

Crisis and Astonishment

Alexander Kluge-Jahrbuch 9 | 2022





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Richard Langston / Irina Simova

Editorial

I

“After 1991, following the disintegration of the Russian imperium,” Alexander Kluge confessed in the preface to *The Devil’s Blind Spot* (2004), “I had the feeling that the new century would take the bitter experience of the 20th century and turn it around into something hopeful.”¹ Even though the emerging twenty-first century looked already like it was sliding backward “into the era of the Thirty Years’ War,” Kluge was quick to renounce cultural pessimism. “There are no periods of decline,” he declared, echoing his spiritual teacher Walter Benjamin’s own renunciation of cultural conservatism in his unfinished *Passagenwerk*.² “It’s more worthwhile,” Kluge averred, “to examine the allegedly pre-modern period to find out what in it releases human power and what the power of the Devil.”³ Investigating the devil’s blind spots—“Gaps in our world edifices”—is just one possible step in the process required for making sense of and, what’s more, intervening in the persistent illusions of progress and the interminable, catastrophic course of history.⁴ Another possible step is astonishment [*Staunen*].

1 Alexander Kluge, *The Devil’s Blind Spot: Tales from the New Century*, Michael Chalmers/Micahel Hulse (trans.), New York 2004, p. vii.

2 Ibid., vii. Translation modified to reflect the standard English translation of Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*. See: Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland/Kevin McLaughlin (trans.), Cambridge 1999, p. 458.

3 Kluge, *The Devil’s Blind Spot*, p. vii.

4 Alexander Kluge, *Die Lücke, die der Teufel läßt: Im Umfeld des neuen Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a.M. 2003, p. 7. Unless otherwise noted, this and all other translations are those of the authors.

II

In the eighth thesis of his seminal episodic essay “On the Concept of History,” Walter Benjamin contends that astonishment is an essential element for reconceptualizing the twentieth century’s disastrous concept of history:

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords with this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism. One reason fascism has a chance is that, in the name of progress, its opponents treat it as a historical norm.—The current astonishment that the things we are experiencing are “still” possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This astonishment is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.⁵

According to Sigrid Weigel, a precise reading of this thesis recognizes that Benjamin sought not to discredit astonishment per se as a disingenuous response to the normalization of violence, terror and war in everyday life. Rather, Benjamin’s objective was to reject the “philosophical status given to” what Aristotle claimed in *Metaphysics* as the starting point of all philosophizing: *thaumazein* [θαυμάζειν], which is rendered as either “astonishment” or “amazement” in English and “Staunen,” “Bewunderung” or “Verwunderung” in German.⁶ When subsumed into the modern business of philosophy, Benjamin insists, astonishment becomes nothing less than a corroborative tool of what might be best called cynical reason, what Peter Sloterdijk, many decades later, defined as “*enlightened false consciousness*” or “to act against better knowledge.”⁷ Far from discarding astonishment altogether, however, Benjamin places astonishment, Weigel persuasively adds, “at the possible beginning of a cognition of an untenable notion of the history that engendered it and at the same time marks the end of precisely that notion of history.”⁸ What Benjamin calls for, in other words, is the recovery of *thaumazein* as a mode of perception (*aisthesis*) especially attuned to suffering

5 Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” *Selected Writings*, Michael W. Jennings (ed.), vol. 4, Cambridge 2003, p. 697. Harry Zorn’s translation renders “Staunen” in the original German as “amazement.” We explain or reasons for using “astonishment” below.

6 Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin*, Georgina Paul/Rachel McNicholls/Jeremy Gaines (trans.), London 1996, p. 146. See also: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b. On the standard translation of the Greek *θαυμάζειν* and its derivatives (*θαῦμα*, *θάμβος*, and *ἐκπληξίς*) into English and German, see: Elenor Sain/Tobias Trappe, “Staunen, Bewunderung, Verwunderung,” in: Joachim Ritter/Karlfried Gründer (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 10, Basel 1998, pp. 115–24.

7 Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Michael Eldred (trans.), Minneapolis 1987, p. 5–6.

8 Weigel, p. 147.

(*paschein*).⁹ Intense affect is, however, one of several constituents needed to break with the long reigning concept of history and the suffering it causes. Another essential constituent is the gaze.

III

The German word for astonishment—*Staunen*—has acquired various meanings since its emergence in the early seventeenth century. Aside from its original meaning of “starr sein” [to be rigid], *staunen* has primarily denoted “gedankenvolles sinnen und träumen” [thoughtful pondering and dreaming]. “Even more clearly,” the Grimms dictionary goes on to explain, “the concept of gazing comes to the fore when amazement is associated with certain directional indications.”¹⁰ According to Jonathan Crary, by the time the verb *staunen* finally entered the Grimms dictionary in 1910, looking and seeing assumed entirely new guises compared to the dominant ways European vision had operated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the “objective ground of visual truth” was “stable and fixed.”¹¹ Since then, the physiology of human vision did not change so much as “the plural forces and rules composing the field in which perception occur[ed].”¹² So, if astonishment was once understood in terms of a visual geometry in which an alien object or event seen at a distance shattered an observer’s sense of normalcy, which in turn led to “a second, intellectual birth,” how then has the modern *dispositif* of vision comprised of technological instruments, techniques, institutions, discourses and socioeconomic forces influenced the feeling of astonishment?¹³ There was no doubt in Benjamin’s mind that the sight of persistent catastrophe failed to incite the astonishment necessary for jettisoning an affirmative concept of history. For that, another kind of seeing was needed.

9 On the relationship of *thaumazein* with *aisthesis* and *paschein* in Plato and Aristotle, see: Stefan Matuschek, *Über das Staunen: Eine ideengeschichtliche Analyse*, Tübingen 1991, p. 19.

10 Jacob Grimm/Wilhelm Grimm, “STAUNEN, verb,” in: *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, online publication, www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=S41742 (Accessed 15. 12. 2023).

11 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 1992, p. 14.

12 Crary, p. 6.

13 Matuschek, p. 8; Crary, p. 8.

IV

Not long after German lexicographers linked astonishment with vision, but well after the emergence of the new docile observer uncovered by Crary, Benjamin took a keen interest in collecting “old children’s books, fairy tales and beautiful legends” while working on his dissertation on Romantic art criticism.¹⁴ Illustrated children’s books like Friedrich Justin Bertuch’s lavishly illustrated, twelve-volume *Bilderbuch für Kinder* published between 1792 and 1830 assumed a special place in his collection. Recalling Benjamin’s hobby, Gershom Scholem wrote, for example, “In June 1918, we found the first volume of Bertuch’s picture book for children—from the Weimar circle—at an antiquarian bookseller in Bern, of which he then acquired several more volumes. It was a particular focus of his loving attention.”¹⁵ Initially, Benjamin had no clue what to make of his special collection of books. “In a few years I will know what some of these works mean to me,” he confessed in a letter addressed to his childhood friend Ernst Schoen in July 1918, “for some of them it may take a very long time.”¹⁶ By 1924, however, he did finally put his finger on the value of illustrated children’s books like Bertuch’s. Color illustrations typical of the late eighteenth century afforded children fantastic ways of looking that circumvented the “philanthropic theories” that enlightenment pedagogues embedded in their accompanying stories.¹⁷ Far from imposing the narrow abstract logic of adulthood on its young readers, the book’s radiant copperplate engravings of sundry animals promised to activate children’s unschooled eyes, trigger their fantasy and project their untrained way of seeing outward into the world much like baroque emblems once did.¹⁸ To advance this goal, Bertuch even went so far as to advocate cutting out the book’s illustrations

14 Walter Benjamin to Ernst Schoen, 31 July 1918, in *Briefe*, Gershom Scholem/Theodor W. Adorno (eds.), vol. 1, Frankfurt a.M. 1966, p. 198.

15 Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft*, Frankfurt a.M. 1975, p. 86.

16 Benjamin, letter to Schoen, p. 198–199.

17 Walter Benjamin, “Alte vergessene Kinderbücher,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, Hella Tiedemann-Bartels (ed.), vol. III, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, p. 17.

18 Compare Benjamin’s account in “Alte vergessene Kinderbücher” with Bertuch’s own preface, in which he insists: “Das Auge des lebhaften Kindes sieht ganz anders als das Auge des Mannes, das sich beschränken und abstrahiren kann. Das Kind aber sieht die ganze Menge höchst verschiedener Bilder und Gegenstände, die auf der Tafel zusammen stehen, alle auf einmal, springt mit seiner lebhaften Imagination von einem zum anderen über...” [An active child’s eye sees quite differently than that of a man, which can limit and abstract itself. The child, however, sees the whole multitude of different images and objects standing together on the board all at once, jumping from one to the other using his vivid imagination...] See: Friedrich Justin Bertuch, *Bilderbuch für Kinder: enthaltend eine angenehme Sammlung von Thieren, Pflanzen, Früchten, Mineralien ... alle nach den besten Originalen gewählt, gestochen und mit einer ... den Verstandes-Kräften eines Kindes angemessenen Erklärung begleitet*, vol. 1, 2. ed., Weimar 1801, p. 3.

and turning them into toys, something Benjamin found remarkable enough to repeat.¹⁹ How, it's now worth asking, might we grasp Bertuch's picture book as an alternative technique of observation, one that afforded the child's gaze an ability to avert the modern *dispostif* of vision? Might this technique be a key for making astonishment matter again in a world full of mediated images?

V

In his Poetikdozentur für faktuales Erzählen held at Bergische Universität Wuppertal in spring 2022, Marcel Beyer wrestled with very same problem Benjamin outlined in thesis eight. Without ever employing the word *Staunen*, Beyer reported on what he calls the “obscurity” of Russia's war on Ukraine as captured in photographs and videos the author collected while browsing the Internet, surfing social media apps and watching television.²⁰ Not intended as any moral indictment, obscurity for Beyer conveys instead the outward-facing spectacle of war—the ob-scene of ruthless Russian aggression—broadcast digitally for all the world to see. Of particular interest in his first-person account of looking at pictures of war from the comforts of his Dresden home is the presence of animals, or lack thereof, in the theater of war. “In the pictures I've seen since the Russian army invaded Ukraine on the morning of February 24, I've noticed something. Something that can't be seen in these pictures. The crows are missing.”²¹ Unable to speak to the horrors around them—“Animals cannot bear witness,” Beyer insists—animals captured on camera nevertheless represent for him an index of the obscurity of war.²² In other words, there is something astonishing about them. In animals, we see pure innocence, and their suffering instills in us feelings we should otherwise have for human suffering.²³ When absent in photos of Russia's war, they call our attention to the ghostly presence of violence events. When present, they point to a conciliatory sense of normalcy: life—be it human, animal,

19 Bertuch, p. 5: “Das Kind muß damit völlig umgehen können wie mit einem Spielzeuge; es muß darinn zu allen Stunden bildern, es muß es illuminiren; ja sogar, mit Erlaubniß des Lehrers, die Bilder ausschneiden und auf Pappendeckel kleben dürfen.” [The child must be able to handle it as if it were a toy; he must make pictures in it every hour of the day, he must illuminate it; he must even, with the teacher's permission, be allowed to cut out the pictures and stick them on cardboard.] Cf. Benjamin, “Alte vergessene Kinderbücher,” p. 16.

20 Marcel Beyer, *Die tonlosen Stimmen beim Anblick der Toten auf den Straßen von Butscha*, Göttingen 2023, p. 8.

21 Beyer, p. 7.

22 Beyer, p. 16.

23 Beyer, p. 18: “Vielleicht sucht man im Tier vielmehr Anzeichen einer Regung, die man dem Menschen, sich selbst, zuzuschreiben gewohnt ist.” [Perhaps one looks in animals for signs of an emotion that one is otherwise accustomed to attributing to humans and to oneself.]

or both—goes on such that the concept of history—Benjamin’s *bête noire*—continues unchecked. In a word, the obscenity of animals in photos of Russia’s assault on Ukraine affirms the lingering trouble with astonishment.

VI

Taking Bertuch at his word, Kluge began cutting out animals from digital copies of *Bilderbuch für Kinder* not long after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. He then pasted them into photos of the carnage in Ukraine and compiled his collages into a three-channel short film of no more than two minutes and thirty seconds entitled “The Amazement of Animals / The Mourning of Creatures.” Presented in August 2022, at a workshop held at Fundaziun Nairs in Switzerland’s Engadine valley, Kluge’s film is just one of several recent works in which the artist applies Benjamin’s thinking about astonishment, the concept of history and idiosyncratic techniques of childhood vision in Bertuch’s picture books to his long-standing need to understand war. Many of these early animal collages can be found in Kluge’s book *Kriegsfibel 2023*. In an interview with Maximilian Kisters published in *Philosophie Magazin* in April 2023, Kluge explained his objectives thusly:

...these animals provide comfort. They are prints of animals from the time of Caspar David Friedrich. These animals do not belong to our present. But they do belong to evolution, and therefore to us, no matter what period of history they find themselves in. When such images of animals—from the period of 1807 and at the same time messengers of Walter Benjamin’s thoughts—now end up in current press photos of destroyed tanks and the misery of the war in Ukraine, they say: something in our subjective interior, our feelings, resists the perception of a present that has gone mad. The distribution of guilt and innocence doesn’t help to explain it. Such reality is distorted in itself. “The Astonishment of Animals,” which dates from 1807 and comes from Walter Benjamin’s complete works, brings an anti-realism to these current images. The press photos show facts, the animals represent feelings.²⁴

Instead of reading the photographic traces of animals for the ambivalent ways they confirm the hegemonic concept of history as Beyer does, Kluge seeks to intervene in the very *dispositif* of vision itself. By inserting Bertuch’s wonderous eighteenth-century animal illustrations into twenty-first century scenes of war, Kluge lives up to Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach by colliding two temporalities to expose the neutralization of astonishment: to observers looking at

24 Alexander Kluge/Maximilian Kisters, “Kinder sind die wahren Chronisten des Kriegs,” in: *Philosophie Magazin*, 05.04.2023, Online-Journal, www.philomag.de/artikel/alexander-kluge-kinder-chronisten-des-kriegs (Accessed: 20.12.2023).

animals interloping in war photos, it suddenly becomes “ob-scene” that looking fails to translate into appropriate feelings of horror.

VII

Ever since *The Devil's Blind Spot*, Kluge's conjecture that the twentieth-century concept of history continues to wreak havoc in the twenty-first century has proven uncannily prescient. Unlike the last installment of the *Alexander Kluge-Jahrbuch*, which dedicated itself to the carnage of war and mourning, the following yearbook's thematic core turns its sights to another set of attendant concepts: crisis and astonishment. The former concept, a function of history, flourishes unabated, while the latter, arguably a cousin of obstinacy, still requires critical intervention. It might, therefore, be enough to call astonishment a crisis unto itself, as astonishment so often fails to be anything more than a pretense for philosophical interpretation. Yet the crisis subtending so much of what should be astonishing in our chaotic twenty-first century world leads us back to the organizational question of social experience. Why the things we experience in the twenty-first century are still possible has to do with the erosion of experience itself. No wonder then that Kluge and his old friend Oskar Negt reconvened in late 2021 to record a series of new dialogues on Immanuel Kant for their fifth book of collaborative philosophy.²⁵ What about Kant's classical concept of “*Publicum*,” they ask, requires translation for it to do critical work necessary for re-invigorating our twenty-first century public spheres? That the German press was quick to champion Beyer's Poetikdozentur as a litmus test for charging Kluge's *Kriegsfibel 2023* with moral relativism is indicative of the ways in which looking and reading still fail to amount to a critical reckoning with astonishment: “Kluge says in this primer and in his interviews,” one journalist summed up in his indictment, “that he already prefers to deal with the question of what will come after the Ukraine war. This is very understandable, but what kind of peace is that supposed to be if he begins to ignore the question of responsibility?”²⁶ On the

25 Cf. Oskar Negt/Alexander Kluge, *Kant Kommentare*, Leipzig 2023. See the English translation of interview eight included in this yearbook.

26 See, for example, Tobias Rütger, “Menschen, Tiere, Panzer und Fiktionen,” in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15.04.2023, online publication, www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/r/themen/ukrainekrieg-buecher-von-kluge-und-marcel-beyer-18820492.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_3 (Accessed: 16.04.2023). The initial basis for Rütger's as well as Beyer's rebuke of Kluge is his support for withholding arms from Ukraine published in an open letter to Chancellor Scholz in *Emma* in April 2022. Additional fuel used to fan the flames was gleaned from Kluge's interview published in *Die Zeit*, which accurately announced that “Alexander Kluge glaubt nicht daran, dass Panzer den Krieg beenden werden. Nur ein völlig neues Denken könne den Notausgang weisen” [Alexander Kluge does not believe that tanks

public sphere's recourse to morality in times of war, Kluge, like Theodor W. Adorno before him, is clear: "I am a moral person, but morality is not a tool against war."²⁷ Like Bertuch's *Bilderbuch für Kinder*, Kluge's primer is designed to stoke our imagination, to draw attention to historical differences in our vertiginous age of blurred lines and borders, to juxtapose hard facts with emotions and, above all, to provide us with the capacity for orientation. Taking sides may feel like the morally right thing to do, but chances are it will very likely fall short of altering the reigning concept of history let alone the catastrophic structures it seeks to name.

VIII

The seeds for *Jahrbuch 9* emerged out of a series of Skype conversations with Alexander Kluge over several years. It was his suggestion to bring together the promise of transnational public spheres with the topics of astonishment, the contemporary specter of war and the invention of photography. These four themes were and continue to be topics of concern for Kluge's recent work and they are all reflected in the contributions comprising this volume. In light of the recent digital transformation of the public sphere, which Kluge discusses at length in dialogues with Oskar Negt in *Kant Kommentare* (2023) and Stefan Aust in *Befreit die Tatsachen von der menschlichen Gleichgültigkeit* (2023), Kluge has emphasized the value of fostering transatlantic dialogues with comrades in the Americas. *Jahrbuch 9* expands this network to include voices from Latin America. Anything but a vanity project, such dialogues are significant for Kluge insofar as they shift his aesthetic politics to a space between the denigrated public spheres in both the Americas and Europe. It is this strategic displacement that informed the editors' decision to designate English, the de facto lingua franca, as the primary language of this volume of the *Alexander Kluge-Jahrbuch*. The first of its five text clusters frame the volume's twin themes of crisis and astonishment. Texts and interviews on astonishment and crisis—manifest in both war and the erosion of public spheres—are followed by Kluge's juxtaposition of the right-wing US Capitol riots on January 6, 2021, and the American civil war. Cluster two as-

will end the war. Only a completely new way of thinking can provide an emergency exit]. See: Alexander Kluge/Peter Neumann, "Vorstellungen von Glück sind ansteckend," *Die Zeit*, 19.02.2023, pp. 46–7, online publication, <https://www.zeit.de/2023/08/alexander-kluge-ukraine-krieg-ende-frieden> (Accessed: 16.04.2023). Ironically, Rütther's overarching accusation—Kluge exercises a gross privilege "im Frieden über den Krieg anderer Leute nachzudenken" [thinking about other people's wars in peace]—insists that Kluge, arguably the preeminent theoretician of feeling, is entirely indifferent to astonishment.

27 Kluge/Kisters.

sembles dialogues on Kluge's collaborative work on images. This cluster spans Kluge's work on cinema to his partnerships with painters (like Katharina Grosse) and poets (like Ben Lerner) to his very recent experiments with AI, in general, and deep learning, text-to-image models like Stable Diffusion, more specifically. If the task of poetics is to bring objectivity and emotion into contact with one another, then these exchanges attest to how important Kluge's word-image collaborations are for his work. The third cluster of texts are exclusively scholarly in nature and wrestle with themes—pedagogy, politics and revolution; technology, the image and fantasy—central for framing how crisis and the gaze of astonishment inform Kluge's aesthetic. A cluster of these contributions engage questions of ecocriticism, necropolitics, negative imperialism and global collection practices to reveal Kluge's sustained investment in producing a critical visual and textual language for the translational public sphere of late capitalism. The fourth cluster includes a report from the Alexander Kluge Vorlass held at the Akademie der Künste and two book reviews. As with every *Jahrbuch*, the volume concludes with a bibliography of publications from 2021.

IX

The *Alexander-Kluge Jahrbuch* is a trilingual, peer-reviewed yearbook dedicated to fostering the critical study of every aspect of Alexander Kluge's work. An international platform intent on bringing together a wide range of disciplines and theoretical approaches, the yearbook welcomes both essays and reviews written in English, French or German. Detailed information about submission guidelines as well as the editorial and advisory boards can be found both in German at passagen.univie.ac.at/alexander-kluge-jahrbuch and in English at klugejahrbuch.web.unc.edu. Unsolicited submissions are always welcome and can be submitted to one of the yearbook's five co-editors; their contact information can be found on either of the yearbook's aforementioned websites.

I. CRISIS, TRANSATLANTIC PUBLIC SPHERES, IMAGES OF ASTONISHMENT

Alexander Kluge

The Astonishment of Animals¹

Walter Benjamins favorite children's book, Friedrich Justin Bertuch's *Bilderbuch für Kinder* (1807) depicts ANIMALS. Benjamin bought the twelve-volume work a second time as an adult.

The illustrations therein are from a time long ago. The prints date back to the years when Caspar David Friedrich made his paintings. Transposed into present-day scenes from the ATAVISTIC WAR in Ukraine, these animals are astonished. Photography does not reproduce reality completely: Human wishes go missing. "If they are self-confident, they assume the form of an animal" (Derrida).

The snake from Bertuch's *Bilderbuch für Kinder* (1807) obviously hails from a different time and a different world than the ones in which "a rocket strikes a city block in Ukraine." The animal and the contemporary image form a contrast. This is a visual example of a "temporal perspective." It is unlikely that a written text can convey this kind of "narrative perspective."

Translation: Richard Langston

¹ This text originally appeared as "Das Staunen der Tiere" in: Alexander Kluge, *Kriegsfibel 2023*, Berlin 2023, pp. 47–9.





Three images from the exhibition “Alexander Kluge – Werkstatt” held at Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol/Switzerland, 25 August 2022–23 September 2022. These images are also contained in Kluge’s 2022 film *Mondrian Krieg Tiere*. © Alexander Kluge.

Alexander Kluge / Richard Langston

Astonishment as Experience: From Singularity to Commonwealth

KLUGE: My latest feature-length film is called *Cosmic Miniatures* and has to do with the cosmic dimensions in which we can recuperate in the *longue durée*. I want us to be able to perceive, observe and respond to history, but I also have a terrible aversion to the questions that history raises. I can only overcome this when I take a short break in outer space. There's nothing more comforting than the fact that the speed of light is indeed constant. It's far removed from our own speeds. It's extremely fast. To march at 300,000 kilometers per second would be a huge challenge for ants, and yet 87 billion generations of ants could probably cover the distance from the Earth to the Andromeda Nebula. That's a comforting perspective entirely independent of me, the time span of my life and all the many problems confronting us now in the present.

LANGSTON: That's a perspective that's also fundamentally philosophical in its orientation.

KLUGE: It's just as philosophical as it is absurd because ants can't walk in space. But how do we actually know that? How do we know that creatures smaller than ants aren't able to walk in space without feeling the coldness?

LANGSTON: This brings us back to our topic, namely astonishment, *Staunen*.

KLUGE: *Thaumazien* is a basic Aristotelian idea and it's so clever.

LANGSTON: Astonishment is a reaction deeply rooted in our bodies, isn't it? It affects us in ways quite different than how the planets and stars do.

KLUGE: Celestial bodies don't determine our destinies physically, but rather by the fact that we take refuge in them. This is evident by the fact that people are eager to name them. They say with astonishment "Pegasus!" when, in fact, the stars don't really assume the shape of a horse. This exudes a certain eeriness and corresponds to the concept of *similitudo*, i. e., similarity as a structural feature of trust. This mimesis is also what dominates the constellations in Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. It begins with the images of soothsayers in Babylon who read the future from sheep livers. We know that it's never been scientifically proven that animal innards can predict the future. Nevertheless, the nature of a sheep's