

(Published in *History and Theory*, 2011)

PERFORMING HISTORY: HOW HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP
IS SHAPED BY EPISTEMIC VIRTUES

HERMAN PAUL

ABSTRACT

Philosophers of history in the past few decades have been predominantly interested in issues of explanation and narrative discourse. Consequently, they have focused consistently and almost exclusively on the historian's (published) output, thereby ignoring that historical scholarship is a practice of reading, thinking, discussing, and writing, in which successful performance requires active cultivation of certain skills, attitudes, and virtues. This paper, then, suggests a new agenda for philosophy of history. Inspired by a "performative turn" in the history and philosophy of science, it focuses on the historian's "doings" and proposes to analyze these performances in terms of epistemic virtue. It argues that historical scholarship is embedded in "practices" or "epistemic cultures," in which knowledge is created and warranted by means of such virtues as honesty, carefulness, accuracy, and balance. These epistemic virtues, however, are not etched in stone: historians may highlight some of them, exchange one for another, or reinterpret their meaning. On the one hand, this suggests a rich area of research for historians of historiography. To what extent can consensus, conflict, continuity, and change in historical scholarship be explained in terms of epistemic virtue? On the other hand, the proposal outlined in this article raises a couple of philosophical questions. For example, on what grounds can historians choose among epistemic virtues? And what concept of the self comes with the notion of virtue? In addressing these questions, philosophy of history may expand its current scope so as to encompass not only "writings" but also "doings," that is, the virtuous performances historians recognize as professional conduct.

Keywords: virtue epistemology, epistemic virtues, epistemic cultures, practice theory, per-

formative turn, philosophy of history, historiography, methodology

In the wake of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995), a renewed interest can be discerned not only in archives as sites of power and meaning, or of desire and loss, but also in that species of scholars who spend their working hours in such archival institutions.¹ With a mix of fascination and irony, Derrida comments on the yearning for authenticity found among such visitors (most of them historians), on their hope to discover "untouched" remains of the past, and on their sometimes passionate quest for the holy grail of historical truth.² Once an activity treated almost exclusively in historical methodology textbooks and introductory courses in historical scholarship, archival research has now been discovered to be an activity that could, and still can, be loaded with sensuality, emotion, and romantic passion. Leopold von Ranke, writes Bonnie G. Smith, experienced pure excitement when, on research leave in Venice, he encountered the objects of his love: ancient letters and old minutes, hidden away in local archives, but bearers of both historical and emotional meaning for someone who tried to rewrite the history of Europe based on primary sources. Enthusiastically, the German historian-discoverer compared the search for such archival documents to the exploration of unspoiled wildernesses in Africa. Indeed, for Ranke, the archive was a scene of authenticity, a place not only of historical information, but also of "historical sensation." As Smith aptly observes,

¹. I have benefited from helpful remarks from Stephen Bann, Antoon De Baets, Robert Doran, Harry Harootunian, Dominick LaCapra, and Hayden White in response to a draft of this paper, presented at the University of Rochester on April 25, 2009. I am grateful to Allen R. Dunn, editor of *Soundings*, for his permission to incorporate in this article material previously published in Herman Paul, "The Epistemic Virtues of Historical Scholarship; or, the Moral Dimensions of a Scholarly Character," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 91 (2008), 371-387. Funding was generously provided by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO).

². Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), translated as *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, transl. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also Derrida's *Genèses, genealogies, genres et le génie: les secrets de l'archive* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), which has appeared in English as *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*, transl. Beverley Bie Brahic (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), and Carolyn Steedman's Derrida-inspired collection of essays, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

“The idealistic language of historical objectivity was strangely parallel to the language of fetishistic love.”³

Philosophers of history may wonder what sort of implications, if any, this renewed interest in archival work and “primary source research” may have for how they understand their task. Since the days of William H. Walsh, that task has been defined as philosophical reflection on what counts as historical knowledge. This formulation is deliberately ambiguous. It can be understood as philosophical reflection on what historical knowledge *should be*: on the (epistemic) conditions that knowledge-claims about the past have to satisfy to be considered “scholarly knowledge.” This explicitly normative approach is perhaps best exemplified by David Hackett Fischer’s amusing study, *Historians’ Fallacies* (1970), which showed that even the greatest of modern historians failed to obey the (rigid) standards that Fischer proposed.⁴ Simultaneously, however, “philosophical reflection on what counts as historical knowledge” may refer to an analysis of what is *actually* defined as historical knowledge by historians, university administrators, funding agencies, or the general public. This is the sort of approach that Raymond Martin has advocated in his “empirical” philosophy of history. It does not speculate about “ideal” historical explanations, but analyzes what historians in fact accept as valid historical explanations, or convincing interpretive schemes.⁵

If these examples give some indication of how twentieth-century philosophers of history have adopted various positions between the ideal-typical poles of “prescription” and “description,” it is perhaps surprising to observe that almost all philosophy of history produced since the days of Carl G. Hempel seems to agree on one thing. It all seems to assume that historical knowledge must be conceived of as a *product*, made and ready for inspection, rather than as a

³. Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 116-120, 126-127. See also Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 48-49, and, more generally, Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen, “Leopold Ranke’s Archival Turn: Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography,” *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008), 425-453.

⁴. David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1970).

⁵. Raymond Martin, *The Past within Us: An Empirical Approach to Philosophy of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

production process, continuously underway and in development. When, in days long gone, philosophers of history filled the pages of *History and Theory* with reflections on “valid historical explanations,” they tended not to examine how historians with wrinkled eyebrows pondered causes and effects, or how at night in bed they stared at the ceiling contemplating the relative merits of alternative explanatory strategies. It was rather the result of all that labor—explanations neatly spelled out in historical monographs or research articles—that captivated their attention.

Much the same goes for the narrativism of Arthur C. Danto, Louis O. Mink, and Hayden V. White, which from the early 1970s onwards gradually became the dominant successor-paradigm to Hempel’s covering-law approach. Its substitution of narrative for explanation as the main topic of philosophy of history marked, of course, an increasingly radical break with Hempel *cum suis*.⁶ Yet, most narrativist philosophers of history shared with their predecessors a narrow fascination for the outcome of the historian’s research. Not the laborious activity of what Mink called “seeing things together,” or the creativity and talent required for judging how “facts” distilled from scattered source material could meaningfully be brought together, but the outcome of that process, the narrative expression of such “synoptic judgments,” was their principal object of investigation.⁷ True, for White, the “metahistorical” conventions or traditions informing such judgments were important, too. *Metahistory* (1973) was an analysis of assumptions constraining and shaping how historians approach the “historical field.”⁸ But even in his case, the historian’s activities, the intellectual operations involved in doing archival research, or the performative act of writing a conference paper remained uninvestigated.

What, then, is the challenge contained in the renewed interest in archives and source research, documented by the writings of Derrida, Smith, and others? For philosophers of history, I take this challenge to consist in a rethinking of their subject matter so as to encompass

⁶. See Richard T. Vann, “Turning Linguistic: History and Theory and *History and Theory*, 1960–1975,” in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 40–69.

⁷. Louis O. Mink, *Historical Understanding*, ed. Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁸. Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD, and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

not only what historians *have done*, but also what they *do*. Historians bending over ancient documents carefully removed from gray folders in brown archival boxes, or writing a draft of a journal article, are engaged in performative activities. They read, select, associate, interpret, define, and formulate, not to mention a dozen other activities, which they undertake often simultaneously, often unreflectively, and often, perhaps, in less than full conformity to what their methodology textbooks once told them to do.

My suggestion is to analyze these scholarly activities in terms of *performance*.⁹ Philosophers of history might want to engage, much more than they have done so far, in studies of “scholarship in action,” that is, in analysis of the work historians *do* when they “perform” their research. More precisely, if it is true that “performance is always a doing and a thing done,” as Elin Diamond argues, I would suggest that philosophers of history expand their current focus on “things done” (the historian’s written “output”) so as to give more appropriate attention to “doings” (the behavior that historians display in reading, writing, and teaching).¹⁰ In other words, whereas philosophy of history from Hempel to White has focused on the materialization the historian’s performances (be it explanations offered in historical accounts or narratives produced in discursive fields), I would invite philosophers of history, and historians of historiography, to pay attention to the performances themselves. In order not to privilege the scripts over the acts of performance, or the “things done” over the “doings,” it is time that philosophers of history also begin exploring “doings” in archival reading rooms, “doings” among library stacks, and “doings” in studies cluttered with notes.

The pages that follow offer the beginning of a vocabulary or, more precisely, a preliminary

⁹. In passing, I note that this proposal has an obvious affinity with, and is at least inspired by, what is sometimes described as a “performative turn” in studies of science, technology, and society (STS). A stimulating example of this new type of science research is Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), esp. chapter 1.

¹⁰. Elin Diamond, “Introduction,” in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1: “On the one hand, performance describes certain embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others (and/or the watching self). On the other hand, it is the thing done, the completed event, framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited across a pre-existing discursive field.” Obviously, the two can never be separated.

conceptual tool for analyzing such “doings.” I suggest that the concept of “epistemic virtues”—well-known among philosophers of science, but hardly explored so far by philosophers of history¹¹—enables us to conceive of a historian’s “doings” as performances ideally regulated by virtues such as diligence, accuracy, and truthfulness. I show that historians not only exhibit epistemic virtues in their day-to-day work, but sometimes also think of professional behavior in terms of virtues (and of unprofessional conduct in terms of vices). I briefly explain what analytic philosophers understand epistemic virtues to mean and, finally, argue at some length that these virtues may constitute a research agenda for both historians of historiography and philosophers of history.

¹¹. Aviezer Tucker discusses the historian’s “cognitive values” in his *Our Knowledge of the Past: A Philosophy of Historiography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. 36-39. In more recent publications, however, Tucker has adopted the language of “cognitive virtues” (without necessarily changing his position on cognitive values: these can be regarded as the goals of cognitive virtues). See Tucker, “Historiographic Revision and Revisionism: The Evidential Difference,” in *Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe After 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeck (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 1-15, and “Temporal Provincialism: Anachronism, Retrospection and Evidence,” *Scientia Poetica* 10 (2006), 299-317. Although the research agenda I will present in the pages that follow is markedly different from Tucker’s (see below, note 48), I am indebted to his work. Also, I should like to acknowledge a stimulating discussion with Tucker on matters of virtue epistemology during a conference in Groningen in January 2010. Other philosophers of history who have paid (occasional) attention to epistemic virtues include Mark Bevir, Mark Day (I will return to both of them below), and Markus Völkel, the latter most notably in his “Wie beglaubigt man den eigenen Glauben? Fallgeschichten aus dem Bereich der *Social Epistemology*,” in *Unsicheres Wissen: Skeptizismus und Wahrscheinlichkeit 1550–1850*, ed. Carlos Spöerhase, Dirk Werle, and Markus Wild (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 217-244.

The idea that a historian's "doings" can be conceptualized in terms of virtues and vices would hardly have surprised such methodology textbook authors as Charles Victor Langlois, Charles Seignobos, John Martin Vincent, and Marc Bloch. No matter how different their introductions to historical method were, they all discussed the historian's professional conduct in terms of intellectual virtues. Thus, in 1898, Langlois and Seignobos declared that historical research required a "scientific spirit" (or *wissenschaftliche Persönlichkeit*, as their German contemporaries used to say). Ideally speaking, such a scientific spirit excelled in "minute accuracy," "prudence," and "complete disinterestedness." "For textual criticism and the investigation of sources, it is, moreover, very useful to have the puzzle-solving instinct—that is, a nimble, ingenious mind, fertile in hypotheses, prompt to seize and even to guess the relation of things." Unsurprisingly, Langlois's and Seignobos's ideal historian also possessed "the qualities of order, industry, and perseverance" and had "an exceptional appetite for work." The authors even explicitly employed virtue language when they claimed that "patience is the cardinal virtue of the scholar."

The true scholar is cool, reserved, circumspect. In the midst of the turmoil of life, which flows past him like a torrent, he never hurries. Why should he hurry? The important thing is, that the work he does should be solid, definitive, imperishable. Better "spend weeks polishing a masterpiece of a score of pages" in order to convince two or three among the scholars of Europe that a particular charter is spurious, or take ten years to reconstruct the best possible text of a corrupt document, than give to the press in the same interval volumes of moderately accurate *anecdota* which future scholars will some day have to put through the mill again from beginning to end.¹²

This set of ascetic virtues corresponded to a number of vices, such as "mental confusion," "ignorance," and "negligence," which the authors, in almost biblical imagery, identified with the (sinful) natural state of humankind. Indeed, on their view, "the natural inclination of the human mind" was to treat matters "which really demand the utmost obtainable precision" in unreflective manners and with "careless laxity." Scholarly work, then, required a disciplining

¹². Ch. V. Langlois and Ch. Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*, transl. G. G. Berry (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1932), 123, 119, 127-128, 128, 126, 127.

of the self, in the Foucauldian sense of the word.¹³ Although “certain aptitudes” were indispensable, rigorous training was needed to appropriate the ascetic virtues characteristic of professional conduct. This shows to what a large extent Langlois and Seignobos believed historical scholarship to depend on virtuous character formation. Although their manual went to great lengths to codify professional conduct in methodological rules, the authors stressed that such rules were “suggested by experience” and derived from what they considered good scholarly practice. Accordingly, for them, historical scholarship was not a matter of following rules; it consisted of displaying virtuous behavior of the sort they tried to capture in (second-order) language.¹⁴

Likewise, John Martin Vincent, writing in 1911, presented professional conduct in virtue terms when he warned his American students against “laziness” (“a sin to which historians are susceptible like other people”), “outspoken prejudice,” and “blind devotion.” Other vices he taught them to avoid included carelessness, exaggeration, and hurriedness. Most important, however, was that students trained themselves in the ascetic virtues Langlois and Seignobos had recommended. Vincent even dared to say, in true positivist fashion, that the historian’s “personality” had to “be reduced to a negligible quantity.”¹⁵ If few authors went as far as this, his younger French colleague, Marc Bloch, nonetheless proposed rather similar standards of virtue and vice, especially in matters of source criticism. In his *Apologie pour l’histoire, ou, métier d’historien* (1941), Bloch spoke about an “intellectual ethic” that consisted of virtues

¹³. *Ibid.*, 139, 68. In a time when the great majority of history books published in France were written by “amateurs,” “discipline” also amounted to exclusion of those unqualified to carry the title of historian. See Philippe Carrard, “Disciplining Clio: The Rhetoric of Positivism,” *Clio* 24 (1995), 195.

¹⁴. Langlois and Seignobos, *Introduction*, 120, 8. A similar catalogue of virtues and vices can be found in Ernst Bernheim’s influential *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie: mit Nachweis der wichtigsten Quellen und Hilfsmittel zum Studium der Geschichte*, 3rd/4th ed. (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1903), to which I will devote a separate article (soon to appear). For an interesting comparison among Bernheim, Langlois, and Seignobos, see Rolf Torstendahl, “Fact, Truth, and Text: The Quest for a Firm Basis of Historical Knowledge Around 1900,” *History and Theory* 42 (2003), 305-331.

¹⁵. John Martin Vincent, *Historical Research: An Outline of Theory and Practice* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), 301, 278, 297, 256, 300.

such as diligence, perseverance, and dedication.¹⁶

Lest it be thought that such language of virtue and vice belonged to an age now long past—an age in which character still served as a dominant moral category and historians had not yet shaken off the positivist dream of methodological self-control¹⁷—let me note that Frédéric Ogé, writing in 1986, also equated the qualities required for good historical performance with the virtues of patience, humility, and rigor.¹⁸ Robert C. Williams’s popular introduction, *The Historian’s Toolbox* (2003), abounds with virtue language, too. It warns its student audience to read with “care,” to “look carefully,” to “take notes carefully,” to be “extremely careful” when engaging in oral history projects, and to “be careful” in consulting online material. “In other words, let’s be careful out there!”¹⁹ Philippe Carrard appears to be correct, then, when he observes that “historians in textbooks are zealous, austere, and methodical creatures.”²⁰

If these examples suggest that historians have a tradition of *reflecting* on professional conduct in terms of virtues, it is, of course, another matter to what extent they also *practice* these virtues. It need not be said that the conscientious, hard-working historian presented in the methodology manuals is a highly idealized one. Moreover, it takes little imagination to see that scholars can pay lip service to this ideal without actually accepting it as constitutive for their day-to-day work. As Bloch already said on methodological textbook instruction: “There is only one trouble with this idea: no historian has ever worked in such a way, even when, by some caprice, he fancied that he was doing so.”²¹ Nonetheless, even if the virtues catalogued

¹⁶. Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, transl. Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 88.

¹⁷. On character as a moral category: Stefan Collini, “The Idea of ‘Character’ in Victorian Political Thought,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* V 35 (1985), 29-50.

¹⁸. Frédéric Ogé, “Quelques conseils pratiques aux étudiants,” *Sources* 6 (1986), 53-57, as cited in Philippe Carrard, *Poetics of the New History: French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 26.

¹⁹. Robert C. Williams, *The Historian’s Toolbox: A Student’s Guide to the Theory and Craft of History*, 2nd ed. (Armonk, NY, and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 48, 65, 53, 157, 178, 138.

²⁰. Carrard, *Poetics of the New History*, 26..

²¹. Bloch, *Historian’s Craft*, 64.

by Langlois, Seignobos, and others do not necessarily correspond to the standards historians actually employ, the language of virtue is also frequently used in everyday practice. As Mark Day has shown, book reviewers often describe the relative merits of studies under investigation in terms of virtue and vice. Among the “virtues most highly prized in historical accounts,” for example, is an “intelligent handling of complex interaction between elements,” while the number one criticism made in Day’s sample of reviews is “omitting investigation of a relevant topic.” This corresponds to the virtue of ingenuity and the vice of neglect, respectively.²²

So, standards of virtue and vice not only appear in methodological discourse, but also in judgments that historians pass on one another’s work. Although, of course, historians do not always explicitly use the word “virtue” or an equivalent thereof; their praise and blame often relates to qualities of work that they consider virtuous and vicious, respectively. This suggests that, for historians, it is not entirely uncommon to think in terms of virtues and vices about good and bad performance in their field of study. The question now is whether philosophers of history might also want to adopt this language of virtue and vice in analyzing the historian’s “doings.”

II

Philosophers in the analytic tradition, especially in the English-speaking world, have begun to show a growing interest in virtues of the sort encountered in the previous section. They have come to classify such things as carefulness, honesty, accuracy, and balance as “epistemic virtues” (a category that frequently overlaps with, but must nonetheless be distinguished from, “moral virtues”). An entire philosophical school, named virtue epistemology, devotes itself to

²². Mark Day, *The Philosophy of History: An Introduction* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 24, 23, 22. Likewise, in her study of academic peer review, Michèle Lamont observes that panels evaluating grant proposals of young historians and other humanities scholars define “excellence” at least partly in terms of virtue. “Panelists privilege determination and hard work, humility, authenticity, and audacity. They express how the management of the self—the display of a proper scholarly and moral habitus—is crucial to definitions of excellence across fields.” Michèle Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 195.

the question how “epistemic” or “intellectual” virtues may justify true beliefs. Although it is frequently, and not incorrectly, noted that virtue epistemologists derive much of their inspiration from the field of virtue ethics, such as represented by Alasdair MacIntyre,²³ only a few of them seem attracted by MacIntyre’s moral agenda. They study epistemic virtues rather because they believe these virtues answer the question how a person can be justified in holding certain true beliefs.

Epistemic virtues are often believed to come in two sorts: cognitive abilities and personality traits. “Some philosophers,” writes John Greco in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, “have understood intellectual virtues to be broad cognitive abilities or powers. On this view, intellectual virtues are innate faculties or acquired habits that enable a person to arrive at truth and avoid error in some relevant field.” Others, however, believe intellectual or epistemic virtues to be “more like personality traits than cognitive abilities or powers.” Intellectual courage and open-mindedness are classic examples of character traits that can be considered epistemic virtues, if only because they increase “one’s chances of arriving at true beliefs.”²⁴

This distinction between cognitive abilities and personality traits corresponds to a rough division in the field of virtue epistemology between, on the one hand, virtue reliabilists and, on the other, virtue responsibilists. Whereas the former “conceive of intellectual virtues as any reliable or truth-conductive quality of a person,” the latter think of them as “good intellectual character traits.” In other words, virtue reliabilists refer to cognitive faculties such as vision, memory, and introspection, while virtue responsibilists speak about fair-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual carefulness, and the like.²⁵

In fact, most virtue epistemologists occupy some sort of middle position. In particular, few of them are prepared to claim that knowledge can be acquired without a proper display of certain character traits. Indeed, a strict virtue reliabilism, which denies that character is epistemologically relevant, is almost untenable, argues Jason Baehr. To quote him at some length:

²³. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

²⁴. John Greco, “Virtues in Epistemology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 287.

²⁵. Jason Baehr, “Character, Reliability and Virtue Epistemology,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 56 (2006), 193.

Getting to the truth about historical, scientific, moral, philosophical, psychological or religious matters, for instance, may make significant agency-related demands: it may require considerable concentration, patience, reflection, honesty; it may require the possession of certain intentions, beliefs and desires. While in order to reach the truth in these areas our cognitive faculties must be in good working order, this is not usually what explains or at least not what *best* explains our actually getting to the truth. Rather, reaching the truth in these areas is often explained largely or most saliently in terms of an exercise of certain traits of intellectual character: traits like intellectual carefulness, thoroughness, adaptability, tenacity, creativity, circumspection, attentiveness, patience and honesty.²⁶

I should like to emphasize that Baehr and most other virtue epistemologists are interested in these traits of intellectual character insofar and only insofar as these traits help explain how justified true beliefs differ from beliefs that may be true but not justified. Although “X caused Y” may be a true belief, scholars are unjustified to hold it, or so the argument goes, as long as they lack good reasons for accepting it. In an academic context, such a good reason is meticulous research guided by epistemic virtues such as intellectual openness (to alternative causal relationships), honesty (about evidence), and fairness (in weighing evidence or causal factors). In other words, virtue epistemologists reflect on epistemic virtues, not (as I do) in the hope of developing a conceptual tool for interpreting scholarly performances, but to answer the question, what counts as justified true belief?—which is quite a different thing.

Nonetheless, their reflections are crucial for my argument, for they show that virtue epistemologists almost unanimously understand the acquisition of scholarly knowledge to be a matter not merely of cognitive abilities such as a properly functioning memory, but also of character traits such as carefulness and thoroughness. “Epistemic virtues earn their right to be called virtues by molding the self.”²⁷ This, then, is what I would like to borrow from virtue epistemology. I do not wish to defend virtue epistemology as a whole, and I am neutral as to the truth of the claim that epistemic virtues best explain how scholars arrive at justified true beliefs. Nor do I wish to take a stance in the debate between reliabilists and responsibilists. I only argue, with a majority of contemporary virtue epistemologists, that character traits play important, constitutive roles in the acquisition of scholarly knowledge. There may be other,

²⁶. *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁷. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 41.

perhaps equally important, factors. But without the exercise of certain character virtues, there can be no knowledge acquisition. Without “scholarly selves,” socialized into knowledge-seeking communities and disciplined to perform according to the standards set by those communities, scholarship is impossible.

III

Questions of socialization and disciplinization lead us from virtue epistemology to the sociology of knowledge and the history of science. Having argued that the exercise of epistemic virtues such as encountered in Langlois, Seignobos, and Williams requires a cultivation of character traits, I would now like to make two general observations about such cultivation processes, or about the shaping of scholarly selves. The first is a sociologically inspired observation about socialization into epistemic virtues; the second is a brief historical remark on the change of such virtues over time.

Few sociologists today still subscribe to Robert K. Merton’s theory of disciplinary socialization, developed in the mid-twentieth century in order to explain how disciplinary identities are created and maintained. Nonetheless, most of the alternative theories of socialization proposed since then still agree with Merton’s basic insight: that scholarly selves, or “scientific spirits,” are created under the pressure of disciplinary forces. Students develop their research skills, their working habits, as well as their “personal qualities,” under the influence of expectations and examples offered by their teachers and peers. Especially in highly institutionalized contexts, where the pursuit of advanced degrees and future employment depends on a successful appropriation of collectively approved standards, students are likely to do their best to excel in those epistemic virtues that are considered markers of professional performance.²⁸ As critics of Merton have correctly pointed out, though, such socialization processes are never unidirectional. Students may read Williams, get frustrated by all his talk about carefulness, and wonder aloud whether a bit more risk-taking, a bit more daring research, is really such a bad thing. Accordingly, appropriation of disciplinary standards is never a matter of merely passive acceptance: newcomers often interpret, adapt, or even change the standards of a discipline. For this reason, epistemic virtues, understood as markers of good performance, are not

²⁸. Robert Merton, “The Normative Structure of Science,” in Merton, *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations*, ed. Norman W. Storer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 267-278.

etched in stone: they are the outcome of “negotiations” or the result of interaction between insiders and newcomers.²⁹

A further qualification is that “disciplines,” in which Merton was primarily interested, are not the only, and perhaps not even the most important, contexts in which socialization processes take place. As illustrated by the historical discipline, which accommodates research as diverse as econometric history and history of emotions, and subfields ranging from social to intellectual history, a discipline can contain a variety of scholarly practices. Each of these practices may not only have its own subject matter and methodological apparatus, but also what Merton called an “ethos of science”:

The ethos of science is that affectively toned complex of values and norms which is held to be binding on the man of science. The norms are expressed in the form of prescriptions, proscriptions, preferences, and permissions. They are legitimized in terms of institutional values. These imperatives, transmitted by precept and example and reenforced by sanctions are in varying degrees internalized by the scientist, thus fashioning his scientific conscience or, if one prefers the latter-day phrase, his superego. Although the ethos of science has not been codified, it can be inferred from the moral consensus of scientists as expressed in use and wont, in countless writings on the scientific spirit and in moral indignation directed toward contraventions of the ethos.³⁰

Although econometric historians and historians of emotions are likely to agree on a number of such imperatives, they also have their own “dos” and “don’ts,” their own working manners, and their own codes for what counts as professional conduct. The ethos shared by econometric historians is usually more “scientific” than that of their colleagues working on, say, narrative representations of nostalgia or repressed emotions of grief in autobiographical memory. Accordingly, at least to some degree, a career in econometric history will require a different

²⁹. Ann E. Austin and Melissa McDaniels offer a nice overview of responses to Merton in their “Preparing the Professoriate of the Future: Graduate Student Socialization for Faculty Roles,” in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. John C. Smart (Dordrecht: Springer 2006), XXI, 397-456. See also, more generally, Riccardo Campa, *Epistemological Foundations of Robert Merton’s Sociology and the Debate in the Philosophy of Science of the Twentieth Century* (Toru : Nicholas Copernicus University Press, 2001).

³⁰. Merton, “Normative Structure of Science,” 268-269.

socialization process, the appropriation of a different set of epistemic virtues, and perhaps even a cultivation of different character traits than a career in emotional history.

This is why epistemic virtues are taught, learned, and exercised in *practices* rather than in disciplines. Following Andreas Reckwitz and other recent “practice theorists,” I think of practices as “routinized forms of behavior” characterized by certain activities and a shared “background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.” In other words, a practice is “a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated and the world is understood.”³¹ Whereas disciplines are institutional arrangements consolidated in professional organizations, chairs, and graduate programs, practices are ways of working, attitudes, dispositions, or manners. They are breeding grounds for Merton’s “ethos of science” as well as for the virtues nurtured by such an ethos. Because the historian’s “doings” are embedded in “routinized forms of behavior,” practices are the context in which epistemic virtues must be located.³²

Finally, for the purpose of this article, it is important to emphasize that both practices and virtues are historically and spatially situated. They may change over time and differ from place to place. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, for example, in their marvelous history of “objectivity,” show that this notorious epistemic virtue emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, partly to replace, partly to fuse, and partly also to compete with, older epistemic virtues, such as “truth-to-nature.” Some scholarly practices quickly adopted the new virtue of objectivity, whereas others, for various reasons, tried to preserve some older virtues. Such differences, argue Daston and Galison, were not only expressed in occasional reflections on the nature and aims of scholarship, but were also manifested in practices of research and writing. “Science dedicated all to certainty is done differently—not worse, but differently—from science that takes truth-to-nature as its highest desideratum.” Although such scholarly practices may be under-determined by epistemic virtues, in the sense that a virtue often allows for a variety of practices, Daston and Galison argue that at least some transformations in scientific

³¹. Andreas Reckwitz, “Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing,” in *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*, ed. Gabrielle M. Spiegel (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 251, 252.

³². Along the same lines, Karin Knorr Cetina speaks about “epistemic cultures” or “practices of creating and warranting knowledge.” See Knorr Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 246.

practice in the past century and a half can be explained from changes in the relative importance that scholars have attributed to the virtues of “truth-to-nature,” objectivity, and “trained judgment.” Accordingly, both in the abstract and in their concrete realization, “we can identify distinct epistemic virtues—not only truth and objectivity, but also certainty, precision, replicability—each with its own historical trajectory and scientific practices.”³³ Thus, whereas historical scholarship is shaped by epistemic virtues, such virtues, in turn, are shaped by historical contexts.

IV

Applied to the study of historical scholarship, the insights formulated in the previous sections may yield some interesting results. In this section, my focus is on how epistemic virtues may enrich the history of historiography. In the next section, I address the potential relevance of epistemic virtues for philosophy of history. Admittedly, a clear distinction between these two fields of inquiry cannot be drawn. Even if one follows Fischer in asserting that philosophy of history is a “prescriptive” activity, which is as such qualitatively different from the “descriptive” activity that Fischer understands the history of historiography to be, one must concede that historians of historiography, in defining and interpreting their subject matter, also employ theory-laden concepts such as “research” and “discipline.” Such concepts structure the investigation, have normative implications, and thereby blur the borderline that Fischer draws.³⁴ Nonetheless, for convenience’s sake, it might be helpful to distinguish, in an ideal-typical mode, between an inquiry whose aim is to *understand* what historians in previous centuries did (“history of historiography”), and an inquiry intended to *justify* what historians do when seeking knowledge of the past (“philosophy of history”).

As for the former, then, let me suggest four possible questions for a history of historical scholarship refracted through the prism of epistemic virtues. First, in order to explain why historians working within a single (institutional) discipline can develop rather different ideas about the standards of good performance to be applied in their scholarship, historians of histo-

³³. Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 27, 34, 33.

³⁴. Jonathan Gorman, *Historical Judgement: The Limits of Historiographical Choice* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 33-40; Herman Paul, “How Historians Learn to Make Historical Judgments,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), 95-96.

riography may want to follow Daston and Gallison in examining to what extent epistemic virtues can change. They may want to investigate how the character traits attributed to model historians change over time, and how this results in different views on the historian's task. An example of such change is the disdain expressed in R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History* (1946) for the sort of history writing advocated in Langlois's and Seignobos's methodology manual. Notably, the British historian called their *Introduction* "about as useful to the modern reader as would be a discussion of physics in which no mention was made of relativity."³⁵ This was not because the French historians had been guilty of the vice of incompleteness, but because their epistemic virtues were those of what Collingwood famously disposed of as "scissors-and-paste history." Collingwood's alternative, phrased in terms of "questions and answers," required other, more imaginative abilities than the philological source-criticism of the late nineteenth century. So, although the discipline in its early days almost seemed to coincide with the practice of historical philology,³⁶ this was no longer true in 1930s Oxford. Much the same can be said about the *historische Sozialwissenschaft*, popularized by German historians such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler in the early 1970s. The practice of "historical sociology," too, needed epistemic virtues that only partly overlapped with those of the older, philological history, which Wehler openly rejected.³⁷ A history of historical scholarship through the prism of epistemic virtues, then, may trace changes in scholarly practices that remain invisible to those historiographers who focus mainly on the development of disciplines.

If this first proposal still remains close to the classical "schools and traditions" approach, which depicts the history of historiography as a succession of "approaches,"³⁸ a second, more

³⁵. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 143.

³⁶. For a nuanced view on discipline-formation in the late nineteenth century, see Gabriele Lingelbach, "The Historical Discipline in the United States: Following the German Model?" in *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective*, ed. Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stuchtey (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 183-204.

³⁷. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Geschichte als historische Sozialwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 7.

³⁸. Illustrations of this approach include Georg G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, rev. ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), and Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004).

important advantage of a historiographical focus on epistemic virtues is its ability to map the interdisciplinary contexts in which standards for good scholarly performance can be developed and authorized. Whereas disciplines may contain several practices, practices are not necessarily confined to disciplines. Indeed, the epistemic virtues advocated by Langlois and Seignobos were by no means the exclusive property of academic historians. They could be acquired in a philology seminar as easily as in a history seminar. By 1898, the year in which Langlois's and Seignobos's *Introduction* first appeared, history and philology, although increasingly divided in institutional terms, shared what Franz Schultz called a common "philological ethos," characterized, among other things, by care for details and love of precision.³⁹ Moreover, at many universities this ethos was also particularly strong among scholars of language, students of literature, church historians, and Biblical scholars. As I have tried to show for Leiden in the late nineteenth century, scholars working in different areas of the humanities, nowadays remembered as "father figures" in different disciplinary domains, not only regarded themselves as colleagues working in a similar "spirit," but also, to a large extent, employed the same standards for what counted as good scholarly performance. In the case of Leiden, then, a focus on epistemic virtues brings to light a philological ethos shared alike by professors of Dutch history, Dutch literature, church history, Old Testament, and Arabic.⁴⁰ Thus, although a history of epistemic virtues will be attentive to practices in which virtues were nurtured (and challenged), it will by no means result in disciplinary histories. To the contrary, it will show to what extent certain virtues were appropriated throughout and even outside the humanities.

Whereas this example focuses on shared sets of virtues, it might, in the third place, be worthwhile to study clashes and conflicts between epistemic virtues. Traditionally, religious history is a domain rich in such quarrels. The fierce debates provoked in the nineteenth century by so-called "historical critical" approaches to Scripture, for example, focused in many

³⁹. Franz Schultz, "Die Entwicklung der Literaturwissenschaft von Herder bis Wilhelm Scherer," in *Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Emil Ermatinger (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1930), 37; Herman Paul, "Waar zijn de historische hulpwetenschappen gebleven? Lotgevallen van het filologische ethos in de twintigste-eeuwse geschiedwetenschap," *Groniek* 42 (2009), 9-24.

⁴⁰. Herman Paul, "Een Leids historisch ethos? De epistemische deugden van Fruin en Acquoy," *Leidschrift* 25 (2010), 95-114.

cases not so much on the metaphysical issue of “supranaturalism,” but on the question of how appropriate a “historical critical” type of epistemic virtue was for students of the Bible. The famous “Babel-Bible controversy” instigated by Franz Delitzsch in 1902 revolved almost entirely around this question. Were the Mosaic Scriptures best read with piety and humility or with the critical eye of a philologically-trained historian?⁴¹ Students of modern history, too, encountered such questions when they dealt with, for example, the Roman Catholic Church. Was it appropriate, as Ranke did in *Die römischen Päpste* (1834–1836), to treat the successors of Saint Peter with the same sort of scholarly skepticism that ordinary mortals deserved?⁴² No one disputed that Bible and church history ought to be approached historically, but the question was which epistemic virtues were truth-conducive, or brought about real knowledge of them. Interestingly, a version of this same question nowadays emerges in debates over the origins of the Quran or in exchanges between secular and Muslim historians.⁴³ This suggests that historians working on such debates over the “use and abuse of history,” or scholars interested in relations between history and memory, or historical scholarship and tradition, can make proficient use of the category of “epistemic virtues.”

Fourth, if such virtues require personality traits, as I argued above, they obviously also reflect certain moral commitments. It is a moral statement to say that scholars must be “ascetic,” in the sense of detached, fair, and honest, just as it is a moral judgment to repudiate patriotism in the name of such ascetic values.⁴⁴ Because of this moral dimension, epistemic virtues may

⁴¹. Klaus Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit: Eine Forschungsgeschichtliche Studie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988).

⁴². Hubert Wolf, Dominik Burkard, and Ulrich Muhlack, *Ranke's “Päpste” auf dem Index: Dogma und Historie im Widerstreit* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003).

⁴³. See, e.g., *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islams*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2005); Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007).

⁴⁴. For an account of “objectivity” in terms of “asceticism,” see Thomas L. Haskell, “Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream*,” in Haskell, *Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), esp. 148-150.

also be fruitfully compared to moral virtues preached or practiced outside academia. An example of such a comparison can be found in Steven Shapin's *A Social History of Truth*, which investigates how notions of truthfulness among scholars in seventeenth-century England were closely related to codes of honor valued by British gentlemen at that time. Truthfulness was an epistemological virtue, but also a marker of a gentleman's identity.⁴⁵ On a more practical note, training in such ascetic virtues as self-discipline and impartiality has long been considered appropriate preparation for a life of public service. As early as the seventeenth century, antiquaries well-versed in the *ars historica* were perceived as possessing "the knowledge and the skills that were essential for running the civil and military bureaucracies of Europe's states."⁴⁶ Admittedly, as Hayden White would remind us, epistemic and moral virtues do not always fit neatly together. The discipline that championed virtues of intellectual openness was slow to learn to welcome women and people of color as equal members. And what did German historians, with all their ascetic character traits, do against the Nazification of their universities in the 1930s?⁴⁷ Relationships between epistemic and moral virtues may thus be complicated, confused, or conflicted. Precisely this, however, is a good reason to examine how virtues and vices celebrated and condemned by historians relate to moral ideals prevalent in their societies.

V

The suggestions made so far are historiographical proposals: they focus on what historians past and present understand to be standards for good performance in historical studies. My

⁴⁵. Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴⁶. Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 99.

⁴⁷. White raised these examples in the discussion following my presentation of a draft of this paper at the University of Rochester. On German historians under the Hitler regime, see *Versäumte Fragen: Deutsche Historiker im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Rüdiger Hohls and Konrad H. Jarausch (Stuttgart and Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000).

proposals assume that such standards can change over time and that scholars can cherish different sets of epistemic virtues. Although this assumption does not *a priori* exclude the possibility that historians past and present also share certain standards, or rely on epistemic virtues that philosophers might call “universal,” it encourages thick description and careful contextualization, so as to take into account the peculiarities of practices and epistemic cultures in which historians find themselves working. Instead of claiming that all history requires, say, “precision,” it tries to show that the virtue of precision meant something different to such figures as Langlois, Seignobos, Collingwood, and Wehler. My approach, then, resembles what is sometimes called a “modest” version of “descriptive philosophy of science,” which, unlike its stronger, “robust” counterpart, does not proceed from a normative view of what scholarship is, but examines how such normative views change over time. It does not distinguish, from a present-day perspective, between epistemic and non-epistemic (or truth-conducive and non-truth-conducive) virtues, but investigates how such distinctions are proposed, challenged, and defended in various contexts over time.⁴⁸

Nonetheless, if epistemic virtue is such a promising topic for historians of historiography, one may well wonder whether the same is true for philosophers of history. Can epistemic virtue become a master category, not unlike explanation in the days of Hempel and narrative in the era of White? In response to this question, two warnings must be issued at the outset. First, epistemic virtues are never the exclusive property of historians. As we saw above, histo-

⁴⁸. Gerard Holton and David Hull, “Descriptive Philosophies of Science,” in *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, ed. John Losee, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 265. The main difference between Tucker’s approach (see above, note 11) and mine might correspond to this distinction between “robust” and “modest” forms of descriptive philosophy of science. Whereas Tucker draws a normative distinction between “cognitive” and “therapeutic” values in historical studies (“Historiographic Revision,” 5), thereby taking sides with one group of historians (the “critical” ones) against another (the “uncritical” ones), I consider it more illuminating, and less prejudiced, to examine which epistemic virtues these groups do and do not share. More helpful, from my perspective, is one of Tucker’s older distinctions, between “traditionalist” and “critical” cognitive values (*Our Knowledge of the Past*, 46-53). Although “traditionalist” is a derogatory, pejorative label, Tucker at least seems to acknowledge that those identified with this label (Biblical scholars before Jean Astruc, J. G. Eichhorn, and W. M. L. de Wette) made knowledge-claims just as did “critical” students of Scripture. Obviously, the types of knowledge these groups of scholars produced were markedly different, but that is precisely what their different sets of epistemic virtues explain.

rians may well share their epistemic virtues with other scholars in the humanities. Consequently, a philosophy of epistemic virtues is always more than a philosophy of history: it also deals with other forms of knowledge-production. This, of course, is not necessarily a disadvantage. It only indicates that in addressing historians' epistemic virtues, philosophers of history do not deal with a distinct feature of historical knowledge. Second, epistemic virtues cannot be granted an all-explaining role in philosophy of history, if only because historical scholarship is an activity with many different aspects—especially if all the historians' "doings," varying from taking notes or conducting interviews to evaluating statistical data or checking names and dates, are considered. Each of these aspects requires different abilities and dispositions on the part of historians. Some of these skills, such as reading and writing, can well be conceptualized in terms of virtues and vices. But a statistical T-test is done either correctly or not: the test requires no specific virtuous behavior (except for accuracy in importing data). Also, it is not a matter of virtue to write that Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States, or a vice to say that he was number fifteen: such factual statements are simply true or false. Therefore, putting all one's cards on epistemic virtues would be a recipe for reductionism. It would risk downplaying the variety of skills, knowledges, and methods that historians bring to their work.⁴⁹

Yet, with this double caveat, I would suggest that epistemic virtues play a crucial role in what Mark Bevir calls an "anthropocentric epistemology." If post-positivist philosophy is right in assuming that human knowledge has an element of irreducible subjectivity, then knowledge can, at least to some extent, be seen as the product of a human practice. Accordingly, argues Bevir, if philosophers want to specify what counts as justified knowledge, they cannot limit the grounds of justification to what lies outside such human practices, or outside human subjectivity. Obviously, without that "outside" world, there would be nothing to know. But knowledge of the world depends on the knower at least as much as on the object that is known. Especially in scholarly contexts, knowledge claims must be evaluated. Choices between rival theories or insights have to be made. Judgments must be formed about differing interpretations. For Bevir, this implies that philosophers in search of an account of justified knowledge have to focus on scholarly practices of evaluation, choice, and judgment. They must focus on "a particular attitude or stance" that scholars take toward information, methods,

⁴⁹. Herman Paul, "Tegen reductionisme in de geschiedfilosofie: hypothesen over eenheid en verscheidenheid in de geschiedschrijving," *Groniek* 36 (2003), 501-514.

or models. “Epistemology must be anthropocentric.”⁵⁰

This is where epistemic virtues come in. For evaluations, choices, and judgments are “performances,” or rather, “doings” in which, ideally speaking, historians’ behavior conforms to standards for what counts as a solid evaluation of source material, a justified choice between rival theories, or a sound judgment on the relative plausibility of a historical interpretation.⁵¹ These standards, however, must be applied. Even if they are thoroughly internalized (along the lines sketched in section III), they still must be utilized, implemented, or adopted in the specific situation in which the historian is working. In other words, the scholarly “tools” that historians have at their disposal—to pick up Williams’s metaphor again—must be used judiciously. They require a well-developed faculty of judgment. Indeed, they call for epistemic virtues such as conscientiousness and fair-mindedness, or other virtues that in the circumstances of time and place are considered as characteristic of good evaluations, choices, and judgments. The better historians perform these virtues, the better they apply the prevalent standards of scholarship, and the better their work will be conceived to be. This, then, implies that an anthropocentric epistemology cannot do without epistemic virtues. Indeed, any philosophy of history interested in how historians evaluate knowledge claims, choose between rival interpretations, and judge the relative merits of historical judgments must develop an account of the epistemic virtues that historians apply in such evaluation, choice, and judgment.

Still, this is not to say that philosophers of history must become virtue epistemologists. For acknowledging that historians have to exercise certain epistemic virtues if they are to perform well (according to culturally determined standards of historical scholarship) is not the same as to argue, with contemporary virtue epistemology, that epistemic virtues are truth-conducive. As I indicated earlier, I am neutral as to the claim that scholars reach truth by the exercise of epistemic virtues. If Ernest Sosa, the alleged “father” of modern virtue epistemology, claims that epistemic virtues are valuable because they lead to truth,⁵² I would contextualize this claim by asking what sort of truth Sosa has in mind, and what sort of (culturally sanctioned)

⁵⁰. Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97.

⁵¹. Gorman, *Historical Judgement*, 86-91.

⁵². Ernest Sosa, “Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue,” in Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 225.

virtues correspond to his notion of truth. Therefore, my claim that philosophers of history ought to pay attention to the roles that epistemic virtues play in historical scholarship is considerably more modest than Sosa's claim that epistemic virtues lead to justified true belief. I do not say that justified true belief depends on epistemic virtues. Instead, I argue that the "doings" historians perform in evaluating, choosing, and judging require epistemic virtues, and that philosophers of history, in analyzing these "doings," need an account of epistemic virtues.

Bevir offers an example of what I have in mind when he construes the long-cherished ideal of "objectivity" in terms of "intellectual honesty."⁵³ If objectivity exists, it does so not as a feature of beliefs or statements, but as a feature of agents. After all, we do not normally say that books or articles are objective; we say that historians should strive to be objective. Whether they can reasonably hope to attain that ideal is another matter. In fact, then, objectivity may be more of a goal in the direction of which historians believe they ought to work than a standard that is met in practice. This is an additional reason to conceive of objectivity in terms of epistemic virtue. Just like the moral virtues of righteousness, fairness, and justice, objectivity is a regulative ideal.⁵⁴ Even though this ideal may be unachievable—who can ever claim to be fully righteous or entirely objective?—it serves as a point of orientation. It focuses the historians' research and provides a standard by which to measure their achievements. Consequently, in order to be considered "objective," historians need not reach the unreachable, but only have to practice the virtue of objectivity (or intellectual honesty, as Bevir suggests) to an extent considered sufficient by their peers. The historian's "doings," in the archive or at the writing desk, are virtuous performances guided by such regulative ideals.

Finally, having argued that epistemic virtues play an irreducible role in historical judgments and evaluations, and therefore deserve serious attention from philosophers of history, I would like to suggest that a number of interesting follow-up questions can be asked. I will not try to answer these questions on this occasion, but list them as elements of a research agenda for a philosophy of history interested in the performative dimensions of historical scholarship. First, then, my line of argument has tended more toward "description" than "prescription."

⁵³. Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 101.

⁵⁴. Dorothy Emmet, *The Role of the Unrealisable: A Study in Regulative Ideals* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

Although I have presented epistemic virtues as regulative ideals for historical scholarship, I have not argued that certain virtues *should* be adopted as ideals. Rather, I have argued that historical scholarship is *de facto* guided by epistemic virtues, although not necessarily always by the same sets of virtues. The question, then, is whether we can conceive of such virtues in hierarchical terms. Are certain virtues, such as objectivity in Bevir's sense of the word, more fundamental to the historian's work, and therefore less subject to change, than others?

Second, are there any rational criteria for judging epistemic virtues? On what grounds might one prefer the virtues nurtured in Wehler's *historische Sozialwissenschaft* over the philological ethos of late nineteenth-century historical studies, or vice versa?⁵⁵ Third, how would it be possible to conceive of such a choice, given the sociological observations made in section III above? Do epistemic virtues, like the metahistorical approaches White identified in *Metahistory*, function as strong scholarly conventions?⁵⁶ To what extent, then, can changes of epistemic virtues be understood in voluntaristic terms, as choices of individual historians? Fourth, what sort of view of human selfhood is tacitly presupposed in the approach that this article suggests? Does an analysis of historical scholarship through the prism of epistemic virtues conceive of historians as "selves" capable of carrying out self-governance and self-development? In other words, how "strong" is the subject presupposed in the idea of virtuous performance?⁵⁷ And, finally, how wide is the explanatory scope of the category of epistemic virtue? How does it relate to, and interact with, other conceptualizations of historical scholar-

⁵⁵. An interesting but ultimately rather unsatisfactory attempt to specify such criteria for the natural sciences can be found in Larry Laudan, *Science and Values: The Aims of Science and Their Role in Scientific Debate* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984), 50-62.

⁵⁶. For this interpretation of White's *magnum opus*, see Herman Paul, "Hayden White and the Crisis of Historicism," in *Re-Figuring Hayden White*, ed. Frank Ankersmit, Ewa Doma ska, and Hans Kellner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 54-73 as well as my book-length study, *Hayden White: A Philosophy of History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, forthcoming).

⁵⁷. With Bevir, I would reject "atomic individualism," "without thereby denying the ability of human beings to act creatively in any given social context" (*Logic of the History of Ideas*, 33). In more hermeneutic fashion, Pickering beautifully speaks about a "dance of agency," in which scholarly performances are the outcomes of reciprocal interactions among researchers, their instruments, their objects of study, and their environments (*Mangle of Practice*, 21-22).

ship, focused on language, discourse, experience, or models of reasoning? If these relations can be clarified, philosophy of history might eventually become a philosophy, not merely of explanations and narrative discourse, but of historical performances, that is, of historical scholarship in action.

Leiden University,

The Netherlands