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Virtue language in historical scholarship: the cases of Georg Waitz, Gabriel Monod and Henri Pirenne

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SUMMARY

Historians of historiography have recently adopted the language of 'epistemic virtues' to refer to character traits believed to be conducive to good historical scholarship. While 'epistemic virtues' is a modern philosophical concept, virtues such as 'objectivity', 'meticulousness' and 'carefulness' historically also served as actors' categories. Especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historians frequently used virtue language to describe what it took to be a 'good', 'reliable' or 'professional' scholar. Based on three European case studies—the German historian Georg Waitz (1813-86), his French pupil Gabriel Monod (1844–1912) and the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862–1935) —this article argues that such virtues cannot neatly be classified as 'epistemic' ones. For what is characteristic about virtue language in historical scholarship around 1900 is an overlap or entanglement of epistemic, moral and political connotations. The virtues embodied by, or attributed to, Waitz, Monod and Pirenne were almost invariably aimed at epistemic, moral and political goods at once, though not always to the same degrees. Consequently, if 'epistemic virtues' is going to be a helpful category, it must not be interpreted in a strong sense ('only epistemic'), but in a weak one ('epistemic' as one layer of meaning among others).

KEYWORDS

Virtues; epistemic virtues; Henri Pirenne; Gabriel Monod; Georg Waitz; historiography

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, historians of historiography have invested great amounts of energy in analysing historical discourses, rhetorical conventions, narrative templates and genre demarcations. Much of this has been focused on historians' articles and book publications, as distinguished from, say, their reading, teaching, supervising, grading and administrative activities. Accordingly, the primary object of study has not been the historians' day-to-day work, but their written output. More recently, however, historians of historiography have followed historians of science in employing

categories such as 'scholarly personae' and 'epistemic virtues' for referring to aspects of historical study that go beyond the written text. Scholarly personae are ideal-typical models of being a scholar, drawing attention not to what historians do, but to how they do their work, or are supposed to do it. They refer to bodily dispositions, habituses and character traits considered as essential for being a 'good', 'reliable' or 'professional' scholar. For understanding this last aspect, the category of epistemic virtues has proven especially fruitful, as the word virtue refers to just that: a character trait or personal disposition to a certain behaviour that is deemed to be 'good' in a given situation. Virtues such as 'objectivity', 'industriousness', 'meticulousness' and 'intellectual courage' were not only seen as dispositions needed for writing scholarly articles, but also for conducting archival research, teaching a class or supervising a doctoral student. As such, the categories of 'scholarly personae' and 'epistemic virtues' have the potential of broadening the scope of historiographical research. Precisely for this reason, they have been picked up so far primarily by historians of historiography whose research interests are not confined to 'written output' and include such day-to-day practices as reading, note taking and student supervision.²

Historians from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe would not have been surprised to hear their work described in terms of virtue. They did so themselves: virtues such as 'impartiality', 'exactness' and 'carefulness' were actors' categories in the first place. Drawing on ancient moral repertoires, historians (not to mention scholars in other fields) used virtue language to articulate their understandings of the scholar's vocation and to evaluate each other's work. Genres such as the obituary and the methodology manual abounded in virtue language³, while debates over research methodologies or findings were often fought out in terms of virtues and vices. As Kasper Risbierg Eskildsen has argued, this happened because virtues were vital for solving reliability issues: virtuous scholarly conduct was seen as a marker of scholarly trustworthiness.⁵

What, however, does the adjective 'epistemic' mean and how appropriate is it for historians of historiography to speak about 'epistemic virtues' rather than about virtues in a more generic sense? When historians of science such as Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison examine the changing meanings of 'objectivity' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they classify objectivity as an epistemic virtue in order to convey that this virtue had epistemic goals: it was supposed to serve the acquisition of such epistemic goods as knowledge and understanding of reality.⁶ Arguably, many virtues routinely classified as 'epistemic virtues' ('thoroughness', 'diligence', 'love of truth') served such epistemic aims. But is this all that can be said about them? Didn't 'impartiality' serve as a moral and political norm as well? Wasn't 'industriousness' a key virtue in the moral imaginary of nineteenth-century bourgeois elites?⁷ And didn't 'love of truth' have distinct religious connotations, at least for liberal Protestants?8 How exclusive, in other words, is the adjective in 'epistemic virtues'? If historians of historiography begin to speak about epistemic virtues, do they refer to

¹Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, 'Introduction: Scientific Personae and Their Histories', Science in Context, 16 (2003), 1–8; Herman Paul, 'What Is a Scholarly Persona? Ten Theses on Virtues, Skills, and Desires', History and Theory, 53 (2014), 348-71.

²See, e.g., Philipp Müller, 'Geschichte machen: Überlegungen zu lokal-spezifischen Praktiken in der Geschichtswissenschaft und ihrer epistemischen Bedeutung im 19. Jahrhundert: ein Literaturbericht', Historische Anthropologie, 12 (2004), 415–33; Jo Tollebeek, Men of Character: The Emergence of the Modern Humanities (Wassenaar, 2011); Daniela Saxer, Die Scharfung des Quellenblicks: Forschungspraktiken in der Geschichtswissenschaft 1840–1914 (Munich, 2014).

³Herman Paul, 'Distance and Self-Distanciation: Intellectual Virtue and Historical Method around 1900', *History and Theory*, 50 (2011), 104-16.

⁴Herman Paul, 'Virtue Language in Nineteenth-Century Orientalism: A Case Study in Historical Epistemology', *Modern Intellectual* History (advanced online publication at http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000293, 7 August 2015).

⁵Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, 'Inventing the Archive: Testimony and Virtue in Modern Historiography', *History of the Human Sciences*, 26 (2013), 8–26. See also Steven Shapin, A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England (Chicago,

⁶Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007).

⁷See, e.g., *Die bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Göttingen, 2000).

⁸Gerhard Kaiser, 'Die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen: die Freiburger Universitätsdevise – ein Glaubenswort als Provokation der Wissenschaft', in Welche Wahrheit braucht der Mensch? Wahrheit des Wissens, des Handelns, des Glaubens, edited by Ludwig Wenzler (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2003), 47-103.

virtues that served epistemic *instead of* other aims (a strong reading of the adjective) or to virtues that served epistemic aims among others (a weak reading)?

Based on three case studies from three Western European countries, this article argues in favour of a weak reading by showing that virtue language in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century historiography was typically aimed at multiple goods at once. It analyses some key virtues associated with Henri Pirenne (Belgium), Gabriel Monod (France) and Georg Waitz (Germany), taking into account both the historians' descriptions of their own work and the qualities that were ascribed to them. All three cases show a striking entanglement of epistemic, moral and political connotations in their descriptions of what being a historian entailed.

This entanglement came naturally for the first historian we treat here, given that Pirenne had acquired a reputation both as a model historian and as a model citizen. Although his biographers tried to make a distinction between the two, for Pirenne himself the one could not go without the other. To be a good historian one had to be 'a man of the world'. In Pirenne's case, being a man of the world meant adhering to the virtue catalogue of the liberal bourgeoisie. This implied not a neat separation but an entanglement of virtues, as his critics pointed out. Their attacks on the impartiality of the Histoire de Belgique questioned Pirenne's epistemics as well as his morals.

Perhaps less obvious is the case of Monod, who is usually regarded a 'scientific' historian and a key figure in establishing a French historical infrastructure in the late nineteenth century. He, too, however, was committed to other than epistemic goods, judging by both his historical writings and private correspondence, in which he reflected on his historical and political involvement. First a staunch republican, later a dreyfusard, Monod considered both historical teaching and historical research as having inherent societal and political importance, because the virtue of impartiality as practised by historians was, in his eyes, a moral virtue as much as it was an epistemic one. Impartiality, for Monod, was a quality characteristic of good citizens and good historians alike.

While Pirenne and Monod were both politically active, an entanglement of epistemic, moral and political meanings can even be observed among historians who, in the eyes of their colleagues, focused strictly on archival research. This is why Georg Waitz's students and the virtues they ascribed to their teacher constitute our final case study. Even though the Waitz school had a reputation among German historians for privileging meticulous research over story-telling and political argument9, no less than seven necrologies of Waitz characterised the Göttingen professor in terms of loyalty (*Treue*)—a virtue that had epistemic aspects, but distinct political connotations as well. So, if even the virtues championed by Waitz's students were more than epistemic ones, it seems warranted to conclude that, for historians in the decades around 1900, virtues could not be reduced to the epistemic realm. 'Impartiality' and 'loyalty' were epistemic, moral and political virtues at once.

2. A man of the world

Henri Pirenne is considered one of the first truly 'modern' and 'scientific' historians 10, as the founder of comparative history¹¹, as a pacemaker of international scientific cooperation¹² and as the maître (directly or spiritually) of numerous great historians. 13 But apart from being an influential scholar,

⁹See, e.g., Mircea Ogrin, Ernst Bernheim (1850–1942): Historiker und Wissenschaftspolitiker im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart, 2012), 48.

¹⁰Cf. Louis Pyenson and Christophe Verbruggen, 'Elements of the Modernist Creed in Henri Pirenne and Georges Sarton', History of Science, 49 (2011), 377-94.

¹¹Henri Pirenne, 'De la méthode comparative en histoire, discours d'ouverture du cinquième Congrès international des Sciences historiques', in Compte-rendu du cinquième Congrès international des Sciences historiques, edited by Guillaume Des Marez and François-Louis Ganshof (Brussels, 1923); Adriaan Verhulst, 'Marc Bloch and Henri Pirenne on Comparative History: A Biographical Note', Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire, 79 (2001), 507-10.

¹²Daniel Laqua, 'internationalisme ou affirmation de la nation? La coopération intellectuelle transnationale dans l'entre-deuxguerres', Critique internationale, 52 (2011), 51-67.

¹³In Belgium: Guillaume Des Marez, Herman Van der Linden, François-Louis Ganshof, Fernand Vercauteren, and Hans Van Werveke, to name just a few. Internationally: Carl Stephenson (Cornell University, US), for instance. Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre called him

Pirenne was also an important citizen. In Belgium, eight streets are named after him. He has a statue in Brussels and his own stamp. He received the Belgian Grand Cross in the order of the crown, he became Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur in France and was honoured by the President of the United States. His lectures were public events, his opinions on political matters highly valued. It is in fact, to quote Walter Simons, 'hard to imagine an academic historian today receiving the kind of public acclaim that befell the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne'. 14 Apparently, Pirenne combined the qualities of an ideal-typical historian with the characteristics of a model citizen. Biographical notes and obituaries on the historian show that he was as much a national as an academic icon, and that his career provided as much an example for good citizenship as for good scholarship. This means that both on the personal and the professional level, Pirenne was praised for his virtuousness.

It is striking, however, how eulogies, by consistently and unanimously stressing Pirenne's double status of 'man of science' and 'moral guide', distinguished between his virtues as a scholar and those as a citizen. Abel Lefranc for instance called him 'an incomparable maître who was at the same time, and to all, a great citizen: a double halo that confers to Pirenne an exceptional place in [...] the Pantheon of History'. 15 Maurice Powicke characterised him as 'a man of immense force of character, a leader in the historical world, but especially [...] a great Belgian citizen whose influence and importance were generally recognized. [...] Honors and distinctions were showered upon him almost as a matter of course, tributes to his massive scholarship and personal achievement, but also to the value of the things for which he stood.'16 In some of the main biographies on Pirenne, the virtues and achievements of 'the historian' and 'the person' were even explicitly treated under separate headers.¹⁷ Upon closer examination, however, there doesn't appear to be such a sharp distinction between the work-related and personality-related virtues of Pirenne at all.

Pirenne's own thoughts on 'being' a historian and 'doing' history are illustrative in this respect. It was Pirenne's conviction that the ultimate task of the historian was to serve the greater good of humanity. In order to be capable of that role, the historian had to be an example of moral integrity. Herman Vander Linden, who was the first pupil to be trained by Pirenne, was one of the few to have correctly assessed his master's deeply rooted ideological project for a humanist historiography, by stating that it was in fact impossible to 'separate the character of the scholar from the rich nature of the man. [...] Henri Pirenne was too humanistic, in the highest sense, not to equally assign great importance to reasoning, to morality, and to religion in his oeuvre.'18 Although as a trueborn liberal Pirenne abhorred the idea of state interference in science¹⁹, he did indeed cherish the idea that history had to be useful for society. Already in his first year of study at the University of Liège in 1882, he wrote in his diary:

What I would ultimately like is not to spend my life in pure scholarship like a university professor, but through the study of the past to discover facts, arguments, and new insights that I can apply to the study of the present.

And two years later:

I still cherish the idea of combining science with the practical, active life.²⁰

Pirenne, according to Marc Bloch 'the least academic person in the world' 21, was always more a man of practice and synthesis than of theories and specialisms. He belonged to no definite school and never

their spiritual maître. For this, see The Birth of Annales History: The Letters of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to Henri Pirenne (1921– 1935), edited by Bryce and Mary Lyon (Brussels, 1991).

¹⁴Walter Simons, 'The "Pirenne Phenomenon", The Low Countries, 20 (2012), 281.

¹⁵Abel Lefranc, 'Eloge funèbre de M. Henri Pirenne, associé étranger de l'Académie', Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 79 (1935), 439-48.

¹⁶Maurice Powicke, 'Henri Pirenne', *The English Historical Review*, 201 (1936), 79–89.

¹⁷See, for example, François-Louis Ganshof, 'Pirenne (Henri)', *Biographie Nationale*, 30 (1959), col. 671–723.

¹⁸Herman Van der Linden, 'Notice sur Henri Pirenne', *Annuaire de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, 28 (1950).

¹⁹Ganshof, 'Pirenne (Henri)', col. 718–19.

²⁰Free University of Brussels, University Archives, ULB 026PP/01/04/003.

²¹Marc Bloch, 'Henri Pirenne, l'Histoire de la Belgique (7e tome)', *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 17 (1932), 478.

wrote much on historical methodology. However, as a professor charged with the general introductory course in history and with the 'practical seminars', he was forced to make explicit his ideas on how to write history. As the preparatory notes for these classes show, Pirenne reserved an important part for virtues in the historian's task. Although he certainly didn't underestimate the importance of source criticism and detailed study, writing history, for Pirenne, was ultimately about the interpretation and synthesis of historical facts. This act of interpreting and synthesising was based as much on the subjective values and virtues of the historian as on the rules of historical criticism:

The [evaluation of historical evidence] depends no longer upon the external character of the proofs but upon the personalities of their authors. [...] This judgment depends necessarily upon the training, the intelligence, and the morality of the witness.²²

A delicate exercise as this was, the capacity to make truthful and just interpretations of historical events required a particular social habitus:

Historical criticism is not everything. [...] The historical construction or, if you wish, the historical synthesis requires [...] a knowledge of the political and social life that can be obtained only through a certain familiarity with contemporary life, through sturdiness of imagination, the absence of prejudices, and finally a psychological delicacy yielded by this nuanced culture that is a feature of what I would call, in the best and largest sense of the word, the 'man of the world'.23

What Pirenne intended by this 'nuanced culture of men of the world' was in fact the modern, tolerant and cosmopolitan culture of the nation's ruling class: the liberal-industrial bourgeoisie. Born into a family of wealthy textile entrepreneurs, Pirenne was himself a prominent member, and a prime representative, of this social, political, economic and—since the professionalisation of science—also scientific elite. Pirenne's virtuousness as a historian reflected the professional ethos of this liberal-industrial bourgeoisie and its ideals of humanism, Bildung and meritocracy—as did the virtue jargon that was employed to praise Pirenne. He was admired for being exemplarily 'disciplined', 'industrious', 'entrepreneurial' and 'productive' in his scholarly activities. His writing style was commendably 'economic' and 'precise', his work schedule admiringly 'structured' and 'efficient'. His source criticism was always 'meticulous', his judgment 'sober', 'honest' and 'impartial', and his oeuvre, in consequence, rigorously 'objective'.

As was characteristic of a 'true man of the world', Pirenne's notoriously Burgundian lifestyle and the political influence he exerted as Belgian's national historian did not seem to contradict, but rather to complete his scholarly virtuousness. It was after all only by actively participating in society—or as Pirenne euphemistically called it, through 'a knowledge of the political and social life that can be obtained only through a certain familiarity with contemporary life'—that history could be fully understood. No scientific ideal of asceticism and 'suffering for science' 24 for this good Belgian, on the contrary: for Pirenne, scholars who locked themselves away in their cabinets de travail 'voluntarily placed themselves outside history' 25 Eulogists and biographers seemed to follow this line of reasoning. Whenever they addressed the matter of Pirenne's personality, they emphasised his fondness of socialising and travelling, both within Belgium and abroad, acknowledging that it allowed him to broaden his intellectual horizon, to forge and maintain important professional networks, and to make his name, his work, his university and his country known to the world. They recalled the many long, friendship-forging diners and Bacchanals that Pirenne enjoyed with his fellow-historians and students—'although never

²²Henri Pirenne, 'La tâche de l'historien', *Le Flambeau*, 14 (1931), 439. Simultaneously published in the United States as 'What Are Historians Trying to Do?', in Methods in Social Science: A Case Book, edited by Rice Stuart (Chicago, 1931), 435-45.

²³Henri Pirenne, 'De l'influence allemande sur le mouvement historique contemporain', *Scientia*, 34 (1923), 174.

²⁴See the book of the same title by Rebecca Herzig, *Suffering for Science: Reason and Sacrifice in Modern America* (New Brunswick/

²⁵Pirenne, 'De l'influence allemande', 176. Hence Pirenne's settlement with the 'ordinary specialists' and 'narrow nationalists' amongst German historians after the First World War, and his plea for comparative history at the International Conference of the Historical Sciences in Brussels in 1923.

at the expense of his work'. 26 They admired his 'wide range of interests', his 'enthusiasm for novelties'²⁷ and the 'firm and noble consciousness of his responsibilities as a citizen'. And they evoked his sharp tongue and his strong debating skills, thereby hurrying, however, to stress how he managed to remain at all times 'impartial', 'nuanced' and 'open to compromise'—three key virtues in the Belgian ideological and communitarian hornet's nest.

However, not everyone agreed on Pirenne's talent for impartiality and nuance. Although the First World War caused a temporary revival of Belgian patriotism, rising communitarian tensions in Belgium, especially from the 1920s onwards, asked for an ardent and enduring defence of Pirenne's impartiality.²⁸ The recurrent critique, both from Flemish and Walloon opponents, on the Histoire de Belgique as a teleological justification of the nation threatened to damage Pirenne's virtuousness, both epistemically and on the level of his moral integrity. The discussion illustrates to what extent the virtues of 'the citizen' and those of the 'historian' were entangled.

Pirenne was, of course, not just any historian. As the biographer of Belgium's national history, as a martyr for his country and for science during the war and as a public figure with a voice to be reckoned with in the intense communitarian struggles of his time, his influence reached far beyond the borders of the academic community. That his moral, political and epistemic virtuousness were so entangled—even though his eulogists have consequently tried to separate them, out of a positivist stance probably, or to safeguard the idealised image of the historian—should therefore not come as a surprise. The obvious influence of Pirenne's own time and milieu on his convictions and virtuous as a historian, however, begs the question if this entanglement of virtues can also be observed among historians with a less outspoken public image.

3. Impartiality

Although Gabriel Monod was less of a retiring scholar and more of a cosmopolitan than his reputation suggests, he undoubtedly was not the man of the world Pirenne was. He was first and foremost one of the main architects of the academic discipline of history in France, serving as a professor at the École pratique des hautes études and authoring several books on early-medieval source criticism. Yet, he too came to play an important—and contested—role in public debate, albeit reluctantly. And, as in the case of Pirenne, striking similarities can be observed between his use of virtue language in both epistemics and in the ethical or political realm, especially where it comes to the virtue of impartiality which he considered of central importance.

Monod gained his renown not so much by his original historical research, but by his work as a teacher and as the director of the Revue historique. The greatest part of his publications is formed by the inexhaustible number of review articles he wrote for this journal and by texts on historiography and historical method in which he set the standards for the discipline. He for instance published texts on Ernest Renan, Hippolyte Taine and Jules Michelet.²⁹ Especially from 1900 onwards, when political circumstances urged him to reconsider the value of historical research and education for society, he devoted much energy to rethinking historical method and its underlying epistemology, including the meaning of the cardinal virtue of impartiality. He had presented impartiality and political neutrality as the most important requirements for scientific history writing already in his 1876

²⁶See for instance the anecdote of Pirenne delivering an astonishing lecture in Oxford after having drunk several strong beers, cited, for instance, in Bryce Lyon, Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study (Ghent, 1974), 413-14; Walter Prevenier, "'Ceci n'est pas un historien": Construction and Deconstruction of Henri Pirenne', Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine, 3–4 (2011), 554; Paul Morren, Henri Pirenne: historiograaf (1862–1935) (Antwerp, 2011).

²⁷Another key anecdote in the Pirenne biography, first recalled by Marc Bloch in his Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien (Paris, 1949), regards a visit of the two historians to Stockholm. Pirenne chooses to visit the brand-new City Hall first, explaining: 'Si j'étais un antiquaire, je n'aurais d'yeux que pour les vieilles choses. Mais je suis un historien. C'est pourquoi j'aime la vie.'

²⁸Until long after his death, Pirenne's pupils out of loyalty to their master would take up the defence. A remarkable example can be found in Ganshof, 'Pirenne, Henri', col. 691.

²⁹Gabriel Monod, Les maîtres de l'histoire: Renan, Taine, Michelet (Paris, 1894).

introductory article for the first volume of the Revue historique, often considered the 'manifesto' of methodological historiography.³⁰

This impartiality had to be realised, Monod concurred with most other French historians of his generation, by the rigorous employment of a critical method, by which the historian's own moral and political biases would be ruled out.³¹ This reasoning seems to be at odds with Lorraine Daston's recent statements on the distinction or even the possible opposition between the ideas of objectivity and impartiality in nineteenth-century historiography.³² While she interprets impartiality as the capacity of the historian to pass a righteous judgement on the past by expelling his personal opinions and taking stance 'above the parties', objectivity would be warranted by the practice of methodological techniques, the possible political prejudices that could guide the historian notwithstanding. Since Monod connects impartiality to critical method, he demonstrates that the virtues of impartiality and objectivity could easily be conflated, only reserving the term 'objectivity' for more strictly epistemological contexts while employing 'impartiality' in both epistemological and political discussions.

According to Monod, the pursuit of impartiality did not mean that historians had to turn their backs to society. To the contrary, history ought to be impartial in order to enhance education in republican and national citizenship. In a lecture for his students of 1888, he related the impartiality of the historian to a kind of moderation in politics:

Someone who arrives at this high form of impartiality that renders to everyone the justice one deserves is much better prepared to pay attention to politics. [...] [O]nce she is convinced of two things—that the present is indissolubly linked to the past and that history doesn't repeat itself—she associates respect for the past with desire for progress. History thus preserves her from both a reactionary and a revolutionary spirit. History cannot pretend to teach us political opinions; she teaches us to add to the defense of our political opinions a spirit of prudence, critique, and moderation.³³

By that time, Monod had already experienced for himself the merits of historical critique for considering topical questions in his Allemands et Français on the Franco-Prussian War, a book that was criticised in French newspapers as unpatriotic and in German ones as anti-German.³⁴ In sum, for Monod, historical method and scientific impartiality were strongly related to a moderate political conviction and the capacity of independent judgment in politics. His ideas on scientific impartiality therefore referred immediately to his convictions about the value of history for society.

The sources of this conviction can be found firstly in Monod's personal background and secondly in the political context of the early Third Republic. Coming from a cosmopolitan and Protestant family, Monod travelled to Italy after his studies, where he frequented the salon of the feminist and liberal writer Malwida von Meysenbug and got engaged to Olga Herzen, daughter of a wellknown Russian socialist exile writer. His next stop was Germany, where he learned the principles of modern historical research in the seminars of Ranke and Waitz. His international experiences and his belonging to a religious minority predisposed him to a relatively disinterested regard on French history, for which his German training offered him the methodological tools. This personal disposition fitted particularly well into the context of the moderate republican regime, where history stood at the top of the academic hierarchy because of its moral and political significance.³⁵ History education, thus it was hoped by historians and politicians alike, would ground the republican regime in the hearts and minds of the people and prepare them to participate in the political life of the

³⁰Gabriel Monod, 'Du progrès des études historiques en France depuis le XVI^e siècle', Revue historique, 1 (1876), 5–38 (esp. 30 and 36–38). For the qualification 'manifesto': Christian Delacroix, François Dosse and Patrick Garcia, Les courants historiques en France: XIXe-XXe siècle (Paris, 2007), 117.

³¹Monod, 'Du progrès des études historiques en France depuis le XVI^e siècle', 26–28.

³²Lorraine Daston, 'Objectivity and Impartiality: Epistemic Virtues in the Humanities', in *The Making of the Humanities*, edited by Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 2014) III, 27-41.

³³Gabriel Monod, 'La pédagogie historique à l'École normale supérieure en 1888', Revue internationale de l'enseignement, 54 (1907),

³⁴Gabriel Monod, Allemands et Français: souvenirs de campagne: Metz, Sedan, la Loire (Paris, 1872). The book is in fact a collection of earlier published articles. For the newspaper reactions, see Monod's reply in the preface of the book.

³⁵See, for example: Jean El Gammal, *Politique et poids du passé dans la France 'Fin de Siècle'* (Limoges, 1999).

nation. Historical research thus had education as its ultimate aim. And in a democratic society, where citizens should be capable to form their own reasonable opinions, history had to be studied and taught in an impartial way. Hence, Monod's appraisal of the virtue of impartiality was ultimately motivated by the moral and political convictions he shared with the ruling politicians.

The Dreyfus Affair, however, undermined this agreement between the impartial historian Monod and the political authorities, and urged him to rethink both his epistemic and his moral convictions. When this affair grew within a few years into a nationwide political crisis putting at stake the values of the republic itself, many historians and palaeographers felt particularly concerned, as the guilt of Dreyfus depended solely on the question whether the handwriting of the single exhibit was truly his. 36 Already in November 1896, before the affair came to the fore with the publication of Zola's l'accuse, Monod had concluded by comparing the exhibit with several letters of the accused officer that the latter had to be innocent. He however hesitated a year to make public his findings, doubting whether he as a scholar was allowed to draw political conclusions from them.³⁷ In November 1897 he finally decided to inform Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, vice-president of the Senate, arguing that a politician would be the suitable person to disclose the case.³⁸ Only after insinuations in an anti-dreyfusard newspaper that Monod was a dreyfusard partisan, did he decide to leave behind his usual political reluctance. He became one of the principal defenders of Dreyfus, writing numerous newspaper articles, lobbying several politicians, and even illegally leaking intercepted letters.³⁹ Despite his initial hesitations, Monod considered his position in the Dreyfus Affair as a consequence of being a historian. For example, while offering his support to Joseph Reinach, who was treated by legal proceedings as part of a case linked with Dreyfus's called the Henry Affair, he wrote: 'As a historian, I assume only two hypotheses. 40 And a year and a half later:

I am astonished and scandalized by the judgment pronounced against you in the Henry Affair, even more as a historian than as a citizen. [\dots] It is a wholly subjective appraisal. Many historians think just like me that you have proven—or more exactly that Henry has abundantly proven by his deeds, which you brought to light—his complicity with Esterhazy. 41

Significantly, he signed this letter with the title 'member of the Institut'. It was because Monod was a historian, trained in palaeography, that he could evaluate the handwriting proof and could conclude independently that the handwriting couldn't be Dreyfus's. That is why taking the side of Dreyfus was for him the result of historical method and the virtue of impartiality which formed its backbone.

Yet, Monod soon learnt that not everybody shared this faith in the capacity of historical method to warrant impartiality and to produce truth, as political opponents accused him of being partial and a member of a foreign, Protestant fifth column keen on harming the French Army. Even more painful was the discovery that the method did not lead automatically to the conclusions Monod had drawn. Numerous scholars, including Monod's pupil Gabriel Hanotaux, concluded on the basis of the same proofs that Dreyfus had been guilty, a conclusion that with hindsight is obviously

³⁶Vincent Duclert, 'De l'engagement des savants à l'intellectuel critique: une histoire intellectuelle de l'Affaire Dreyfus', Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques, 24 (1998), 25–62. Olivier Dumoulin, Le rôle social de l'historien: de la chaire au prétoire (Paris, 2002), 163–76. Madeleine Rebérioux, 'Histoire, historiens et dreyfusisme', Revue historique, 100 (1976), 407–32.

³⁷Gabriel Monod, 'Lettre au directeur du *Temps*, 5 novembre 1897', *Le Temps*, 6 November 1897, republished in: E. de Haime [Auguste de Morsier], *Les faits acquis à l'histoire: Affaire Dreyfus* (Paris, 1898), 214–17.

³⁸Gabriel Monod to Auguste Scheurer-Kester, 2 November 1897, Paris, Archives nationales, 276/AP/2, Archives privés de Scheurer-Kestner.

³⁹Vincent Duclert, *L'usage des savoirs: l'engagement des savants dans l'Affaire Dreyfus (1894–1906)*, Thesis, Paris I (Paris, 2009) offers a—however incomplete—list of Monod's interventions in the press. About leaking letters: Gabriel Monod to Joseph Reinach, 6 January 1900, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 24882: Correspondance Joseph Reinach, lettres de Gabriel Monod, no. 289–290.

⁴⁰Gabriel Monod to Joseph Reinach, 1 January 1900, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 24882: Correspondance Joseph Reinach, lettres de Gabriel Monod, no. 287.

⁴¹Gabriel Monod to Joseph Reinach, 17 June 1902, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 24882: Correspondance Joseph Reinach, lettres de Gabriel Monod, no. 335–336.

⁴²For example: Charles Maurras, 'L'État Monod et les états confédérés. Ou: le vrai souverain de la France', *Gazette de France*, 24 and 25 April 1902.

false. 43 This meant that technical skills did not suffice to reach historical truth and that personal dispositions could make a difference. In the meantime, this same virtue of impartiality drove Monod to take a definite political stance in opposition to the majority of the ruling politicians, albeit with regret, since he did not cease stressing that it was the authorities who betrayed the republican values, not he.44

Thus becoming aware of the possible tensions between different domains where impartiality as a virtue can be exercised, Monod devoted himself after the turn of the century to reformulate and clarify his epistemology and his thoughts on the societal meaning of history. Reassessing the connection between historical method and the virtue of impartiality, he came to criticise the direction the historical discipline had taken since 1876, which had made it too narrowly analytical, too much involved with criticism, and as a result less meaningful for society. Historians, according to Monod, had to contribute to finding a remedy for the crisis of the republic by reinventing a more valuable kind of history writing. 45 Hence, for Monod, historical research was meaningful to the extent that it informed and enabled historical teaching—research without education would be meaningless. This, then, is where the moral and epistemic aspects of the virtue of impartiality met each other. Yielding both epistemic goods—a better and more scientific historical understanding—and moral ones—a truly republican attitude and a preparation to social life—impartiality was not just a moral virtue transposed to history or vice versa, but an epistemic virtue that was in the meantime inherently moral.

4. Loyalty

If 'impartiality' was more than an epistemic virtue, the same is true for the 'loyalty' that Waitz's students ascribed to their teacher. Waitz is an interesting example for our purposes because he increasingly dissociated himself from the kind of political activity characteristic of Pirenne and the older Monod. 46 Back in the 1830s and 1840s, Waitz had not hesitated to take political stances. He had especially engaged himself with the future of his native province, Schleswig-Holstein.⁴⁷ From the 1850s onwards, however, Waitz had focused more exclusively on historical research. More importantly, he had come to distinguish quite sharply between politics and scholarship—despite the fact that his own Verfassungsgeschichte had an unmistakable political subtext. 48 In response to the Sybel-Ficker controversy (1859-61), for instance, Waitz had rejected Heinrich von Sybel's attempt to put historical scholarship in the service of political struggle. This did not imply that his political views had differed from Sybel's—they had been quite akin in fact – but indicated that Waitz had felt a greater need for genre demarcations between politics and scholarship.⁴⁹ Consequently, the three most important virtues that Waitz had tried to instil in his students—'criticism' (Kritik), 'precision', and 'penetration'—were all clearly epistemic virtues, directed towards epistemic goals.⁵⁰

⁴³Bertrand Joly, 'L'École des chartes et l'Affaire Dreyfus', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 147 (1989), 611–71.

⁴⁴For example: Gabriel Monod to the Marquise Arconati-Visconti, 23 June 1905, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, Fonds Victor Cousin, Ms. 285, Correspondance de la Marquise Arconati-Visconti, no. 5673-5674; Ibid, 19 March 1908, Fonds Victor Cousin, Ms. 286, Correspondance de la Marquise Arconati-Visconti, no. 5889–5890.

⁴⁵Gabriel Monod, 'La chaire d'histoire au Collège de France. Leçon d'ouverture au Collège de France', *Revue bleue*, 5^e série, IV (1905), 774-77 and 801-6.

⁴⁶On Monod's relation to Waitz, see Christian Simon, 'Monod – Waitz – Winkelried: Geschichtswissenschaft zwischen Patriotismus und Quellenkritik', Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte, 36 (1986), 443-54.

⁴⁷Niklas Lenhard-Schramm, Konstrukteure der Nation: Geschichtsprofessoren als politische Akteure in Vormärz und Revolution 1848/49 (Münster, 2014), 50-54.

⁴⁸lbid., 94–103.

⁴⁹Thomas Brechenmacher, 'Wie viel Gegenwart verträgt historisches Urteilen? Die Kontroverse zwischen Heinrich von Sybel und Julius Ficker über die Bewertung der Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters (1859–1862)', in Historische Debatten und Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, edited by Jürgen Elvert and Susanne Krauß (Stuttgart, 2003), 34-54 (53).

⁵⁰G. Waitz, Die historischen Übungen zu Göttingen: Glückwunschschreiben an Leopold von Ranke zum Tage der Feier seines fünfzigjährigen Doctorjubiläums, 20. Februar 1867 (Göttingen, 1867), 4; Rainer Kolk, 'Wahrheit, Methode, Charakter: zur wissenschaftlichen Ethik der Germanistik im 19. Jahrhundert', Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur, 14 (1989), 50-73.

Strikingly, however, Waitz himself was never remembered in such narrow terms. While necrologies in the late 1880s routinely referred to Waitz's 'industriousness', 'meticulousness' and 'accuracy', no less than seven of these obituaries especially emphasised his 'loyalty' (Treue). 51 Hubert Ermisch and Wilhelm Wattenbach even argued that 'loyalty' was a key to understanding Waitz's life and work. Although this could be an epistemic virtue, 'loyalty' had a much broader range of meaning, as shall be shown in a moment.

One reason why loyalty entered the panegyrics of Waitz's students is that Leopold von Ranke, who had died less than twenty-four hours before Waitz, had inquired at this deathbed about the fate of his favourite pupil: 'Was macht denn der treue Waitz?' (How is the loyal Waitz doing?).⁵² If Waitz's students had learnt one lesson from their teacher, it was that they were privileged to belong to Ranke's scholarly 'family'. Especially at the festive celebration of the Übungen in 1874, the family metaphor had been used again and again, not the least by Waitz himself, to underline the privilege of belonging to the inner circle of German historical scholarship.⁵³ This fascination for Ranke and his scholarly offspring explains not only why Waitz was portrayed as Ranke's 'most loyal' disciple⁵⁴, but also why several of his students were eager to quote and vary on Ranke's last words. Alfred Stern, for instance, argued that Waitz had been so loyal to his master as to follow him even to the grave.⁵⁵

A second reason why 'loyalty' served as a key virtue was that Waitz had played a significant role in propagating the idea of a 'Germanic loyalty' (germanische Treue) typical of the ancient Germanic people.⁵⁶ 'Loyalty in particular is holy', Waitz had famously written in a passage on old Germanic customs. '[I]t should govern all of life, the house and the family just as the village and the state. The man is loyal to his wife, the friend to the friend, the young man to the king he serves; the entire people maintains a bond of loyalty with the sovereign.'57 Under reference to this passage, Ermisch suggested that Waitz's moral universe was not very different from the one he had attributed to the old Germanic people.⁵⁸

Most significant for our purposes, however, is that loyalty was an attractive key term because it could be applied to various aspects of Waitz's life, thereby integrating such seemingly different things as Waitz's teaching, his family life, his source editions and his membership of the Frankfurt Assembly. As Ermisch put it:

We would like to highlight loyalty as the chief trait of his character. He was loyal and unimpeachable in his striving to examine pure historical truth, loyal as a husband and as a father, loyal as a teacher. The same loyalty also dominated his political thinking and feeling ... Finally, he was loyal as a friend of his friends and of his former students ...

⁵¹[Hubert Ermisch], 'Georg Waitz † 24. Mai 1886', Wissenschaftliche Beilage der Leipziger Zeitung (1886), 265–69; [Wilhelm] Wattenbach, 'Gedächtnisrede auf Georg Waitz', in Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin aus dem Jahre 1886 (Berlin, 1887), 1-12 (3); Alfred Stern, 'Georg Waitz', Die Nation, 3 (1886), 538-40 (540); Alfred Stern, 'Gedächtnisrede auf Leopold von Ranke und Georg Waitz, gehalten vor der Versammlung der allgemeinen geschichtsforschenden Gesellschaft der Schweiz zu Aarau am 10. August 1886', in Stern, Reden, Vorträge und Abhandlungen (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1914), 36-68 (68); A[ugust] K[luckhohn], 'Georg Waitz', Allgemeine Zeitung (1886), 4017-18, 4041-42, 4313-14, 4385-86 (4017); W. v[on] Giesebrecht, 'Worte der Erinnerung an König Ludwig II, Leopold v. Ranke und Georg Waitz', Historische Zeitschrift, 58 (1887), 181-85 (184); C.Er. Carstens, 'Geheimrath Professor Dr. G. Waitz', Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburgische Geschichte, 17 (1887), 366-74 (372, 374).

⁵²Wattenbach, 'Gedächtnisrede', 3.

⁵³[Konstantin Höhlbaum], Die Jubelfeier der historischen Übungen zu Göttingen am 1. August 1874: Bericht des Fest-Comités (Göttingen, 1874), 5, 7, 13; Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, 'Private Übungen und verkörpertes Wissen: zur Unterrichtspraxis der Geschichtswissenschaft im neunzehnten Jahrhundert', in Akademische Wissenskulturen: Praktiken des Lehrens und Forschens vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne, edited by Martin Kintzinger and Sita Steckel (Bern, 2015), 143-61; Falko Schnicke, 'Rituale der Verkörperung: Seminarfeste und Jubiläen der Geschichtswissenschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts', Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft, 63 (2015), 337-58.

⁵⁴Ermisch, 'Georg Waitz', 265.

⁵⁵Stern, 'Gedächtnisrede', 68.

⁵⁶Nikolaus Buschmann, 'Die Erfindung der deutsche Treue: von der semantischen Innovation zur Gefolgschaftsideologie', in *Treue*: politische Loyalität und militärische Gefolgschaft in der Moderne, edited by Nikolaus Buschmann and Karl Borromäus Murr (Göttingen, 2008), 75-109 (81, 83).

⁵⁷Georg Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, third edition (Kiel, 1880), I, 46–47.

⁵⁸Ermisch, 'Georg Waitz', 269.

⁵⁹lbid.



Or in Wattenbach's phrasing:

The loyal Waitz! With these words Ranke had pointed out the core of his being. Loyal [Treu] to his former teacher and fatherly friend, loyal to his fatherland and to his scholarship, unwaveringly honest, straightforward, and persistent, frank without fear of people, hence also receiving trust [Vertrauen] from all sides in all domains of life.60

Interestingly, while Wattenbach, a moderate liberal⁶¹, combined the traditional, hierarchical notion of Treue with the more modern, dynamic, democratic concept of Vertrauen—a trust that came not naturally, but which had to be earned from one's peers—Ermisch, a pro-Prussian monarchist⁶², openly embraced the conservative political connotations of Treue. 63 For him, the various responsibilities Waitz had assumed over the years had all been rooted in a 'loyal sense of duty' (treuem Pflichtbewußtsein), in which loyalty had overtones of obedience, 'service to the truth', and work 'assigned by providence'.64

Although Ermisch was more outspokenly conservative than most other necrologists, the authors broadly agreed that the 'personality' (Persönlichkeit) of their teacher had given unity to the variety of his engagements. This is not to say that they conflated role or genre distinctions. Following the later Waitz, the necrologists tended to separate 'Waitz the politician' from 'Waitz the historian'. They stressed, however, that in these and other capacities the same set of 'qualities' or 'character traits' had come to the fore. While these dispositions had not been particularly well suited to parliamentary work—back in 1848, Waitz had had a reputation for being too nuanced to be politically effective they had been especially appropriate for scholarly research. Indeed, Waitz's character traits had made him an almost ideal embodiment of the 'German professor'. 65 The loyalty that Ermisch, Wattenbach and others ascribed to their teacher was therefore not an isolated character trait, but part and parcel of his 'forceful personality' or 'character pure as gold'.66

What this shows is that loyalty cannot easily be interpreted in terms of epistemic virtues alone. Waitz's students conceived of their master's typical character traits not exclusively in epistemic terms, as conducive to knowledge or understanding of the past, but as features of a personality that devoted itself with equal devotion to scholarly and non-scholarly responsibilities alike. Also, Treue as a term was too politically charged to refer to epistemic goods alone. If Waitz was portrayed as loyal through and through, this was to invoke a moral universe in which a well-respected genealogy, a sense of exclusive group identity (the Rankean family), and respect for social hierarchy were as important as love of truth or scholarly trustworthiness.

5. Conclusion

Waitz, Monod and Pirenne lived in a world where historians were not solely motivated by a thirst for knowledge or understanding of the past. The virtues they advocated, as well as those ascribed to them, also referred to their civic engagement, political commitment and educational significance. Accordingly, an interpretation in epistemic terms only would be too narrow: many virtues had moral, political and/or religious connotations as well. This does not imply, of course, that historians should drop 'epistemic virtues' from their vocabulary. Precisely because virtues could have different

⁶⁰Wattenbach, 'Gedächtnisrede', 3.

⁶¹C. Rodenberg, 'Wattenbach', in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 56 vols. (Leipzig, 1898), XLIV, 439–43 (442).

⁶²Jana Lehmann, Hubert Ermisch 1850–1932: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der sächsischen Landesgeschichtsforschung (Cologne, 2001),

⁶³On *Treue* and *Vertrauen* in nineteenth-century German political discourse, see Ute Frevert, *Vertrauensfragen: eine Obsession der* Moderne (Munich, 2013), esp. 124-25, 165-69.

⁶⁴Ermisch, 'Georg Waitz', 265.

⁶⁵Ferdinand Frensdorff, 'Zur Erinnerung an Georg Waitz: Vortrag auf der Versammlung des Hansischen Geschichtsvereins zu Quedlinburg am 15. Juni 1886 gehalten, Hansische Geschichtsblätter, 14 (1885), 1-10 (4); Georges Blondel, Notice sur Georges Waitz (Paris, 1886), 6.

⁶⁶Ludwig Weiland, Georg Waitz (geb. 9. October 1813, gest. 24. Mai 1886): Rede gehalten in der öffentlichen Sitzung der K. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften am 4. Dezember 1886 (Göttingen, 1886), 14.

layers of meaning, an adjective like 'epistemic' or 'moral' can be helpful in specifying what sort of aim the virtue in question was supposed to serve in this or that particular context. Therefore, we reject a *strong* reading of the adjective in 'epistemic virtues'—a reading according to which virtues were exclusively aimed at epistemic goods. Instead, we opt for a *weak* reading that allows for multiple, overlapping and/or contrasting aims, including epistemic ones, which makes it possible to understand a virtue such as impartiality as moral, epistemic and political at the same time.

Further research would be needed for addressing two follow-up issues. One is the stories—religious, national, ideological—in which such virtues as 'impartiality' were typically embedded. For example, one of the reasons why Catholic and Jewish scholars in Germany were often perceived as unable to engage in 'impartial' research was that Protestant scholars, including especially those with liberal inclinations, saw 'impartiality' as a fruit of the Lutheran Reformation, which had liberated individuals from the tyranny of the Catholic Church. Central to this interpretation of the Lutheran Reformation was 'freedom of conscience'—a virtue heavily loaded with *bildungsbürgerliche* connotations. Accordingly, for such late nineteenth-century German historians as Max Lenz, one of the leading names in the so-called Ranke Renaissance, 'impartiality' was a Protestant prerogative. ⁶⁷ It seems likely that similar narrative templates in other temporal and geographical contexts contributed to other types of exclusion, in terms of gender, race and class, but the role of such templates has so far been understudied. ⁶⁸

A second follow-up issue is societal support for virtues associated with good scholarly practice. In our three case studies, the virtues regarded as conducive to historical knowledge such as loyalty, impartiality and industriousness all reflected broadly shared middle-class values, which arguably accounts at least in part for the wide adherence they enjoyed. This raises the question, though, to what extent historians can assign priority to virtues that lack such broad societal support, for instance because they are narratively framed as 'counter-cultural'. This question arises especially in connection with emancipatory movements such as womens' history (feminist history) in the early 1970s. Although, by then, the category of 'virtue' no longer enjoyed the popularity it had within the period examined in this article, it could be argued that feminist historians such as Gerda Lerner called for specific constellations of female-gendered virtues in their attempts at challenging the academic patriarchy. 69 Likewise, in our own day, feminists advocating 'slow scholarship', characterised by such unfashionable practices as listening and caring, explicitly or implicitly invoke virtues like openness, humility, patience and trust. 70 Follow-up research might address the social conditions required for such virtues to flourish, even if only in remote corners of the academy. Concretely: to what extent can historians be committed to virtues of 'slowness' if academic structures and society at large are primed towards 'speed'? If the weak reading advocated in this article makes sense, it is as difficult as it is courageous to campaign for epistemic virtues whose moral and political connotations are out of joint with broader societal conventions.

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⁶⁷Hans-Heinz Krill, Die Rankerenaissance: Max Lenz und Erich Marcks: ein Beitrag zum historisch-politischen Denken in Deutschland, 1880–1935 (Berlin, 1962), 11.

⁶⁸Two excellent studies on gendered exclusion in historical scholarship are Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge MA, 1998); Falko Schnicke, *Die männliche Disziplin: zur Vergeschlechtlichung der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1780–1900* (Göttingen, 2015).

⁶⁹Paul, 'What Is a Scholarly Persona?', 357–58.

⁷⁰Alison Mountz et al., 'For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University', ACME, 14 (2015), 1235–59.



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