was henceforth known as the Warburg Institute. The priority in these years was to establish the institute as part of the British academic community and thus secure its continued existence. The library was opened to the public; lectures and seminars were offered as a means of expediting efforts to promote the institute as a centre for research. As noted in the first annual report of the institute, of the 2700 visitors in the year from 1935 to 1936, 60% were English, 30% were German and 10% were of other nationalities. British art and architectural historian Sir John Summerson later reported on the atmosphere: 'We found ourselves faced with a range and quality of scholarship we had never met before.'[6] In these first years Wind was able to use his research on the English art of the eighteenth century for a four-part lecture series on *Doctrines of Wit and Enthusiasm in Eighteenth Century English Art and Philosophy*. Among on-going research projects at the institute the annual report noted that Wind was preparing Warburg's 'Snake Dance and Ritual' for publication.[7] Under the rubric of forthcoming lectures there was an early mention of Wind's lecture on the 'Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo' and a planned publication on the same topic.[8] So the first major art historical subject that Wind addressed in the migration period was Michelangelo. Margaret Wind describes this period, which ended with Wind's emigration to the USA in 1939, as follows:

> More important for the development of his scholarship than the further work in English art he undertook at this time (on Shaftesbury, for example) was the interest in Renaissance imagery that had been kindled by Warburg and now flourished in a remarkable way in the Reading Room of the British Museum.[9]

Wind's study of *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos* has to be seen in the context of concrete challenges and institutional uncertainty. At first the contemporary political situation still permitted European travel, but when the so-called Nuremberg laws came into force on 15 September 1935, circumstances for the Jewish population of Germany clearly changed.

---

[5] See Bernhard Buschendorf, 'Auf dem Weg nach England. Edgar Wind und die Emigration der Bibliothek Warburg' in *Porträt aus Büchern. Bibliothek Warburg und Warburg Institute*, ed. by Michael Diers (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1993), 85–128; Dieter Wuttke, 'Die Emigration der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg und die Anfänge des Universitätsfachs Kunstgeschichte in Großbritannien' in *Aby Warburg. Akten des internationalen Symposions Hamburg 1990*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Weinheim: VCH, 1991), 141–163. For Wind's Hamburg period and the early years in London following emigration in 1933 see Pablo Schneider, 'From Hamburg to London. Edgar Wind: Images and Ideas' in *The Afterlife of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg: The Emigration and the Early Years of the Warburg Institute in London*, ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Peter Mack (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 117–130, 228–232.

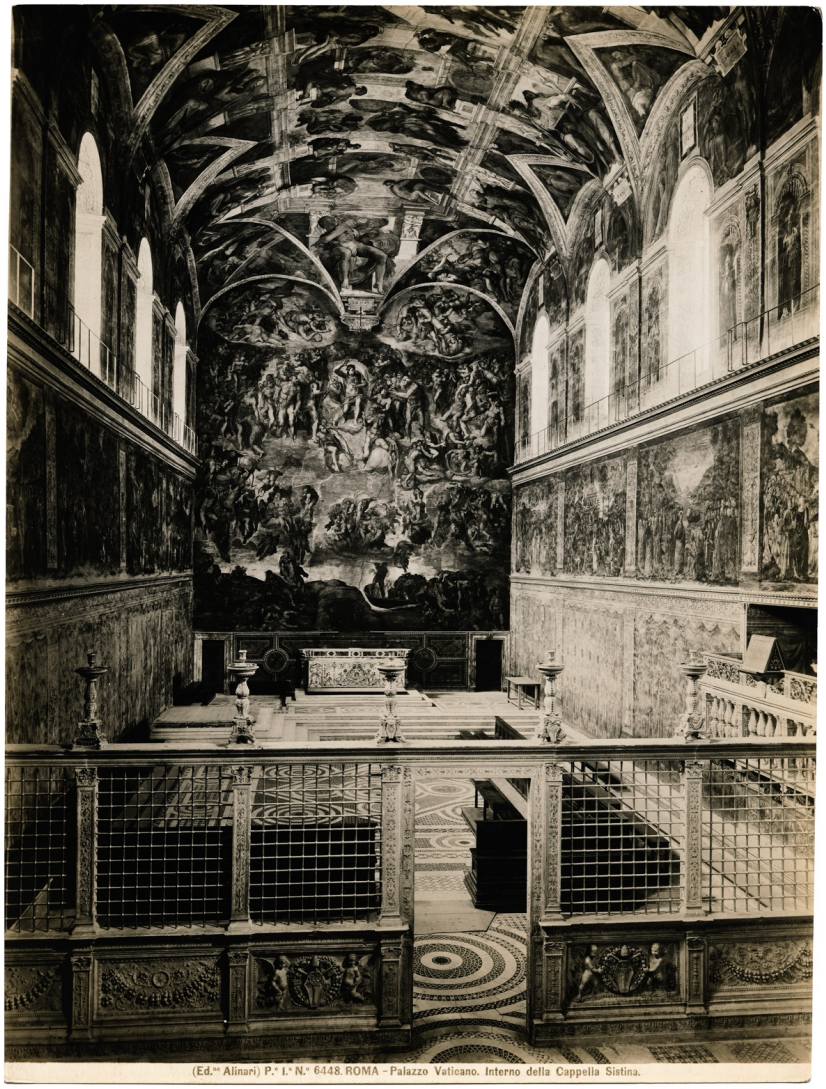
[6] Summerson to the Royal Institute of British Architects, 19 October 1976. Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[7] Aby Warburg, 'A Lecture on Serpent Ritual', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 4 (1939), 277–292. At this point Wind was co-editing the renowned journal with Rudolf Wittkower and Anthony Blunt.

[8] Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[9] Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. See also Hugh Lloyd-Jones, 'A Biographical Memoir' in Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), xiii–xxxvi, esp. xx–xxi.

The situation was drastic and dangerous, and yet no one could have known what was to come.




Interior of the Sistine Chapel, late 19th century (Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Berlin, Inv. No. F 1178)

## The Pictorial Language of Michelangelo

On 4 September 1935, from the charming coastal town of Glengarriff near Cork in Ireland, Wind wrote to his colleague Gertrud Bing, who was then staying in Lenzerheide in the Swiss Canton of Grisons:

> Dearest Gertrud,
> I hope the sin is not quite as grave as the guilt I feel for not having written to you. You must think I'm quite mad – and that I am. I have a terrible feeling that the 'Spirit of God'

has come over me, for my 'Michelangelo' is three-quarters finished. Please don't say a word about this to Saxl; it may sound crazy, but I might even be able to surprise him with the finished article by the time he gets back. I think you're going to like it, and (I fear) you may even be quite shaken by it. Because now I've found the source of everything: a religious doctrine of Grace based on the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus in John's gospel, a doctrine that finds contemporary literary expression in Michelangelo's own poetry. It explains every gesture, every feature – and brings some incredible features to light. And the worst thing is, it renders simple and transparent – really simple and transparent – not just the Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgement but also the Capella Paolina, the final version of the tomb for Julius, the Medici tombs, the programme for the façade of San Lorenzo – everything! Every stage of this work has been like a revelation, but the most shocking of all was the last, which opened up like a chasm in its simplicity; it was like suddenly falling into a fountain. This explains my peculiar behaviour; whenever I took up my pen to write to you – and I can assure you I often did – I found myself writing this book instead. On days when the weather was fine (which were rare, thank God) I summoned up all my strength and forced myself to go climbing in the mountains or out onto the water, and I think it's done me the world of good. The place where I'm staying is far more beautiful than I expected. Imagine a sea cove, thoroughly Mediterranean in character, with charming islands and virtually tropical vegetation: mimosas, myrtles, palms, bamboo! But that's just the seam of the coastline; immediately behind that, towering above it, there's a bleak and utterly barren chain of mountains in which one almost feels transported into the alps. [...]
All best wishes,
Yours,
Edgar[10]

[10] Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. 'Liebste Gertrud, Ich hoffe, die Sünde ist nicht ganz so schwer wie sie auf mir lastet: – Dir nicht geschrieben zu haben. Du denkst sicher, ich bin verrückt; und ich bin's. Ich habe das schreckliche Gefühl, daß der "Geist Gottes" über mich gekommen ist, denn der "Michelangelo" ist zu drei Vierteln fertig. Bitte sage Saxl nichts davon, denn vielleicht kann ich ihm bis zu seiner Rückkehr das Ganze – obwohl es Wahnsinn scheint – als Überraschung vorlegen. Es wird Dir gefallen und – (ich fürchte) – Dich sehr aufregen. Denn ich habe jetzt die Wurzeln des ganzen gefunden: – eine religiöse Gnadenlehre, die sich auf das Gespräch Christi mit Nikodemus im Johannesevangelium gründet und deren zeitgenössisch literarischen Beleg in Michelangelos eigenen Gedichten vorliegt. Aus ihnen erklärt sich jede Gebärde, jeder Zug – und es treten unglaubliche Züge zutage. Das Schlimmste ist: Nicht nur die Sixtinische Decke und das "Jüngste Gericht" werden plötzlich einfach und durchsichtig – wirklich: einfach und durchsichtig, – sondern auch die Capella Paolina, die letzte Fassung des Juliusgrabes, die Medicigräber, das Programm der Lorenzofassade, – alles! Ich habe auf jeder Stufe dieser Arbeit gedacht, daß sie eine Offenbarung war, aber diese letzte war wirklich die erschreckendste, weil sie in ihrer Einfachheit wie ein Abgrund wirkte. Es ist, als ob man plötzlich in einen Brunnen fällt. Hieraus erklärt sich mein eigentümliches Verhalten: jedesmal wenn ich die Feder in die Hand nahm, um Dir zu schreiben, – und ich versichere Dir, es geschah oft, – schrieb ich stattdessen an diesem Buch weiter. An den schönen Tagen (die, gottlob, nicht zu häufig waren) zwang ich mich mit aller Macht auf die Berge zu klettern oder aufs Wasser zu gehen, und hab' mich dabei, glaub' ich, sehr gut erholt. Der Ort ist von einer unerwarteten Schönheit. Stell Dir eine Seebucht vor von absolut südlichem Charakter: – mit entzückenden Inseln darin und einer fast tropischen Vegetation: Mimosen, Myrthen, Palmen, Bambus! Aber das ist nur der Saum am Ufer; denn dahinter ragt, völlig unvermittelt, ein düsteres, gänzlich kahles Felsgebirge auf, in dem man sich ins Hochgebirge versetzt glaubt. […] Alles Gute von Deinem Edgar.'

Full of enthusiasm, the art historian went on to explain his analysis to his colleague. The conception of the iconographical programme for the Sistine Chapel was indebted to the religious doctrine of Grace. This doctrine was intrinsically future oriented and dynamically communicated to the beholder with reference to the dialogue between Christ and Nicodemus. This was supported by Michelangelo's own poetry, a contemporary source that likewise constituted a unique form of communication.

Wind's admonition, 'Please don't say a word about this to Saxl,' seems slightly ambivalent, for the relationship between the two colleagues was not always smooth, and here he takes Gertrud Bing, Saxl's life partner, into his confidence. In any case, the passage also reveals that Wind hoped to have the manuscript finished in the near future, though this was not the way things turned out. On 13, 20 and 27 May 1936, Wind discussed his recent research in a series of lectures entitled 'The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo'.[11] The Catholic weekly newspaper *The Tablet* published a detailed report of the first sitting in its 16 May edition. Wind had presented Michelangelo as an artist who 'painted with his head, not his hands'. Proceeding from this observation, the article went on to summarize the theoretical basis of the lecture: the prefiguration of the New Testament in the Old.

> To state Dr. Wind's theory briefly, the cycle expressed in this arrangement is the cycle of prophecy. The prophets represent the 'prophecy' of the Old Testament, the sibyls the 'grace' of the New. […] Dr. Wind's method has been to use the mediæval books of scriptural collation and criticism, which would have been available to Michel Angelo, and to see what scenes of the Old Testament were thought to pre-figure scenes in the New. To give a concrete example from his lecture: the scene of the Derision of Noah, in which the drunken Noah is mocked and put to shame by his sons, appears in the scenes of the Creation. The prophet corresponding to this central picture is the prophet Joel, he who writes: 'Awake, you drunkards, and weep!' Two cherubini stand behind Joel, one pointing to the other, who turns away. The corresponding sibyl is the Delphic sibyl. All the sibyls were thought to prophesy in some manner the Passion of Christ, and the Delphic sibyl particularly His crowning with thorns. Thus the motif of 'derision' is carried all through this group of pictures. [...] The centerpiece of the whole chapel, the creation of Eve, is related to the birth of the Church, the wound in Adam's side corresponds with the wound in Our Lord's side, and the bare wilderness in which Adam is lying (so strange a representation of Paradise before the Fall) foreshadows Golgotha. The creation of Adam, by a really remarkable parallel with a Giotto painting, is shown to have an affinity with the Resurrection.[12]

[11] For the list see Dieter Wuttke (ed.), *Kosmopolis der Wissenschaft. E.R. Curtius und das Warburg Institute. Briefe 1928 bis 1953 und andere Dokumente* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1989), 328. For the scholarly prehistory see the study by Roland Kany, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Forschung an der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg* (Bamberg: Wendel, 1989).

[12] 'Michel Angelo', *The Tablet* 167, 16 May 1936, 619.

Wind had given an impressive account of the central theme of his argument. His reflections proceeded from the tension between prefiguration and prophecy.[13] Though his approach was not iconographic it was still evidently indebted to Warburg's ideas, ideas that centred on the substance that would emerge at each viewing. For although Wind described the historic conception of a certain constellation of motifs, this constellation was devised for the purpose of actively producing meaning in the beholder: an observance of prefiguration that found its dynamic continuation in the comprehension of prophecy.

## Warburg's Afterlife

Wind's method seems to have been inspired by conversations with Warburg that went back to 1927. In this period the two men often discussed the pictorial functions of gesture and other forms of physical expression, and Warburg gave Wind his autograph fragments on the theory of expression. He penned a card to accompany these at the KBW and left a note for Wind: 'Creation of mental space as a function of culture. Attempt at a psychology of human orientation on the basis of a universal history of the image.'[14] In the afternoon of that day he explained his ideas about polarity to his young colleague. He described their origin in the tension between traditional northern realism and classical Renaissance animation: 'Botticelli in the wish-space between realistic Burgundian period-dress present and pantheistic Ovidian *danse macabre* romanticism. Placed Pollaiuolo and the Arazzi.' Warburg concluded this entry from 9 November 1929, on the lecture in the oval reading room of the KBW, with a personal observation: 'A very productive instance of mutual encouragement.'[15] In all likelihood their conversation will have started with panels 39, 34 and 37 of the Mnemosyne Atlas, even if their exact appearance can only be reconstructed from the extant photographic documentation. What's more important, though, is that Warburg presented his ideas on the symbol as cultural-historical fact that generated its meaning from its polarity functions. Wind adopts the same approach in his own reflections on the frescoes of the Sistine Ceiling when he conceives of pictorial representations as symbols and attempts to describe their lasting after-effects: prefiguration and prophecy. For the potential that emerges from this might have the effect of either levelling or propulsion and is productively demonstrated or manifested in visual realisation.[16] In Wind's *Die*

[13] For the literature from around the time of Wind's deliberations see Hans Engelhardt, *Der theologische Gehalt der Biblia pauperum* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1927) and Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos. Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1939).

[14] 11 November 1929. Aby Warburg, *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, ed. by Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Berlin: Akademie, 2001), 547; see also Aby Warburg, *Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde*, ed. by Ulrich Pfisterer and Hans Christian Hönes (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

[15] Warburg, *Tagebuch der KBW*, 551: 'Botticelli im Wunschraum zwischen burgundischer trachtenrealistischer Gegenwart und ovidianischer pantheistischer Toteland-Romantik gezeigt. Pollajuolo placiert und die Arazzi. War ein sehr tüchtiges gegenseitiges Fördern.'

[16] See Bernhard Buschendorf, '"War ein tüchtiges gegenseitiges Fördern." Edgar Wind und Aby Warburg', *Idea* 4 (1985), 165–209, esp. 179–180.

*Bildsprache Michelangelos* the immediacy of this historical conception of the image and civilization becomes a driving moment of visual contemplation. And yet he had already been grappling with Warburg's ideas on this subject several years prior.

The art of Michelangelo was a preoccupation for other art historians in Hamburg during those years, particularly Wind's doctoral supervisor Erwin Panofsky.[17] In any case, it is remarkable that Panofsky withdrew from the field of Michelangelo studies just as Wind seemed to be reaching the end of his manuscript on the subject. In a letter to Ludwig H. Heydenreich from 1948, Panofsky writes: 'Since 1938, i.e. since Tolnay and Wind appeared in the United States, I have entirely and gladly relinquished the realm of Michelangelo studies to them and no longer even follow the literature.'[18]

Moreover, immediately after Warburg's death in October 1929, his closest colleagues, Fritz Saxl, Gertrud Bing and Edgar Wind, embarked on a period of intensive engagement with the work, ideas and methodology of the founder of the KBW. In the *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Wind published an essay titled 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik' (Warburg's Concept of Kulturwissenschaft and its Meaning for Aesthetics).[19] Here, in sketching Warburg's ideas and describing their development, Wind argued against a conception of art that propagates an ahistorical and ultimately abstract experience of seeing with respect to the works:

> However, to understand this function [...] one should not dissociate it from its connection with the functions of other elements of that culture. One should rather ask the twofold question: what do these other cultural functions (religion and poetry, myth and science, society and the state) mean for the pictorial imagination; and what does the image mean for these other functions?[20]

---

[17] See Gerda Panofsky, 'Einführung' in Erwin Panofsky, *Die Gestaltungsprincipien Michelangelos, besonders in ihrem Verhältnis zu denen Raffaels*, ed. by Gerda Panofsky (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 1–41, esp. 2. Erwin Panofsky, *Die sixtinische Decke* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1921). Erwin Panofsky, 'Die Michelangelo-Literatur seit 1914', *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 1 (1923), 1–64; Erwin Panofsky, 'Rezension von "Ernst Steinmann und Rudolf Wittkower Michelangelobibliographie 1510–1926"', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 1 (1932), 160–161.

[18] Panofsky (Princeton) to Heydenreich (Washington), 6 December 1948; see Erwin Panofsky, *Korrespondenz. Band II, 1937–1949*, ed. by Dieter Wuttke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 1000: 'Ich habe seit 1938, d.h. seit dem Erscheinen von Tolnay und Wind in den Vereinigten Staaten, diesen den ganzen Michelangelobereich gern und vollständig abgetreten und nicht einmal mehr die Literatur verfolgt.'

[19] Edgar Wind, 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 25 (1931), 163–179; reprinted in Ekkehard Kaemmerling (ed.), *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Theorien – Entwicklung – Probleme* (Cologne: DuMont, 1979), 165–184; and translated as Edgar Wind, 'Warburg's Concept of Kulturwissenschaft and its Meaning for Aesthetics' in idem, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 21–35.

[20] Wind, 'Warburg's Concept of Kulturwissenschaft', 25; Wind, 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft', 167–168: 'Wer aber die Funktionen des Sehens verstehen will […], der darf es nicht aus seinem Zusammenhang mit den übrigen Kulturfunktionen völlig herauslösen. Er muß vielmehr die doppelte Frage stellen: Was bedeuten diese übrigen Funktionen – Religion und Dichtung, Mythos und Wissenschaft, Gesellschaft und Staat – für die bildhafte Phantasie? Was bedeutet das Bild für diese Funktionen?'

Wind incorporated and elaborated on these methodological questions in his research.

Wind's Michelangelo manuscript was still not finished in May 1936; in July that year he visited Rome to continue his research. He reported back to Saxl:

> From here I could only speak volumes. So I prefer to remain silent. The poles of my existence are the structure of the Sistine Ceiling and the 'Instituto Biblico' of the Jesuits, where I'm reading the contemporary commentaries on the Bible. All Rome lies between them (also in purely spatial terms). This being the case, you'll appreciate how I might have been touched by modicum of madness.[21]

Again, Wind seems to have been slightly discombobulated by his findings. And given his methodological approach, this is understandable. Rather than attempting to decipher iconographical aspects of the fresco cycle, he concentrated on the active content of the motifs, that which remained effective and still held out the anticipation of redemption, as per the opening of the book.[22] And so Wind found himself directly confronted with the motto Warburg had jotted down on Rose Monday in 1888 – 'Du lebst und thust mir nichts' ('You live and do me no harm') – adding the formulation: 'Darin liegt bereits eine Ahnung von der Entfernung als Grundprincip' ('Which already contains an intimation of distance as fundamental principle').[23]

## Analysis

In his analysis of the Sistine Ceiling Wind distanced himself from the existing scholarship by concentrating on the supposition that the frescoes followed a coherent programme and that their conception was based on typology. For instance, he realised that the pendentive depicting Haman's punishment related to Dante's *Purgatorio*, in which he is crucified, not hanged, as reported in the Book of Esther. This departure allowed Michelangelo to embody the prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice: it 'gives this pictorial language the form of a secret prophecy. To those who can see the allegorical intention, the Christian meaning will be transparent, whereas those who understand only the literal sense remain as it were imprisoned in a strictly Old Testament cycle.'[24] For Wind, such parallels with written sources were more than just passages to be employed and cited when identifying figures

[21] Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, copy of the Warburg Institute Archive, London: 'von hier könnte ich nur Bände erzählen. Also schweige ich lieber. Die Pole meiner Existenz sind das Gerüst der Sixtina und das „Instituto Biblico" der Jesuiten, wo ich die zeitgenössischen Bibelkommentare lese. Dazwischen liegt (auch rein räumlich verstanden) ganz Rom. Daß ich bei dieser Lage der Dinge von einem leichten Wahnsinn befallen bin, wirst Du verstehen.'

[22] For this aspect of the 'active image' see Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010).

[23] Warburg Institute Archive III.43.3. Now published in Warburg, *Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde*, 5.

[24] Wind, *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos*, 22: 'gibt dieser Bildersprache die Form einer geheimen Prophetie. Wer die gleichnishafte Absicht erkennt, wird die Transparenz des christlichen Sinngehalts bemerken. Wer nur den wörtlichen Sinn versteht, bleibt gleichsam eingefangen in einen strengen alttestamentarischen Zyklus.'

and motifs – a burden later borne by iconography. He was far more interested in identifying lines of thought that were embodied in images and thus harboured, besides historical value, the potential for humanist analysis.[25] In this way Wind produced an analysis that was highly innovative at the time of writing, an analysis that conceived of individual motifs and themes together, as a whole, establishing connections between them across the entire ceiling. Wind's typological approach also incorporated aspects of Warburg's thinking in polarities: it not only drew parallels between related elements of the Sistine Ceiling but also considered the vitality of the idea of salvation. It is on this point that Wind's analysis has a methodological value that transcends the example of Michelangelo's painting, for his analysis of the Sistine Ceiling goes beyond mere identification. Typology is not used as a tool that might ultimately only answer iconographical and iconological questions. In Wind's analysis Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling is a visual and intellectual work based on the idea of embodied prefiguration. An example of this can be found in the rather minor motif of a group of men depicted in The Deluge.

Here, one of the men looks up while others manoeuvre a ladder. The gaze, the group and the ladder coalesce into a non-visible image, 'as though they were the henchmen who nailed Christ to the Cross.'[26] From this it becomes evident that the identification of individual scenes is to be regarded as a necessary first step. Far more important is the knowledge that the Sistine Ceiling is pervaded by the idea of an anticipation of salvation, which is apparent, for instance, in the double image of the Deluge and the Crucifixion, to which the little scene of the men with the ladder leads. This conceptual approach – an application of Warburg's ideas – is of high methodological value; such analysis grants the image its autonomy and does not reduce it to the status of an accessory to the written sources.[27]

Not that Wind feared having deciphered the programme of the Sistine Ceiling; he was worried about having penetrated the deeper meaning of the paintings. This had not been an exercise in decoding, and that had never been the goal of his analysis; his eyes and mind had seen and comprehended the timeless, fundamental idea of salvation through Christ. This way of looking at the frescoes had revealed God's plan for salvation in a way that could never have resulted from a purely iconographical approach. And this explains

[25] On which see also Elizabeth Sears, 'Die Bildsprache Michelangelos. Edgar Winds Auslegung der Sixtinischen Decke' in *Edgar Wind. Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp (Berlin: Akademie, 1998), 49–75. For the notion of the symbol in this context see Bernhard Buschendorf, 'Zur Begründung der Kulturwissenschaft. Der Symbolbegriff bei Friedrich Theodor Fischer, Aby Warburg und Edgar Wind' in Bredekamp, *Edgar Wind*, 227–248, esp. 237.

[26] Wind, *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos*, 36: 'als wären sie die Schergen, die Christus ans Kreuz geheftet haben.'

[27] Erwin Panofsky recognised Wind's independent approach to the continuation of Warburg's work: 'He is certainly the one man who has developed the ideas of the late Professor Warburg in an entirely independent spirit and is able to carry them on in a most stimulating form.' Panofsky to Georges Boas, 5 October 1939, in Panofsky, *Korrespondenz*, 219; see also Pablo Schneider, 'Edgar Wind (1900–1971). Begriffliches Denken – verkörpertes Sehen' in *Ideengeschichte der Bildwissenschaft*, ed. by Jörg Probst and Jost Philipp Klenner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 53–74, esp. 59–65.

the passage in Wind's letter to his colleague where he refers to the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in the Gospel of John.[28] The driving force behind the analysis was not some condensed representation of a specific and iconographically comprehensible moment but a protracted sequence of questions and answers, and hence a highly dynamic situation that attains the light of truth in the nocturnal atmosphere at the end of the dialogue. Swirling around before this are the deliberations of two men on how salvation can be obtained by being reborn in spirit, not in flesh. In this respect the recognition of signs, their ambivalence and supratemporal qualities, proves central: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'[29] Wind aligned his analysis of the Sistine Ceiling with this form of correspondence. Importantly, though, he did so not for the sake of a definitive interpretation but as a description of the perpetual process of participation though contemplation. This may have seemed esoteric to the majority of his professional colleagues – though not to Aby Warburg.

As noted in his letter to Bing, Wind certainly didn't stop with the reference to John's Gospel. If he had, his art historical study would have been no more than a theological meditation. He clearly makes reference to Michelangelo when he mentions Michelangelo's poems as another written source. These contain references to the Gospel as well as evidence of typological thinking.[30] This type of understanding began with Augustine, who introduced an important observation for Wind. For this late antique church teacher, the Old Testament was a veiling of the New Testament, which in turn was an unveiling of its precursor.[31] In this sense the two were mutually interwoven, an embodiment of the all-encompassing nature of God's plan for salvation. Neither one could explain the other; the possibility of salvation revealed itself beyond the temporal bounds of human understanding.[32] Wind the philosopher and art historian was the first to see this process play out in Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, and his study opens with the programmatic sentence: 'Der Bilderzyklus der Sixtinischen Decke ist ein Sinnbild des Harrens auf Erlösung' ('The programme of the Sistine Ceiling is a symbol of the anticipation of salvation').

[28] John 3, 1–21.

[29] John 3, 14–15.

[30] See Claudia-Elisabetta Schurr, *Vittoria Colonna und Michelangelo Buonarroti. Künstler- und Liebespaar der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2011), 131 and Jan Rohls, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 269.

[31] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XVI, 26.

[32] For the typological aspect see Volker Herzner, *Die Sixtinische Decke. Warum Michelangelo malen durfte, was er wollte* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2015), 134; Alexander Linke, *Typologie in der Frühen Neuzeit. Genese und Semantik heilsgeschichtlicher Bildprogramme von der Cappella Sistina (1480) bis San Giovanni in Laterano (1650)* (Berlin: Reimer, 2014); and the review by Michael Rohlmann, 'Vertiefungsfähig: Typologische Bildstrategien', *Kunstchronik* 6 (2016), 300–305.

## Conclusion

On 3 February 1937, philosopher Ernst Cassirer, writing from Swedish exile in Goteborg, asked the following of Fritz Saxl: 'How are things progressing with Wind's Michelangelo studies? I'm looking forward to seeing them published. Many people in Rome have told me what a strong impression he made with his lectures.'[33] Although the manuscript of *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos* was probably finished around the end of 1936, Wind never pushed to have it published. He had excellent English, so the fact that it was written in German would not have presented much of a problem. That said, he was always extremely fastidious when it came to the publication of his own research. In 1937 he published the first volume of the *Journal of the Warburg Institute* together with Rudolf Wittkower. Here, under the title 'The Crucifixion of Haman', he presented one of his most convincing detailed studies from *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos*.[34] Yet as early as 1935 he had outlined an even more comprehensive investigation under the working title *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo*.[35] In this work he planned to interpret Michelangelo's whole oeuvre with reference to mystical Renaissance theology. In August 1939 he left the Warburg Institute to spend some time working in the USA. At the end of the 1940s, while still in America, he resumed work on his Michelangelo studies and drew up a detailed table of contents. This mentions an introductory chapter 'On the Nature of Symbols' along with four further chapters: 'Pagan and Christian Metaphors', 'Symbols of Death', 'The Theory of Love' and 'The Theological Testament'.[36] The Michelangelo manuscript of 1936 has to be seen in this light.

## Bibliography

Bredekamp, Horst (ed.), *Edgar Wind. Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph* (Berlin: Akademie, 1998).

——, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010).

Buschendorf, Bernhard, 'Auf dem Weg nach England. Edgar Wind und die Emigration der Bibliothek Warburg' in *Porträt aus Büchern. Bibliothek Warburg und Warburg Institute*, ed. by Michael Diers (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 1993), 85–128.

——, '"War ein tüchtiges gegenseitiges Fördern." Edgar Wind und Aby Warburg', *Idea* 4 (1985), 165–209.

[33] Wind papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford: 'wie weit ist eigentlich die Publikation von Winds Michelangelo-Studien gediehen? Ich bin gespannt auf ihre Veröffentlichung. Aus Rom hörte ich von vielen Seiten, welch starken Eindruck seine Vorträge gemacht haben.'

[34] Edgar Wind, 'The Crucifixion of Haman', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937–1938), 245–248.

[35] On which see Edgar Wind, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[36] Sears, 'Die Bildsprache Michelangelos', 51.

——, 'Zur Begründung der Kulturwissenschaft. Der Symbolbegriff bei Friedrich Theodor Fischer, Aby Warburg und Edgar Wind' in Horst Bredekamp (ed.), *Edgar Wind. Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph* (Berlin: Akademie, 1998), 227–248.

Engelhardt, Hans, *Der theologische Gehalt der Biblia pauperum* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1927).

Goppelt, Leonhard, *Typos. Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1939).

Herzner, Volker, *Die Sixtinische Decke. Warum Michelangelo malen durfte, was er wollte* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2015).

Kaemmerling, Ekkehard (ed.), *Ikonographie und Ikonologie. Theorien – Entwicklung – Probleme* (Cologne: DuMont, 1979).

Kany, Roland, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Forschung an der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg* (Bamberg: Wendel, 1989).

Linke, Alexander, *Typologie in der Frühen Neuzeit. Genese und Semantik heilsgeschichtlicher Bildprogramme von der Cappella Sistina (1480) bis San Giovanni in Laterano (1650)* (Berlin: Reimer, 2014).

Lloyd-Jones, Hugh, 'A Biographical Memoir' in Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), xiii–xxxvi.

Panofsky, Erwin, *Korrespondenz. Band II, 1937–1949*, ed. by Dieter Wuttke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

——, 'Die Michelangelo-Literatur seit 1914', *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 1 (1923), 1–64.

——, 'Rezension von "Ernst Steinmann und Rudolf Wittkower Michelangelobibliographie 1510–1926"', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 1 (1932), 160–161.

——, *Die sixtinische Decke* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1921).

Panofsky, Gerda, 'Einführung' in Erwin Panofsky, *Die Gestaltungsprincipien Michelangelos, besonders in ihrem Verhältnis zu denen Raffaels*, ed. by Gerda Panofsky (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 1–41.

Pfisterer, Ulrich, *Die Sixtinische Kapelle* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2013).

Rohlmann, Michael, 'Vertiefungsfähig: Typologische Bildstrategien', *Kunstchronik* 6 (2016), 300–305.

Rohls, Jan, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

Schneider, Pablo, 'Edgar Wind (1900–1971). Begriffliches Denken – verkörpertes Sehen' in *Ideengeschichte der Bildwissenschaft*, ed. by Jörg Probst and Jost Philipp Klenner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 53–74.

——, 'From Hamburg to London. Edgar Wind: Images and Ideas' in *The Afterlife of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg: The Emigration and the Early Years of the Warburg Institute in London*, ed. by Uwe Fleckner and Peter Mack (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 117–130, 228–232.

Schurr, Claudia-Elisabetta, *Vittoria Colonna und Michelangelo Buonarroti. Künstler- und Liebespaar der Renaissance* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2011).

Sears, Elizabeth, 'Die Bildsprache Michelangelos. Edgar Winds Auslegung der Sixtinischen Decke' in *Edgar Wind. Kunsthistoriker und Philosoph*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp (Berlin: Akademie, 1998), 49–75.

Warburg, Aby, 'A Lecture on Serpent Ritual', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 4 (1939), 277–292.

——, *Fragmente zur Ausdruckskunde*, ed. by Ulrich Pfisterer and Hans Christian Hönes (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

——, *Tagebuch der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg*, ed. by Karen Michels and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Berlin: Akademie, 2001).

Wind, Edgar, *Die Bildsprache Michelangelos*, ed. by Pablo Schneider (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

——, 'The Crucifixion of Haman', *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937–1938), 245–248.

——, *Heilige Furcht und andere Schriften zum Verhältnis von Kunst und Philosophie*, ed. by John Michael Krois and Roberto Ohrt (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2009).

——, *The Religious Symbolism of Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*, ed. by Elizabeth Sears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

——, 'Untersuchungen über die Platonische Kunstphilosophie', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 26 (1932), 349–373.

——, 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 25 (1931), 163–179.

——, 'Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics' in Edgar Wind, *The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art*, ed. by Jaynie Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 21–35.

Wuttke, Dieter, 'Die Emigration der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Bibliothek Warburg und die Anfänge des Universitätsfachs Kunstgeschichte in Großbritannien' in *Aby Warburg. Akten des internationalen Symposions Hamburg 1990*, ed. by Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Weinheim: VCH, 1991), 141–163.

——, (ed.), *Kosmopolis der Wissenschaft. E.R. Curtius und das Warburg Institute. Briefe 1928 bis 1953 und andere Dokumente* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1989).

Zöllner, Frank, Christof Thoenes and Thomas Pöpper (eds), *Michelangelo. Das vollständige Werk* (Cologne: Taschen, 2014).