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9. An Ethos of Criticism: Virtues and Vices in Nineteenth-Century Strasbourg

Herman Paul

Introduction

One of the prisms through which historians have come to study scholars' activities in centuries past is that of virtues and vices: character traits that were perceived as beneficial and detrimental, respectively, to the pursuit of scholarly work. Historians study these virtues and vices partly because it allows them to add historical depth and nuance to contemporary academic performance criteria. While we think we know what "objectivity" entails, historical research forces us to rethink what we mean by the term, given that objectivity, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, has taken on a range of forms, each with its own demands on scholars' intellectual habits. In their history of objectivity, historians Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison therefore present historical contextualization as a much-needed remedy against ahistorical thinking about scholarly norms and values: "It is not always the same kind of ethos, or the same kind of self, that is involved: both have histories."¹

If historicizing contemporary virtues is one impetus behind the recent surge of interest in scholarly virtues and vices, a second one is that virtues and vices lend themselves well to transdisciplinary comparisons of the kind that especially historians of the humanities like to make.² No single field of study had a monopoly on objectivity, impartiality, or accuracy: both these virtues and their negative counterparts, the vices, traveled across disciplinary divides, either because scholars appropriated them from neighboring fields or because people drew

¹ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 40.

² Rens Bod et al., "A New Field: History of Humanities," *History of Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

on shared moral repertoires to which categories of virtue were central.³ So by tracing how, for instance, “thoroughness” appealed to philologists, historians, chemists, and medical scholars alike, we can identify parallels and sometimes even transfers between fields of research that are conventionally studied in isolation from each other.⁴

Both of the approaches just mentioned, however, have the disadvantage of isolating single virtues or vices from broader clusters of qualities that scholars regarded as needed for research or teaching. A study that zooms in too closely on thoroughness, for instance, runs the risk of ignoring that the meanings and connotations of this virtue depended on other, contrastive, complementary, or overlapping virtues. Likewise, a study of objectivity may easily forget that the relative weight attached to this virtue can only be assessed by examining what I have elsewhere called the “constellations of virtues” to which scholars were committed.⁵ Scholars never put all their cards on a single virtue: they cared about objectivity and patriotism alike or valued intellectual courage only as long as it was restrained by accuracy and love of truth. So, despite the rich layers of meaning that studies of individual virtues and vices may unearth, the challenge for historians of the humanities is not to lose sight of the fact that scholarly virtues always existed in the plural.

How can this be done? Analyzing evaluative genres, such as book reviews, is one possible way of foregrounding interaction between scholarly virtues, given that reviewers until well into the twentieth century often judged scholarly publications on the virtues or vices that they displayed.⁶ Along these lines, studies of book reviews and scholarly controversies

³ Rens Bod et al., “The Flow of Cognitive Goods: A Historiographical Framework for the Study of Epistemic Transfer,” *Isis* 110, no. 3 (2019): 483–96; *Epistemic Virtues in the Sciences and the Humanities*, ed. Jeroen van Dongen and Herman Paul (Cham: Springer, 2017).

⁴ Herman Paul, “German Thoroughness in Baltimore: Epistemic Virtues and National Stereotypes,” *History of Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2018): 327–50.

⁵ Herman Paul, “Virtue Language in Nineteenth-Century Orientalism: A Case Study in Historical Epistemology,” *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 3 (2017): 689–715.

⁶ See, e.g., Aleksei Pleshkov and Jan Surman, “Book Reviews in the History of Knowledge,” *Studia Historiae Scientiarum* 20 (2021): 629–50; Christiaan Engberts, “Scholarship, Community Formation and Book Reviews: The *Literarisches Centralblatt* as Arena and

have argued that a “balancing” of virtues was central to the moral economies of German and British scholars in the nineteenth century.⁷ The relative importance assigned to different virtues can, however, also be examined in other ways. This chapter will do so by analyzing the ethos of a particular community of humanities scholars, at the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität in Strasbourg. What were the constellations of virtues cherished by these late nineteenth-century German academics? What catalogs of virtues did they instill in their students and display in their research or writing?

By selecting the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität as its case study, this chapter discusses an example from the heyday of the German *Geisteswissenschaften* as well as from the height of nineteenth-century nationalism. That is to say, in the first place, that this chapter deals with a university that proudly presented itself as a stronghold of what the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey called the “human sciences”: fields of inquiry that tried to grasp human culture in all its complexity, not merely by explaining regularities in the human experience, as natural scientists allegedly did, but by “understanding” (*verstehen*) products of the human mind both in their historical settings and in their normative appeal to present-day audiences.⁸ When asked for advice by Strasbourg university authorities, just a year before the German university in the newly conquered province of Alsace officially opened its doors (1872), Dilthey grasped the opportunity to recommend no less than eighteen chairs in the human sciences.⁹ Although this plan turned out a little too ambitious, the importance that Germany’s youngest university attached to the human sciences is apparent from the resources it invested in them. Not only could the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität boast to be the first continental university with

Meeting Place,” *ibid.*, 651–79; Richard L. Kremer and Ad Maas, “A Tale of Reviews in Two History of Science Journals,” *ibid.*, 755–85.

⁷ Christiaan Engberts, *Scholarly Virtues in Nineteenth-Century Sciences and Humanities: Loyalty and Independence Entangled* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Léjon Saarloos, “The Scholarly Self under Threat: Language of Vice in British Scholarship (1870–1910)” (PhD thesis Leiden University, 2021).

⁸ Rudolf Makkreel, *Dilthey: Philosopher of the Human Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 35–44.

⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey, “Entwurf zu einem Gutachten über die Gründung der Universität Straßburg” (1871), *Die Erziehung* 16 (1941): 81–5.

a chair in English,¹⁰ it also managed to attract both staff and students by offering modern seminar teaching in nearly all fields of study.¹¹

These investments were made possible, financially and otherwise, by a wave of nationalist enthusiasm over the German occupation of the Alsace. Almost immediately after the region had been ceded to Germany, the idea of establishing a university in the Alsatian capital captured the imagination of German scholars and politicians alike. They believed that such an institution would be able, not only to showcase the supremacy of German *Wissenschaft*, but also to contribute to a “Germanification” of Alsace’s French-speaking population.¹² This vision helps explain why the human sciences were granted such a privileged status. In Dilthey’s words: “In the historical-philosophical sciences lies the power to stimulate national feeling and moral severity.”¹³ Importantly, this did not imply that Strasbourg faculty members eagerly posed as “political professors” or used the lectern as their pulpit.¹⁴ On the contrary, especially in politically sensitive fields like history, university administrators carefully avoided appointing candidates known for patriotic styles of teaching.¹⁵ Instead of loudly preaching love of country, Strasbourg professors were expected to teach by example, showing the superiority of German culture by demonstrating excellence in research and teaching

¹⁰ Renate Haas and Albert Hamm, *The University of Strasbourg and the Foundation of Continental English Studies: A Contribution to a European History of English Studies* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).

¹¹ Stephan Roscher, *Die Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität Straßburg 1872–1902* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), 147–8.

¹² John E. Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building: The Universities of Strasbourg and Alsatian Society, 1870–1939* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹³ Dilthey, “Entwurf,” 82. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

¹⁴ On the “political professor,” see Ulrich Muhlack, “Der ‘politische Professor’ im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Materialität des Geistes: Zur Sache Kultur: Im Diskurs mit Ulrich Oevermann*, ed. Ronald Burkholz, Christel Gärtner, and Ferdinand Zehentreiter (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2001), 185–204.

¹⁵ Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 57.

alike.¹⁶ Otto von Bismarck's suggestion to change the university motto *Litteris et patriae* into *Patriae et litteris* was therefore rejected: faculty believed they served their country best by strengthening Germany's reputation as a stronghold of *Wissenschaft*.¹⁷

What did this imply for the virtues in which Strasbourg students were being socialized? Focusing on the humanities – fields like philology, Biblical scholarship, history, philosophy, art history, and musicology – I will give an answer in two parts. In the first half of the chapter, I will argue that the dominance of philological and historical critique was such that virtues of criticism (accuracy, precision, attention to detail) were central to Strasbourg's academic ethos in the period under discussion, from 1872 to the turn of the century. In this context, I take the term "ethos" to refer to habits, expectations, norms, and values that scholars at the time believed to define good scholarship.¹⁸ Yet while virtues of criticism were held in high regard, to the point of being seen as indispensable for each and every serious attempt at scholarly inquiry, the ethos at Strasbourg allowed for more than philological precision or historical accuracy. In writing books for general readers, for instance, humanities scholars also engaged in activities that required other qualities than carefulness and sharp-mindedness. So, in the second half of the chapter, I will offer three qualifications to the importance of virtues of criticism: (1) not all genres to which Strasbourg scholars contributed made an equally strong demand on virtues of criticism; (2) these virtues of criticism were compatible with different scholarly personae, or models of being of scholar; and (3) more often than not, they were colored by evaluative stances vis-à-vis the German past, the Christian tradition, or the non-European "other."

Scholarly self-images

¹⁶ As the youngest daughter of economics professor Georg Friedrich Knapp recalled in her memoirs: "We almost never used the word 'Germanifying'. My father . . . did not talk about Germanness, but lived it." Elly Heuß-Knapp, *Ausblick vom Münsterturm: Erlebtes aus dem Elsaß und dem Reich* (Berlin: Hans Bott, 1934), 16.

¹⁷ Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building*, 84–5.

¹⁸ This draws on Robert K. Merton's classic definition in "Science and the Social Order," *Philosophy of Science* 5 (1938): 321–37, at 326 n. 16 and "A Note on Science and Democracy," *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* 1 (1942): 115–26, at 116.

Friedrich Max Müller's inaugural address, *Über die Resultate der Sprachwissenschaft* (On the Results of the Science of Language, 1872), is a good place to start. What makes this text stand out is that it abounds with language of virtue and vice. For instance, in explaining why the study of Indo-European languages was rapidly advancing, Müller pointed to the "unflagging industry," "mathematical exactness," "conscientiousness," and "great cautiousness" exercised by recent generations of linguistics. To some extent, these virtues had helped the field get rid of "prejudice," "speculations," and deference to authority.¹⁹ To remedy some still prevalent vices, such as the arrogant thought of knowing better than others and the sloppy practice of quoting things at second hand, Müller went on recommending *Gewissenhaftigkeit* and *Bescheidenheit*: "Whoever devotes himself to the study of so comprehensive a science must try never to lose sight of two virtues: conscientiousness and modesty." To emphasize the critical importance of these character traits, Müller let his lecture culminate in a long quotation from Barthold Georg Niebuhr:

Above all things, we must in all scientific pursuits preserve our truthfulness [*Wahrhaftigkeit*] so pure that we thoroughly eschew every false appearance; that we represent not even the smallest thing as certain of which we are not completely convinced; that if we have to propose a conjecture, we spare no effort in representing the exact degree of its probability. If we do not ourselves, when it is possible, indicate our errors, even such as no one else is likely to discover; if, in laying down our pen, we cannot say in the sight of God, "Upon strict examination, I have knowingly written nothing that is not true;" and if, without deceiving either ourselves or others, we have not presented even our most odious opponents in such a light

¹⁹ F. Max Müller, *Über die Resultate der Sprachwissenschaft: Vorlesung gehalten in der Kaiserlichen Universität zu Strassburg am XXIII. Mai MDCCCLXXII* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1872), 9, 10, 15, 17, 12, 13, 14, here cited in the English translation (modified in one case) published as "On the Results of the Science of Language: Inaugural Lecture, Delivered in the Imperial University of Strassburg, May 23, 1872," in F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881), 199–226, at 205, 209, 211, 207, 208, 209.

only that we could justify it upon our deathbeds – if we cannot do this, study and literature serve only to make us unrighteous and sinful.²⁰

One may wonder what to make of this exalted prose. What, if anything, does it reveal about the virtues in which Müller and his colleagues tried to socialize their students? Precisely to the extent that the passage depicts scholars at their Sunday best, as aspiring to what Daston and Galison call “the self-discipline of saints,” it does not tell us much about everyday teaching or research habits.²¹ This is partly because high-minded words about the scholar’s vocation belonged to the standard features of the genre.²² Also, because an *Antrittsvorlesung* offered professors a chance to stylize themselves as virtuous scholars, their appeal to modesty and conscientiousness is likely to tell us more about virtues that they *preferred* to have than about dispositions that they *actually* possessed. At least in Müller’s case, the virtues hailed in his inaugural overlapped only partly with qualities that colleagues ascribed to him.²³ (Just months after the occasion, the secretary of the London Philological Society described the Strasbourg professor as a scientific lightweight, “not much thought of” by serious students of language.)²⁴

²⁰ Müller, *Über die Resultate*, 29, 32; “On the Results,” 223, 225–6. The Niebuhr quote was taken from *Lebensnachrichten über Barthold Georg Niebuhr aus Briefen desselben und aus Erinnerungen einiger seiner nächsten Freunde*, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1838), 208.

²¹ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, “The Image of Objectivity,” *Representations* 40 (1992): 81–128, at 83.

²² Mark-Georg Dehrmann, “Prüfung, Forschung, Gruß: Antrittsprogramme und Antrittsvorlesungen als akademische Praktiken im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 23, no. 2 (2013): 226–41.

²³ Arie L. Molendijk, “Multiple Personae: Friedrich Max Müller and the Persona of the Oriental Scholar,” in *Scholarly Personae in the History of Orientalism, 1870–1930*, ed. Christiaan Engberts and Herman Paul (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 45–63, esp. 48–51.

²⁴ Frederick J. Furnivall to William Dwight Whitney, 27 December 1872, as quoted in Stephen G. Alter, *William Dwight Whitney and the Science of Language* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 177.

Nonetheless, virtues of the kind emphasized in Müller's addresses were invoked by, or attributed to, many a Strasbourg professor. Especially obituary writers were eager to stress conscientiousness and carefulness as characteristic qualities of deceased Strasbourg scholars. Whereas the historian Julius Weizsäcker was remembered for his "most painful exactitude," "sharp-minded criticism," and "conscientious work," the classical philologist Wilhelm Studemund was praised for his "erudition" and "scrupulous accuracy."²⁵ Yet another classical scholar, Rudolf Schöll, was hailed as a "sharp-minded researcher," who "in exemplary fashion [had] combined meticulousness with sharpness of judgment."²⁶ Just how persistent this discourse of precision, carefulness, and conscientiousness was, is apparent from the case of Theodor Nöldeke, the Strasbourg Orientalist who as late as the early 1930s was held up as a model of "conscientious research," "considerate judgment," "stringent matter-of-factness," and "exactitude in the smallest things."²⁷

Obviously, such words of praise should not be taken at face value. Like inaugural addresses, obituaries tended to distribute light and shadow in such a way as to make scholars appear at their best.²⁸ Yet what matters for our purposes is not the degree of stylizing in a genre known for saying nothing but good of the dead (*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*). More relevant is that obituary writers, like Müller in his inaugural, chose to emphasize virtues like carefulness, accuracy, and conscientiousness. In their preferred mode of self-fashioning, at least, Strasbourg humanities scholars put a premium on what I will call "virtues of criticism":

²⁵ [Ludwig Quidde], "Julius Weizsäcker †," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 2 (1889): 327–40, at 328, 329, 330; P. Thomas, "Nécrologie," *Revue d'instruction publique en Belgique* 32 (1889): 362–4, at 362.

²⁶ [Wilhelm von Christ], "Rudolf Schöll," *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-philologischen und historischen Classe der k. b. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* (1894): 149–52, at 150–1.

²⁷ Enno Littmann, "Theodor Nöldeke: Gedächtnisrede gehalten am 9. Mai 1931," in *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: Geschäftliche Mitteilungen aus dem Berichtsjahr 1930/31* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1931): 48–57, at 50; C. H. Becker, "Theodor Nöldeke," *Der Islam* 20 (1932): 43–8, at 43, 45.

²⁸ Anna Echterhölter, *Schattengefechte: Genealogische Praktiken in Nachrufen auf Naturwissenschaftler (1710–1860)* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

qualities like precision, exactitude, cautiousness, and sharp-mindedness that were seen as indispensable for philological and historical *Kritik*. Strasbourg professors, in other words, liked to see themselves, not as great orators or as influential teachers, but as dedicated researchers who privileged thoroughness and precision over bold hypotheses or grand visions.

Seminar teaching

If virtues of criticism played a major role in the *discursive legitimation* of scholarship, then to what extent did these virtues also capture how Strasbourg scholars *actually* did their work as teachers and researchers? How important were virtues of criticism, not on Sunday, but on Monday, when scholars found themselves sitting at a desk cluttered with notes or in front of a student audience? One “weekday” practice that has recently been studied in some detail is the seminar: a small-scale teaching format that, unlike the traditional *Vorlesung*, allowed for group discussions and student presentations. Developed by classical philologists in the late eighteenth century, seminars or “exercises” found their way throughout the humanities, mainly because professors embraced them as means for socializing future colleagues into field-specific research habits. Seminar teaching therefore quickly acquired an aura of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, which helps explain why the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität saw it as a matter of prestige to offer seminars in nearly all fields of study.²⁹

Among the sources informing us about virtues and skills cherished in such seminars are eye witness accounts such as penned by François Collard, a classical philologist from Louvain who visited Wilhelm Studemund’s Greek philology seminar in 1878.³⁰ What struck him most

²⁹ Carlos Spoerhase, “Seminar Libraries as Laboratories of Philology: The Modern Seminar Model in Nineteenth-Century German Philology,” *History of Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2019): 103–23; Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, “Virtues of History: Exercises, Seminars, and the Emergence of the German Historical Discipline, 1830–1900,” *History of Universities* 34, no. 1 (2021): 27–40. See also Eskildsen’s chapter in this volume.

³⁰ Other relevant sources include annual seminar reports, such as those written by Wilhelm Scherer: “Bericht des Prof. W. Scherer über das Seminar für deutsche Philologie während der drei ersten Semester seines Bestehens (Winter 1872/3 – Winter 1873/4),” 25 May 1874, in Scherer, *Briefe und Dokumente aus den Jahren 1853 bis 1886*, ed. Mirko Nottscheid and Hans-Harald Müller (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 377–81 and Scherer, “Seminarbericht

was the professor's habit of inviting seminar participants over for dinner. Like the many hours that Studemund spent daily on student supervision, these *soupers philologiques* appeared to him as evidence of great devotion to the students.³¹ As soon as Greek texts appeared on the table, however, Studemund also turned out to be demanding. Collard observed that the philologist "attached great importance to dates," while pressing his students to resolve issues of authorship and authenticity to the best of their abilities. "Woe to the student who erred in haste or hesitated in a moment of doubt: a disquieting glance, an ironic smile, a nervous gesture, or a somewhat brusque remark made him feel that he would have done better to remain carefully silent."³² If this depicts Studemund as a man with little tolerance for mistakes, Collard went on to emphasize that "rigorous method" in source critical matters was what the professor wanted his students to develop. Accordingly, the virtues highlighted in his report resemble those of Müller: accuracy, precision, and "extreme carefulness."³³

Clearly, this account was written for a purpose: propagating a German teaching model at Belgian universities. This explains why Collard's text, like Müller's inaugural, is not free from idealizing tendencies. It is worth noting, therefore, that virtues of accuracy, exactitude, and carefulness were also emphasized in sources that were not intended on telling success stories. A memoir of Hermann Baumgarten, for instance, emphasized that the Strasbourg historian had felt reserved about *historische Übungen*. Instead of familiarizing his students with the do's and don'ts of source criticism, he wanted to teach them the importance of imagination, vision, and a good style of writing. Baumgarten realized, however, that these were things that could hardly be taught, while his students expected him to offer "critical" exercises. So he did what he could, drawing on his own philological training, but with less than convincing results: "The

1874/75," 4 June 1875, in Scherer and Elias von Steinmeyer, *Briefwechsel 1872–1886*, ed. Horst Brunner and Joachim Helbig (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982), 320–1. See also, more generally, Uwe Meves, "Die Jahresberichte der Seminardirektoren als Quellen für die Seminarpraxis," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 23, no. 2 (2013): 242–58.

³¹ F. Collard, *Trois universités allemandes considérées au point de vue de l'enseignement de la philologie classique (Strasbourg, Bonn et Leipzig)* (Louvain: Ch. Peeters, 1879–82), 54–5.

³² *Ibid.*, 36.

³³ *Ibid.*, 37, 39, 45.

energetic life of a real seminar meeting was mostly absent with him.”³⁴ If this indirectly confirms Collard’s point of seminars focusing on philological training, so do the grievances of more outspoken critics like Alfred Dove, who abhorred “the narrowly philological school” of historical exercises.³⁵ Friends and foes, in other words, agreed that seminar teaching placed a premium on virtues of criticism.

Source editions

Virtues of accuracy, precision, and patience were indispensable, too, in the realm of research, especially in a type of analysis known as *Kritik*. Echoing Immanuel Kant, who had proclaimed the eighteenth century “the real age of critique,” Gustav Gröber, the Romanist philologist, and Georg Dehio, the art historian, proudly referred to “our century of critique” or “the century . . . that chose critique as its guide.”³⁶ These were not empty phrases: many humanities scholars, in Strasbourg and elsewhere, saw *Kritik* as a defining mark of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*. Arguably, critique could achieve this prominence thanks to a semantic flexibility that allowed both neo-Kantian philosophers and classical philologists to present themselves as critical.³⁷

³⁴ Erich Marcks, “Hermann Baumgarten (III),” *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (4 October 1893): 2–5, at 3.

³⁵ Alfred Dove to Heinrich von Treitschke, 13 May 1873, in Dove, *Ausgewählte Briefe*, ed. Oswald Dammann (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1925), 32–5, at 34. I discuss some other disapproving responses in Herman Paul, “The Heroic Study of Records: The Contested Persona of the Archival Historian,” *History of the Human Sciences* 26, no. 4 (2013): 67–83.

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1781), xi*; Gustav Gröber, “Geschichte der romanischen Philologie,” in *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie*, ed. Gustav Gröber, vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1888), 3–139, at 34; Georg Dehio, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Hamburg-Bremen bis zum Ausgang der Mission*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1877), 43.

³⁷ See Benedetto Bravo, “Critice in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Rise of the Notion of Historical Criticism,” in *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute*, ed. Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135–95 ; Claus von Bormon, Helmut Holzhey, and Giorgio Tonelli, “Kritik,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch*

Clearly, though, for Gröber, Dehio, and their colleagues in Strasbourg, philological connotations of the term outweighed philosophical ones. When they engaged in “criticism of the Old Testament,” subjected the Pastoral Epistles to “critical treatment,” or offered “contributions to a critique of German and Italian source texts,” they were critical in the sense of not accepting at face value the authorship, the dating, or the message of a text.³⁸

How much such “critical” research depended on the same sort of virtues that we encountered in the seminar is apparent from source editions, a genre to which many Strasbourg scholars contributed at some point in their careers. Classical philologists led the way, with Rudolf Schöll editing Asconius Pedianus, Proclus, and Justinian, while Georg Kaibel published editions of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Galen, Longinus, and Aristotle.³⁹ Chair holders in non-classical languages followed suit with editions of Geoffrey Chaucer and Francesco Petrarch, among others.⁴⁰ Medieval historians launched projects like the *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Straßburg* (Book of Records of the City of Strasbourg, 7 vols., 1879–1900), while the Sanskrit scholar Siegfried Goldschmidt made the ancient Indian Rāmāyana epic available to modern

der Philosophie, dl. 4, ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1976), 1250–82; Giorgio Tonelli, “‘Critique’ and Related Terms Prior to Kant: A Historical Survey,” *Kant-Studien* 69 (1978): 119–48; J. Colin McQuillan, *Immanuel Kant: The Very Idea of a Critique of Pure Reason* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 3–20.

³⁸ Theodor Nöldeke, *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments* (Kiel: Schwes, 1869); Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe, kritisch und exegetisch behandelt* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1880); P. Scheffer-Boichorst, “Beiträge zur Kritik deutscher und italienischer Quellenschriften,” *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 11 (1871): 483–527.

³⁹ See the titles listed in Fr. Schöll, “Rudolf Schöll, geb. 1. Sept. 1844, gest. 10. Juni 1893,” *Biographisches Jahrbuch für Altertumskunde* 20 (1897): 9–40 and W. Radtke, “Georg Kaibel, geb. 30. Oktober 1849, gest. 12. Oktober 1901,” *Biographisches Jahrbuch für Altertumskunde* 27 (1904): 15–71, at 66–71.

⁴⁰ *Der Prolog zu den Canterbury Tales: Versuch einer kritischen Ausgabe*, ed. Bernhard ten Brink (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1871); Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. [Gustav Gröber] (Strasbourg: J. H. Ed. Heitz, [1906]).

readers.⁴¹ Even the musicologist Gustav Jacobsthal contributed his share with a diplomatic edition of a thirteenth-century collection of medieval polyphonic music.⁴²

What kind of virtues such editorial work required, can be seen, first of all, from the pile of correspondence that Julius Weizsäcker and his assistants generated in the process of editing the German Reichstag Records. While some of these letters and postcards address travel plans or reimbursement of expenses, the lengthiest ones are almost invariably devoted to minutiae of spelling and punctuation. Should one read *expectat* or *expectatur*, *Galis* or *Gallis*, *volebat* or *volebant*, *quo* or *quod*?⁴³ Getting these details straight was not beyond the call of duty. Book reviewers wondering how *pendre* could have possibly be transcribed as *prendre* showed that they, too, valued textual accuracy over anything else.⁴⁴ Even more instructive is the example of Studemund preparing a Plautus edition based on a palimpsest in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. The ancient script concealed beneath an early medieval manuscript was notoriously hard to decipher. Despite Studemund making unscrupulous use of chemical reagents to make the text more legible,⁴⁵ his notes are peppered with phrases like “difficult to read” and “it may be that someone who obtains permission to use new chemicals will be able to read a bit more.”⁴⁶ Although a provisional edition of the text was finished within a

⁴¹ *Râvaṇavaha oder Setubandha*, ed. Siegfried Goldschmidt (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1880).

⁴² Gustav Jacobsthal, “Die Texte der Liederhandschrift von Montpellier H. 196: Diplomatischer Abdruck,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 3 (1879): 526–56 and 4 (1880): 35–64, 278–317.

⁴³ Julius Weizsäcker to Ernst Bernheim, 1 May 1884, Greifswald University Library, Ms 1588.

⁴⁴ H. Ulmann, review of *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, vol. 1, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 15 (1894): 495–8, at 498.

⁴⁵ Mario Varvaro, “Wilhelm Studemund e il ‘martire illustre della paleografia,’” *Seminarios Complutenses de Derecho Romano* 25 (2012): 281–318.

⁴⁶ *T. Macci Plauti fabularum reliquiae Ambrosianae Codicis rescripti Ambrosiani Apographum*, ed. Guilelmus Studemund (Berlin: Weidmann, 1889), fol. 235r, 235v. The English translations are taken from Walter Stockert, “The Rebirth of a Codex: Virtual Work on the Ambrosian Palimpsest of Plautus,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman*

couple of years, Studemund kept returning to Milan for further inspections of the manuscript, especially after two colleagues had proposed readings that differed from his.⁴⁷ Oskar Seyffert, who eventually helped Studemund finish his *opus magnum*, was not alone in expressing astonishment at the degree of “conscientiousness” that went into the project.⁴⁸ Colleagues near and far agreed that Studemund’s work was characterized by “most conscientious care” and “truly admirable persistence, cautiousness, and discernment.”⁴⁹

So, time and again, we encounter similar kinds of virtues: carefulness, precision, and patience, sometimes also sharp-mindedness or perseverance, with a characteristic lack of emphasis on originality, creativity, or intellectual courage. It would be possible to call these qualities “philological virtues,” thereby emphasizing their origin in what Franz Schultz called a “philological ethos.”⁵⁰ I however prefer to call them “virtues of criticism,” so as to highlight not their origin, but their goal. On the one hand, this allows us to say that qualities like attentiveness and meticulousness were supposed to contribute to historical and philological *Kritik* as practiced by Strasbourg historians, linguists, and philologists alike. On the other hand, this phrasing also leaves room for different virtues taking center stage in activities other than source editing and seminar teaching. For although *Kritik* and its accompanying virtues were central to how Strasbourg scholars conceived of their work, criticism was not the only thing

Comedy, ed. Michael Fontaine and Adele C. Scafuro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 680–98, at 682, 683.

⁴⁷ O. Seyffert, review of T. Macci Plauti *Fabularum Reliquiae Ambrosianae*, *Zeitschrift für das Gymnasial-Wesen* 44 (1890): 557–61, at 557.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 559.

⁴⁹ E. A. Sonnenschein, “A Plautine Palimpsest of the Ambrosian Library,” *The Classical Review* 4, no. 7 (1890): 308–10, at 308; F[ritz] S[chöll], review of T. Macci Plauti *Fabularum Reliquiae Ambrosianae*, *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* (1890): 1375–8, at 1375.

⁵⁰ Rainer Kolk, “Liebhaber, Gelehrte, Experten: Das Sozialsystem der Germanistik bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann and Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1994), 48–114, at 76, quoting Franz Schultz, “Die Entwicklung der Literaturwissenschaft von Herder bis Wilhelm Scherer,” in *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Emil Ermatinger (Berlin: Juncker und Dünnhaupt, 1930), 1–42, at 37.

that mattered to them. There were other genres to which they contributed – survey courses, narrative histories, occasional speeches – and other expectations that they had to meet. Accordingly, if this chapter so far has illustrated the prevalence of an “ethos of criticism,” I will use the rest of the chapter to add three points of nuance: (1) there were other virtues, too, that mattered; (2) typical for the ethos at Strasbourg were not only virtues, but also evaluative attitudes; and (3) a shared commitment to virtues of criticism did not prevent humanities faculty from developing different “personae” or ways of being a scholar.

Other virtues

First of all, Strasbourg scholars did more than editing old sources: they also wrote monographs, research articles, and narrative histories, while some even edited textbooks or encyclopedic handbooks. Clearly, these genres made different demands on authors than an edition or medieval sources. Take Wilhelm Scherer, the historian of German literature, who shortly after this appointment at Strasbourg wrote a *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung im elften und zwölften Jahrhundert* (History of German Poetry in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, 1875). The book tried to offer a “comprehensive image” of early Middle High German poetry by tracing influences, pointing out analogies, and identifying developments over time.⁵¹ According to a critical reviewer, this exercise was more “journalistic” than scientific, partly because preliminary studies were still missing, partly also because Scherer’s habit of indicating uncertainties only in his footnotes showed a painful lack of “scientific love of truth.”⁵² Other colleagues, however, while granting that Scherer could “lose himself in clouds of conjectures, in the nimbus of parallels, in the realm of lightheartedness [and] of poetic euphoria,” appreciated his interpretative courage and welcomed the book for the

⁵¹ Wilhelm Scherer, *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung im elften und zwölften Jahrhundert* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1875), vii.

⁵² [Friedrich Zarncke?], review in *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* (1876): 151–3, at 153.

stimulus it provided.⁵³ Although most of its conjectures were impossible to prove, the author at least presented a possible picture of how things hang together.⁵⁴

Scherer was not alone in trying his hands at narrative synthesis. In *Die geistigen und sozialen Strömungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (The Spiritual and Social Currents of the Nineteenth Century, 1899), his philosophy colleague Theobald Ziegler also cast his net widely. Emerging out of a lecture series given in 1896–7,⁵⁵ the book offered a panoramic view of German intellectual life since the Enlightenment. Judging by reviews in the popular press, most attractive about the book was its perceived combination of “thoroughness of research” with an accessible style of writing.⁵⁶ Ziegler was hailed as an author who “thinks clearly and writes well.”⁵⁷ Indeed, according to his Austrian colleague Friedrich Jodl, Ziegler was the right person for such a synoptic work because he possessed all the qualities needed for the job: an “unambiguous national attitude,” an “unprejudiced and independent position” in religious matters, and a talent for writing both “lively” and “understandably to all.”⁵⁸ Unmistakably, these were other qualities than those fostered in seminar rooms or needed for preparing source editions.

Similarly, in the realm of teaching, lecture courses (*Vorlesungen*) required different didactic qualities than research-intensive seminars. Given the frequency with which Strasbourg professors were being excused for not lecturing with the rhetorical power and emotional intensity of a Heinrich von Treitschke, it looks like mediocre performance in the

⁵³ [Franz] Sachse, review in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 31 (1877): 93–9, at 97; Erich Schmidt, review in *Deutsche Rundschau* 7 (1876): 294–9, at 295.

⁵⁴ [Elias] Steinmeyer, review in *Anzeiger für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Litteratur* 1 (1876): 234–40, at 235; W. Wilmanns, review in *Historische Zeitschrift* 36 (1876): 518–23, at 519.

⁵⁵ Roscher, *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität*, 372, n. 1030.

⁵⁶ F. D. in “Litterarische Rundschau,” *Westermanns Illustrierte Deutsche Monatshefte* 90 (1901): 530–40, at 536.

⁵⁷ Adolf Hausrath, “An der Neige des Jahrhunderts,” *Deutsche Rundschau* 98 (1899): 313–5, at 315.

⁵⁸ Fr. Jodl, review in *Euphorion* 6 (1899): 772–9, at 775. More critical was the Austrian Catholic *Allgemeines Litteraturblatt* 11 (1902): 39–42.

lecture hall could be framed as a virtue rather than a vice.⁵⁹ Careful, conscientious scholars, after all, would betray their ethos by abstracting too much from what they could analyze in painstaking detail. Still, when Studemund, the meticulous source editor, taught a survey course on Roman literature, he did not hesitate to sacrifice on accuracy when necessary for the sake of clarity.⁶⁰ Others even acquired a reputation for inspirational lecturing. Otto Liebmann's philosophy lectures were described as "little pieces of art," delivered with contagious enthusiasm.⁶¹

Consequently, a first qualifying observation is that the ethos of criticism at Strasbourg was most manifest in *certain* genres of research and teaching, but not in *all* of them. Despite their great commitment to philological and historical critique, Strasbourg humanities scholars also contributed to genres that required other qualities than accuracy and attention to detail. Interestingly, the desire to engage in more than philological *Kleinarbeit* manifested itself not only among scholars skeptical about source editing projects. When Weizsäcker's assistants tried to discriminate between *habitationes* and *habitationibus*, they could also deeply long for more challenging or satisfying work. "Lost in the abysses of editions," Ernst Bernheim, for instance, envied his colleague Karl Lamprecht for book projects that allowed him to follow his own inclinations.⁶² Likewise, Theodor Nöldeke, while agreeing to contribute to Michael Jan de Goeje's large-scale edition of the *Tarikh al-Tabari*, warned his Dutch colleague in advance: "In particular, I have a horror of the work of transcribing; I prefer correcting ten proof sheets over

⁵⁹ Marcks, "Hermann Baumgarten (III)," 3; Hermann Bloch, "Paul Scheffer-Boichorst (25. Mai 1843 – 17. Januar 1902)," *Historische Zeitschrift* 89 (1902): 54–71, at 66; C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Theodor Nöldeke: 2. März 1836 – 25. Dezember 1930," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 85 (1931): 239–281, at 279.

⁶⁰ Collard, *Trois universités allemandes*, 21.

⁶¹ R. Eucken, "Ansprache bei der Bestattung," *Kant-Studien* 17 (1912): 1–5, at 3.

⁶² Ernst Bernheim to Karl Lamprecht, 9 February 1883, in "*Über das eigentliche Arbeitsgebiet der Geschichte*": *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Karl Lamprecht und Ernst Bernheim sowie zwischen Karl Lamprecht und Henri Pirenne 1878–1915*, ed. Luise Schorn-Schütte and Mircea Ogrin (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017), 49–51, at 50.

transcribing half a sheet.”⁶³ Or as Nöldeke sighed on another occasion: he would have greatly preferred to write a monograph on the Sasanian Empire instead of editing Tabari’s account of it.⁶⁴ So, despite the fact that virtues of criticism were seen as indispensable for serious scholarship, Strasbourg scholars also engaged, or dreamt of engaging, in types of teaching and research that made demands on other, less philological virtues.

Evaluative attitudes

If virtues of criticism existed alongside other virtues, a second point that needs to be made is that these virtues were often colored by *evaluative attitudes*. Criticism, after all, not only served the *wissenschaftliche* goal of acquiring knowledge; it was also charged with normative meaning, informed by religious assumptions, or loaded with political overtones, all of which left their mark on the ethos lived out by Strasbourg humanities scholars. Although these evaluative stances often remained implicit, they manifested themselves, among other things, in how scholars positioned themselves vis-à-vis their subject matter – how they identified with their topics of research or, by contrast, distanced themselves from it.

A vivid example of distanced criticism is offered by Theodor Nöldeke’s history of the Qur’an. Reviewing a broad range of sources, from ancient Arabic biographies of Mohammed to manuscript commentaries on the Qur’an, Nöldeke tried to sort out what was historically reliable and what was not. In many cases, “lies,” “pious frauds,” and unbridled “phantasy” on the part of the authors yielded negative results: neither “dogmatic” nor “uncritical” sources could pass Nöldeke’s reliability test.⁶⁵ So, while Nöldeke presented himself as open-minded, free from prejudice, cautious, and skeptical of tradition and authority alike,⁶⁶ these were

⁶³ Theodor Nöldeke to Michael Jan de Goeje, 7 April 1874, as quoted in Snouck Hurgronje, “Theodor Nöldeke,” 262.

⁶⁴ Theodor Nöldeke to Georg Hoffmann, 24 October 1877, as quoted in Bernhard Maier, *Gründerzeit der Orientalistik: Theodor Nöldekes Leben und Werk im Spiegel seiner Briefe* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2013), 69.

⁶⁵ Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qur’āns* (Göttingen: Dieterich 1860), xxix, 5, 20, xxi.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 214, v, xvi, 51. Reviewers also hailed Nöldeke’s “thorough” and “critical” habits of mind: [Moritz Steinschneider], review in *Hebräische Bibliographie* 4 (1861): 67–9; H[einrich] E[wald], review in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (1860): 1441–57, at 1444.

exactly the virtues he found lacking in his source material. And this was not the only way in which Nöldeke contrasted between “us,” modern European scholars, and them, “superstitious Muslims” haunted by religious phantasies “that no one seriously investigating the matter will believe sincerely.”⁶⁷ In later years, he even stated, in private correspondence, that it are not “the worst features of our modern being” that make “dreamers and seers” like Mohammed appear to us as “incomprehensible.”⁶⁸ In other words, the distance between Nöldeke, the self-declared rationalist, and the world of ancient Islam was almost complete.

Things were less clear cut for Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, a New Testament critic who argued that the gospel of Mark offered a more reliable image of Jesus than the gospel of Matthew.⁶⁹ In his scholarly publications, Holtzmann proceeded from the assumption that the Bible had to be treated like Homer or the pre-Socratic fragments, without any preconceived idea about their religious, philosophical, or literary value.⁷⁰ This, however, did not prevent him from climbing the pulpit of Strasbourg Cathedral on Sunday to deliver sermons that treated even Matthew’s words as nourishment for the soul.⁷¹ There are indications that even Holtzmann’s “Marcan priority” hypothesis was informed by a liberal Protestant agenda. In the context of Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*, at least, the thesis that Matthew was of disputable reliability was welcomed by anticlerical Protestants, as it allowed them to dismiss Matthew 16,18 (“upon this rock I will build my church”) as a proof text for apostolic succession.⁷²

⁶⁷ Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qurâns*, 38, 223 (cf. *ibid.*, 50, 214).

⁶⁸ Nöldeke to Hoffmann, 22 February 1886, as quoted in Maier, *Gründerzeit der Orientalistik*, 66.

⁶⁹ John S. Kloppenborg, “Holtzmann’s Life of Jesus according to the ‘A’ Source,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4 (2006): 75–108, 203–23.

⁷⁰ Heinrich Holtzmann, *Recht und Pflicht der biblischen Kritik: Ein Vortrag* (Karlsruhe: G. Braun, 1874).

⁷¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Gesammelte Predigten*, [vol. 1] (Berlin: Hans Friedrich, 1901), chapters 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, and 13.

⁷² William R. Farmer, “State Interesse and Marcan Primacy: 1870–1914,” in *Biblical Studies and the Shifting of Paradigms, 1850–1914*, ed. Henning Reventlow and William R. Farmer (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 15–49, at 32–33.

While Holtzmann negotiated distance and proximity, unambiguous identification with the past under study could be found in the fields of history and art history. At a time when even a specialist reference work like the *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Straßburg* could be presented as a monument of “national conviction,”⁷³ explicit glorification of the German past seemed hardly necessary: studying the national past as such already counted as an act of patriotism. Nonetheless, not a few scholars chose to write in the first person plural, thereby conveying how much they identified with the past under scrutiny. The art historian Georg Dehio, for instance, almost routinely referred to “our people,” “our history,” “our national life,” and “the fortunes of our nation,” even when writing in a professional journal.⁷⁴ Indeed, for Dehio, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II was “one of ours, even when we gradually come to realize that he himself hardly felt German and was not [German] insofar as his upbringing, language, and way of thinking are concerned.”⁷⁵ Arguably, this identification with a past claimed as “German” was one of the motives behind Dehio’s dedication to heritage conservation. As he argued in 1905, at a university ceremony attended by Emperor Wilhelm II: “We do not conserve a monument because we think it is beautiful, but rather because it is a part of our national existence.”⁷⁶ Clearly, Dehio’s age of critique also was an age of nationalism. Historical criticism could serve nationalist history writing just as easily as it could support an Orientalist “othering” of the East.

One implication of this is that German nationalism at the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität was more than a matter of displaying patriotic virtues (as distinguished from scholarly virtues). Typical of the nationalist fervor cultivated at Strasbourg was that critical study *as such* was supposed to add to the glory of the fatherland. Historical or philological inquiry therefore not

⁷³ “Vorwort,” in *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Strassburg*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Wiegand (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1879), v–vii, at vi.

⁷⁴ G. Dehio, “Deutsche Kunstgeschichte und deutsche Geschichte,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 100 (1908): 473–85, at 480, 482, 484, 479.

⁷⁵ Georg Dehio, “Die Kunst Unteritaliens in der Zeit Kaiser Friedrichs II.,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 95 (1905): 193–205, at 194.

⁷⁶ Georg Gottfried Dehio, *Denkmalschutz und Denkmalpflege im neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Rede zur Feier des Geburtstages Sr. Majestät des Kaisers, gehalten in der Aula der Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität Strassburg am 27. Januar 1905* (Strasbourg: J. H. Ed. Heitz, 1905), 9.

only demanded scholarly virtues (accuracy, precision, patience), but also an evaluative stance (identification with the German nation state) which lent a particular flavor to the virtues in which Strasbourg students were socialized. More generally, this implies that virtues, despite their prominence in nineteenth-century scholarly thinking, cannot capture each and every aspect of the ethos prevalent at Strasbourg. The academic ethos was characterized by virtues of criticism, but also, no less importantly, by identifications and dissociations – modes of “positioning” that revealed how Strasbourg scholars related normatively to the German past, the Christian tradition, and the Orientalist “other.”

Different personae

Finally, even if Strasbourg professors shared an ethos of criticism and found each other in love for the German Empire, these similarities did not prevent them from developing different “scholarly personae” or ways of being a scholar.⁷⁷ Patience and accuracy could be lived out in the seclusion of a scholar’s own study, in careful manuscript study, but could be practiced also in Egyptian kings’ tombs, by scholars who tried to decipher ancient hieroglyphs while being surrounded by hordes of startled bats.⁷⁸

A Strasbourg professor who came close to personifying the first persona was Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, a historian whose virtuosity in historical criticism was known near and far.⁷⁹ Unlike Bernheim and Nöldeke, Scheffer did not dream of writing monographs or survey texts: he willingly restricted himself, more exclusively as time went on, to issues in medieval history of which he thought that truth and falsehood had not yet been sufficiently sorted out.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ I elaborate on the concept of personae in Herman Paul, “Introduction: Scholarly Personae: What They Are and Why They Matter,” in *How To Be a Historian: Scholarly Personae in Historical Studies, 1800–2000*, ed. Herman Paul (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1–14 and “Introduction: Scholarly Personae in the History of Orientalism,” in Engberts and Paul, *Scholarly Personae in the History of Orientalism*, 1–16.

⁷⁸ Georg Ebers, *Richard Lepsius: Ein Lebensbild* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1885), vii.

⁷⁹ Bloch, “Scheffer-Boichorst,” 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 58–9; E. Dümmler, “Gedächtnissrede auf Paul Scheffer-Boichorst,” in *Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften aus dem Jahre 1902* (Berlin: Verlag der Königlich Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1902), 1–16, at 14.

This type of research required ingenuity and sharp-mindedness, but also great familiarity with printed and archival sources. Consequently, if Scheffer was not teaching, he could be found in archives, bent over medieval manuscripts, or in his study, surrounded by notes and books.⁸¹ Reportedly, even during dinner, Scheffer (a lifelong bachelor) sometimes had a transcript laying next to his plate.⁸² Although it was a commonplace in obituaries to exonerate a deceased scholar from the charge of having been a *Stubengelehrte*, Scheffer seemed to live the cliché: “The young Strasbourg professor expected nothing from life except comfortable silence for his work.”⁸³

The Egyptologist Johannes Dümichen, by contrast, was an “outdoor” type of scholar: a fieldworker who was most in his element when traveling in the Nile valley. At a time when fieldwork abroad was anything but common, Dümichen’s research trips were a rich source of stories about suffering and sacrifice, complete with anecdotes about the indefatigable scholar spending long hours copying inscriptions under the burning Egyptian sun.⁸⁴ If these travels already brought him a reputation beyond academic circles,⁸⁵ richly illustrated books like the *Geschichte des alten Aegyptens* (History of Ancient Egypt, 1879) added to this fame. As a result, Baedeker, the German travel guide, contracted Dümichen to co-author a volume on Upper Egypt, thereby following the example of the Prussian crown prince, who had chosen Dümichen as his personal guide when touring the pyramids in 1869.⁸⁶ All this explains why, in

⁸¹ Ibid., 13; Bloch, “Scheffer-Boichorst,” 66.

⁸² K. Hampe, “Paul Scheffer-Boichorst,” *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 5 (1902): 280–90, at 286.

⁸³ Bloch, “Scheffer-Boichorst,” 57.

⁸⁴ Georg Ebers, “Johannes Dümichen,” *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (26 February 1894): 1–6, at 2.

⁸⁵ See “Dümichen,” in *Brockhaus’ Conversations-Lexikon*, 13th ed., vol. 5 (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1883), 634.

⁸⁶ K. Baedeker, *Ägypten: Handbuch für Reisenden*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1891), v; Ebers, “Johannes Dümichen,” 4.

his Strasbourg inaugural, Dümichen could literally call his chair “the office of a guide through ancient Egypt,” while comparing his course syllabus to a “travel itinerary.”⁸⁷

As apparent as the differences between Scheffer’s and Dümichen’s personae are, these differences do not imply, however, that Scheffer’s virtues of criticism were of only marginal importance to Dümichen. The *Geschichte des alten Aegyptens* was largely based on inscriptions that the author himself had transcribed. Moreover, apart from this narrative history book, Dümichen’s scholarly output largely consisted of source publications full of carefully copied hieroglyphs.⁸⁸ The exactitude and sharp-mindedness required for this transcription work were not entirely unlike the precision and sagacity that Scheffer needed at his desk. Indeed, at times, Dümichen’s work in Egypt resembled Studemund’s research in Milan: both men tried to decode ancient scripts, with help of modern technologies, to produce transcripts that were as reliable as possible.⁸⁹ So, despite the fact that Dümichen was less of a scholarly recluse than Scheffer, he did engage in work to which virtues of criticism were crucial. Judging by obituaries appearing after Dümichen’s death in 1894, this collecting and publishing of valuable inscriptions was what his fellow Egyptologists eventually judged his greatest contribution.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Johannes Dümichen, *Über die Tempel und Gräber im alten Ägypten und ihre Bildwerke und Inschriften: Vorlesung gehalten in der Kaiserlichen Universität zu Strassburg am XIX. November MDCCCLXXII* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1872), 4, 22.

⁸⁸ See, among other titles, Johannes Dümichen, *Altägyptische Kalenderinschriften in den Jahren 1863–1865 an Ort und Stelle gesammelt* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1866); *Altägyptische Tempelinschriften in den Jahren 1863–1865 an Ort und Stelle gesammelt* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1867); *Historische Inschriften altägyptischer Denkmäler in den Jahren 1863–1865 an Ort und Stelle gesammelt* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1867).

⁸⁹ In Dümichen’s case, photography was the technology that facilitated his transcription work. See Johannes Dümichen, *Resultate der auf Befehl Sr. Majestät des Königs Wilhelm I. von Preußen im Sommer 1868 nach Aegypten entsendeten archäologisch-photographischen Expedition*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1869).

⁹⁰ H[einrich] B[rugsch] and A[dolf] E[rman], “Johannes Dümichen, geb. 15. October 1833, gest. 7. Februar 1894,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Alterthumskunde* 32 (1894): 63; Wilhelm Spiegelberg, “Johannes Dümichen: Geb. 15. October 1833, gest. 7. Februar

What these examples show is that a broadly shared commitment to virtues of criticism among humanities scholars in Strasbourg was, to some extent, compatible with a variety of personae and scholarly ways of life. Not all professors were *Stubengelehrten*; not all of them were hesitant to reach out to educated middle class readers.

Conclusion

Where does all this leave us? When in 1897 the historical economist Gustav Schmoller looked back on the years of his professoriate in Strasbourg, he noticed that many of his colleagues at the time shared a commitment to what he called “realism.” For Schmoller, this term referred to a conception of scholarship in which empirical research, driven by what had become known as the “scientific method,” mattered more than bold attempts at determining how all human knowledge fits together. Realism thus indicated dissociation from the idealist legacy that had shaped so much of German university life in earlier parts of the century. Also, it implied a focus on scientific work, with professors engaging in research instead of occupying parliamentary seats and writing for *bildungsbürgerliche* audiences, as had been customary in earlier decades. For Schmoller, it was “sharper criticism,” “stricter methods,” and “new results” that captured the *corps d’esprit* in the Alsatian capital.⁹¹

Although the picture sketched in this chapter is broadly compatible with Schmoller’s, I have emphasized the *ethos* displayed by Strasbourg humanities scholars rather than their methodologies, partly to understand why they spoke so highly about virtues like precision, accuracy, and sharp-mindedness, but partly also to examine how such virtues of criticism related to the nationalist ambitions of the Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität. One of the things this chapter has made clear is that the ethos prevalent at Strasbourg consisted of more than

1894,” *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l’archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 16 (1894): 74–7, at 75.

⁹¹ Gustav Schmoller, “Von der Straßburger Jubelfeier: Worte in Namen der früheren Lehrer der Kaiser Wilhelm-Universität gesprochen zu Straßburg am 1. Mai 1897,” *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (7 May 1897): 6–7, at 7. On the *Methodenstreit* that caused Schmoller to emphasize this empiricist leaning, see Jens Herold, *Der junge Gustav Schmoller: Sozialwissenschaft und Liberalkonservatismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 189–93.

virtues of criticism. Even though *Kritik* was seen as a defining mark of *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, scholars also engaged in activities for which imagination, creativity, and synthetic abilities were just as indispensable qualities as sharp-mindedness and meticulousness. Also, this chapter has shown that *Kritik* was not a matter of virtues alone: virtues of criticism were often colored by evaluative attitudes, which made visible how scholars normatively positioned themselves vis-à-vis their subject matter. Finally, a shared commitment to *Kritik* did not prevent Strasbourg humanities scholars from embracing different scholarly personae. Far from being homogeneous, their ethos of criticism could be lived out in different ways, by fieldworkers in far-away countries as well as by scholars absorbed in ancient manuscripts.

All this implies that a research focus on communities of scholars, at a single university or otherwise, may bring to light certain aspects of scholarly habits, norms, and values that tend to remain invisible in studies of single virtues or vices. Apart from that it can show how virtues overlapped and interacted with each other, it can highlight the extent to which such constellations of virtues were genre specific. Lecture courses, after all, made other demands on professors than private exercises, just as wide-ranging handbooks required other abilities than critical editions of medieval texts. Also, the perspective adopted in this chapter allows us to see that scholars' self-representations (self-congratulatory accounts like Müller's inaugural address) not always matched with their actual working practices (Studemund pouring chemical reagents on old manuscripts in Milan). Even if Schmoller was right in emphasizing "sharper criticism" and "stricter methods" as distinctive of the ethos cultivated at Strasbourg, historians of the humanities not only want to know what standards scholars propagated, but also how they worked out in practice.⁹²

⁹² Funding was generously provided by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).