

tions), mais encore des réseaux personnels (à travers des correspondances et des voyages, par exemple), ou des liens plus épisodiques (tels ceux qui se créèrent à l'occasion d'une souscription). Dans cette même perspective, les recueils, les biographies collectives, les périodiques (notamment par le biais de la collecte de l'information) seraient l'objet d'enquêtes, ainsi que certaines pratiques de recherche (tels les réseaux mis en place par les astronomes pour leurs observations). On s'intéresserait également aux dédicaces, aux préfaces et à ces liminaires, tels les poèmes et autres pièces écrits en l'honneur de l'auteur par ses amis, autant de documents qui constituent un excellent moyen — et parfois, le seul — pour étudier le lien social dans les milieux intellectuels. Une telle recherche permettrait, à mon sens, de mieux saisir la réalité de la circulation des idées et, au delà, la dynamique même du monde savant à l'époque moderne. Elle amènerait, entre autres, à souligner la part d'une dimension orale dans les échanges intellectuels : en dépit du triomphe de la civilisation de l'imprimé, l'oralité conserva une place non négligeable, place que l'historiographie n'a pas encore saisie dans sa véritable dimension, qu'il s'agisse de la leçon universitaire, de la lecture académique ou de la conversation entre doctes. Cette recherche permettrait également de saisir le rapport dialectique qui exista entre culture savante et culture mondaine. L'historiographie — et je pense ici au cas particulier de la France — a opposé les deux formes de culture ; or, les textes mêmes permettent de saisir leurs liens réciproques, voire l'osmose qui se produit entre elles : je pense, par exemple, aux Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes de Fontenelle ; et comment comprendre plainement les Philosophes et les Lumières sans les salons ?

Topics in the History of Scholarship

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I have selected two topics in the history of scholarship as possible conference subjects. They are connected with a seminar I am running at the Warburg Institute on the history of scholarship c.1550–c.1750.

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The first topic is *historia litteraria*. The term rings few bells today. What political correctness would make of it is anybody's guess. Its only trace in modern usage, as far as I can see, is when one speaks of the literature of a subject.

My example is Christoph August Heumann. I have chosen Heumann because his role in the heyday of *historia litteraria*—the first half of the eighteenth century—is both central and problematic. In 1718 Heumann published what he is probably best known for: *Conspectus reipublicae litterariae, sive via ad historiam litterariam iuventuti studiosae aperta*, 'a survey of the republic of letters, or the way opened for the studious young to *historia litteraria*'. It went through eight editions spread over the entire century. The two parts of the title add up to a major programmatic statement: the written discourse of the republic of letters is *historia litteraria*. The work has five headings: (1) on the art of writing; (2) on the origin of *studia litteraria*, how they spread, and through what vicissitudes they have come down to us; (3) on the disciplines, their growth and decline; (4) on books of all kinds; (5) on authors. This brings together topics that will subsequently separate.

For Heumann every discipline, be it grammar, mathematics, or theology, has a *historia litteraria* of its own, which is indispensable to it, an antidote against dogmatism and the cult of authority. 'It is worth noting', says Heumann, 'that in former centuries'—he has the Middle Ages in mind—'in which the study of *historia litteraria* was frozen, philosophers followed with blind faith, in the manner of sheep, their Aristotle, as did jurisconsults their Bartolus, and theologians their Thomas.' Today, with *historia litteraria* flourishing, not only philosophers but jurisconsults, historians, doctors of medicine, philologists, and indeed theologians have become eclectics and solidly learned. Thus *historia litteraria* is the light of truth and the mother of intellectual freedom (1763 edn, p. 5 n. (h)).

But the standpoint from which this liberation through learning was offered remained unreflected, and this soon showed. *Historia litteraria* turned out not to be confessionally neutral. Heumann asks quite unabashedly whether, had

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historia litteraria existed in the Middle Ages, the papacy would have been quite so politically oppressive as it in fact was. Moreover—and here I follow the very attractive thesis presented by Walter Sparr at the colloquium on eighteenth-century biblical exegesis held at Wolfenbüttel in 1985¹—Heumann’s conclusions on the Eucharist, which brought him into conflict with his colleagues at the Theological Faculty of Göttingen, exposed the limitations and signalled the demise of the kind of tolerant eclecticism on which *historia litteraria* was predicated.

To sum up, both systematically (by virtue of what it held together) and historically (the determinants of its dissolution, and the consequent redistribution of its components) *historia litteraria* invites further study.

The other topic is history and law. In spite of the pioneering work of Donald Kelley (*Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law and History in the French Renaissance*, 1970) and Notker Hammerstein (*Jus und Historia: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historischen Denkens an deutschen Universitäten im späten 17. und im 18. Jahrhundert*, 1972) law, the history of law, and history in law continue to be a specialist domain, not readily entered in historical, especially historiographical studies. This estrangement masks a common past, and is perhaps the consequence of an attempted marriage in the seventeenth century which gave rise to a divorce at the beginning of the eighteenth.

Taking up the ideas of sixteenth-century French lawyers, Johann Eisenhart proposed a *dextrarum iunctio* between history and law at the University of Helmstedt in 1667. While jurisprudence was then a fully-fledged, self-governing discipline, history was not—and was not to become one for another century. It served other disciplines as a common repository of materials. The match with law was unequal, and when Eisenhart attempted to build on it in

his treatise on *fides historica* (the purpose of which was to determine the nature of valid historical proof, that is, to vindicate history not merely as a treasury of examples but as a bearer of truth) he based his demonstration on formal criteria used to establish the validity as proof of historiographical material in courts of law. This left entire the problem of the substantive truthfulness or otherwise of historical accounts, and at the turn of the century Christian Thomasius, using the Pyrrhonist mode, had no difficulty in showing that Eisenhart’s proofs were no proofs at all.

Thomasius never tired of insisting on the importance of history as a basis for law. He had no conception of the autonomy of history: in relation to law its role was crucial but subordinate. Nonetheless, Thomasius released it from its subjection to legal standards by differentiating between *fides historica* and *fides iuridica*. The latter was bound by rules, the former was not. Thomasius deplorably recognized the operation of the latter as a fact of life, but his intellectual, indeed spiritual sympathies lay with the discretionary skepticism he postulated for the former. A great jurist and a determined secularist, Thomasius was also a radical Lutheran. His conception of law was inspired by Pauline antilegalism. He wanted to clear law of what he considered as Caesaropapist distortions, which had converted into a system of peremptory rules what, before Justinian, before Constantine, indeed before Christianity grown papal began to take it over, had been—and should be—a body of opinion. This implied the same epistemological status for law as the one postulated for history: the servant cut the master down to size. Thomasius held that neither history nor law could aspire to apodeictic certainty. The appropriate level for both was that of informed probability.

The implications of this epistemological modesty for the various procedures of *fides historica* were worked out within a few years out by Friedrich Wilhelm Bierling in his *De iudicio historico* and *Commentatio de Pyrrhonismo historico*. No type of historical material was free of the *formido oppositi*, the fear that the opposite might be the case. But what it could offer, if only at the level of probability, bore on fact, not on the formality of its attestation. It was a cool and cloudy dawn of what half a century later became a sunny day for history, when it began to establish its autonomy in the school of Göttingen. The vicissitudes of its relationship with law offer another field for further investigation.

¹ ‘Philosophische Historie und dogmatische Heterodoxie: der Fall des Exegeten Christoph August Heumann’, in *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 171 ff.