

Richard Krautheimer Introduction

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One thing about having dinner with Richard Krautheimer, there is always plenty of food for thought. I was thinking about him the other day after an evening's conversation when suddenly an interesting coincidence struck me between two words and concepts I had never connected before, Magus and Magister, magician and master, or teacher. They do not spring from the same root, but in the person of Richard Krautheimer they have a sort of inner, secret relationship. You will see the context and significance of this realization in a moment.

The evening had been an all too rare bit of quiet time together, which we spent nostalgically talking over Old Times—his a little older than mine, it's true—and exchanging anecdotes. One of my favorite personal anecdotes, which he has never heard, I withheld and saved for this occasion. It goes back to my very beginning as a graduate student at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York, when I worked as research assistant for another legendary figure of our discipline, Walter Friedlaender. Friedlaender was famous, among other things, for his extraordinarily deep and often devastatingly accurate perceptions about people. One of his dicta was that some people have a certain kind of magic that he called "aura" (an art-historical concept par excellence, needless to say), and others do not. It was a very cruel notion, after all, since you were just born that way; no one who lacked aura could ever acquire it, and no one who had it could ever lose it. At

the time I was terribly interested in architecture, partly from the things I had read by Richard Krautheimer, whom I had never met. The rumor was circulating around the IFA that Krautheimer was coming to join the faculty. I vividly remember asking Friedlaender what the man who had written those wonderful things was like. The response was the first time I heard Friedlaender's theory of aura—Krautheimer had it, period. Later that year the rumor was reversed; Krautheimer was not coming, and I left the IFA for Harvard. The very next year Krautheimer did come to New York, and the rest of the story, including my abortive career as an architectural historian, is history.

Whatever Friedlaender meant, I want to illustrate what I mean by Richard's aura in telling this story. When it became clear that Richard was coming to the Institute for Advanced Study this term, I naturally asked him if he wanted to give a talk. The answer was a definite no—no public performances, I'm too old. Later, he thought he might after all like to give a small, informal discussion session at lunch with a very few invited friends and students. Subsequently, he got involved with—hooked on, you might say—a new excavation at a familiar old site of his, San Lorenzo in Damaso, and he allowed as how he might just be willing to hold a small, informal seminar, again for just a few people. How many, I asked. Oh, perhaps fifty or so, was the reply.

That's what I mean by Richard's aura. If I had to invent a motto for Richard Krautheimer it would be something like the following: *Magus et Magister optimus artis optima*e—greatest magician and master of the greatest art, the art of being a human being. Richard Krautheimer really does have aura, and with his magic, magisterial touch he transforms us all by teaching us what it means to be a real human being. Richard has changed the title of his lecture slightly. Originally, it was "San Lorenzo in Damaso, an

Excavation Report"; the revised title is "San Lorenzo in Damaso, an Excavation Report - Plus."

We could go on forever. In fact, when I asked Richard a couple of years ago if he wouldn't like to spend another term at the IAS I confess I had a secret plot in mind, namely, to see if we couldn't persuade him to come back to live in Princeton and stay with us forever. So far, at least, this plot, like most all of those I plan, has been a failure. He seems to think that Rome has something we don't have. He is determined to return to Rome in a few days. Unless, that is, by the warmth and enthusiasm of one final applause we can make him an offer of love and appreciation that he simply can't refuse.