

What Became of Cultural Historicism in the French Reclamation of Strasbourg After World War One?

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There is an inherent obstacle to understanding how surges of great momentum have occurred in the history of historiographic epistemology: Enterprising scholars at the helm of such movements typically announce their approach as the arrival of a “new history.”¹ “New” was the designation that the German cultural historian Karl Lamprecht gave to his work in the eighteen-eighties,² just as Peter Burke, Lynn Hunt, Joan Scott and others proclaimed the advent of the “new cultural history” some hundred odd years later.³ When we consider how the work of such historians indeed coincided with radical changes in historiographic practice for a particular generation, it is tempting to accept that the novelty of their own self-construction explains the generative momentum of their work. But there are good reasons to look sceptically at such claims, or else we risk reducing the history of historiography to a simplistic story of inventions and ruptures in the steady teleological march toward a better way of knowing the past.

There is no doubt that the *Annales* founders, and many of their followers, have had a profound impact on the practices and approaches of countless historians throughout the twentieth century and beyond, and not only in France. But the historiographic

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¹ Ignacio Olabarri, “‘New’ New History: A longue durée structure,” *History and Theory* 34, 1 (February 1995): 1-29.

² K. Lamprecht, “Was ist Kulturgeschichte? Beitrag zu einer empirischen Historik,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1 (1896), 75-150. E. W. Dow, “Features of the New History: A Propos of Lamprecht’s ‘Deutsche Geschichte’,” *The American Historical Review* 3 (1898): 431-448.

³ Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989); V. Bonnell and L. Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, 1999); Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Oxford, 2004).

innovations of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre were not a rupture with their fathers or teachers, and nor did they emerge solely from within the French intellectual context. The expanding scope of historical knowledge in France and its emergent plenitude as a broadly human science had begun well before the arrival of Bloch and Febvre, and it fomented in dialogue and in competition with parallel movements in German historiography in particular. That dialogue proved to be fraught as the rising nationalist tensions perverted scholarly practices on both side of the Rhine, especially in the years just prior to the First World War. Neither Bloch nor Febvre were immune from this ambiance, and their native origins in the contested regions of Alsace and the Lorraine placed an additional pressure on their relationship to German historical scholarship. This paper is a reflection upon some of the Franco-Germanic contexts that we might consider to have a bearing upon the historical epistemology of the *Annales* founders and on their own later accounts of how their vision of history-making came to be, particularly in the view of Febvre who, unlike Bloch, survived the Nazi occupation of France.

Bloch and Febvre occupied subjective positions within an impossible tension between, on the one hand, their combatant experience against the German forces of World War One, their identification with Alsace-Lorraine as French, their contempt for certain forms of German political history; and on the other hand, their very deepest intellectual commitments to cosmopolitanism and to the transcendence of the nation as a framework for the study of historical processes. Bloch moreover, had grown up, in an assimilated Jewish family during the height of the Dreyfus Affair, surrounded by anti-Semitic claims about French Jews as a corrupt wedge against the nation in its struggle for cultural and military supremacy over the Germans. Bloch and Febvre could neither confess their indebtedness to German intellectual traditions, nor bear to give an inch to the nationalistic xenophobia of the day. What they could only do was simply to ignore their relationship to Germanic historiographic thought and say nothing about the effect on their view of German scholarship produced by the bitter conflict in which they themselves had been soldiers. This paper has emerged from a curiosity paradoxically fuelled not by what Bloch or Febvre said about the new German trends, but rather by what was not said.

After Bloch's death at the hands of the Gestapo, Febvre appeared to excise all mention of German thinkers from his writing, and it was in the period after the Second World war until his death in 1956 that he mostly accounted for his place in historiography as the champion of a new movement against the old regime of a dominant Rankean political history that supposedly held total sway throughout Europe until the *Annales* had come along.⁴ That account has been echoed repeatedly in a large array of historiographic surveys published in the last two decades of the twentieth century.⁵ Such visions of Rankean historiography have become something of cliché, not least, as Georg Iggers notes, because they ignore the surprisingly broad conception of historical objects in the writing of Ranke himself who produced work well beyond the naive narration of political

⁴ Lucien Febvre, *A New Kind of History, and other essays*, ed. Peter Burke and K. Folca (New York, 1973); Lucien Febvre, *Combats pour l'Histoire* (Paris, 1952).

⁵ Norman Wilson, *History in Crisis?: Recent Directions in Historiography*, second edition (Upper Saddle River NJ, 2005); John Tosh and Sean Lang, *The Pursuit of History*, fourth edition (Harlow, 2006); Keith Jenkins, Susan Morgan and Alan Munslow, eds., *Manifestos for History* (London, 2007).

facts.⁶ Moreover, the scientific reductionist view of history has been attributed to Ranke in spite of remarks in his work that explicitly suggest otherwise, such as in the 1830 manuscript “On the Character of Historical Science,” which began with the sentence, “History is distinguished from all others sciences in that it is also an art.”⁷ Nor is there any evidence that the Bloch or Febvre were reacting against Ranke’s influence on French historiography prior to the rise of the *Annales*.

The British cultural historian and historiographer Peter Burke is one whose accounts have tended to perpetuate the myth that culture and society had not been discovered by historians until the *Annales* appeared, championing Bloch and Febvre as the leaders of a “French Historical Revolution.”⁸ However that assessment is incongruous in light of the historicization of the *Annales* that Burke has also admitted in more recent work, in which he has noted the steadily expanding scope of social and cultural histories in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the work of the Swiss mid-century historian of the Renaissance Jacob Burckhardt, of Jules Michelet, and later of Karl Lamprecht in Germany and James Harvey Robinson in the U.S. Most saliently, even in the immediately preceding intellectual milieus of Bloch and Febvre’s own scholarly formation, there was a rich set of precedents to their conclusions about the expansion of history into culture. Here we might acknowledge the work of the medievalist Numa Fustel de Coulanges, the role of the philosopher Henri Berr in engendering interdisciplinary dialogue between history, philosophy and anthropology, and Emile Durkheim’s writings on history in relation to the emergent social sciences. Overlooked in Burke’s account, but well documented by Donald Kelley, Geneviève Warland and others, the *Annales* also owed much to the example and support of the Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne, who in turn was closely connected to the German cultural historiographic movement as exemplified by Karl Lamprecht.⁹

In a similar vein to Burke, George Huppert has characterised Febvre as someone who “rejected established ways of doing history and ridiculed academic historians as laborious compilers of the obvious.”¹⁰ While it is undeniably true that Febvre made constant remarks about the deadened quality of university historical studies and scathingly critiqued the banality of what he famously termed “histoire événementielle,” he was hardly the first to take such a position; nor was the kind of historical plenitude he invoked either a new expression of historiographic epistemology or an especially French innovation. The invocation of a “une histoire vivante” (living history) counterpoised to “l’érudition morte” (dead erudition), terms for which Febvre is well known, was also a favourite device of Pirenne in his description of German political historians and peppered

⁶ Georg G. Iggers, “Introduction,” in Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History* (London, 2011).

⁷ Ranke, “On the Character of Historical Science,” in *The Theory and Practice of History*, 8.

⁸ Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution, The Annales 1929-1989* (Stanford, 1990).

⁹ Donald R. Kelley, *Fortunes of History: Historical Inquiry from Herder to Huizinga* (New Haven, 2003); Geneviève Warland, “Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht’s *Kulturgeschichte*: Intellectual transfer or *théorie fumeuse*?” *Journal of Belgian History* 41 (3-4): 427-455; Olabarri, “‘New’ New History”, 8.

¹⁰ George Huppert, “The Annales Experiment,” in *Companion to Historiography* ed. Michael Bentley (London, 1997), 856

his correspondence in support of an embattled Karl Lamprecht during the eighteenth-nineties.¹¹

The challenge of historicising culture and society was in fact a fashionable, if controversial, topic in a number of different and intersecting European intellectual circles throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. One context that needs to be considered in an appreciation of the emergence of the *Annales* concerns the German cultural historiographic genealogy to which both Bloch and Febvre were undoubtedly exposed in their youth and which heavily fore-grounded the history of culture, society and economy.

Karl Lamprecht had closely studied the work of the Swiss scholar of Italian Renaissance history Jacob Burckhardt, and he credited Burckhardt with inspiring his own fascination with the pursuit of a holistic account of past cultures.¹² Lamprecht was a renowned Saxon medievalist in his own time, and taught at the universities of both Marburg and then Leipzig in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth. He was attacked by a number of his contemporaries for his multi-disciplinary approach to the Middle Ages and early modern era. Late in his career, in 1909, he founded his own *Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte* in Leipzig. His magnum opus, entitled ambitiously *Deutsche Geschichte*, spanned a vast array of topics on social relations, natural geography, psychology and literature.¹³ Debates about this work among his compatriot disciplinary colleagues marked a profound rupture in German historiography in which the broad culturalist approach to the past that Lamprecht exemplified became officially anathema to many professional historians. In the infamous *Methodenstreit* (methodology quarrel) that raged in the last decade of the nineteenth century, political historians such as Georg von Below, Dietrich Schäfer and Friederich Meinecke attacked Lamprecht's claims to innovation, his undisciplined approach and his use of sociological and psychological models of analysis in studies of past culture. Most dubiously, Lamprecht advanced the idea of cultures having a kind of psychology, a *Volksseele* or *Völkerpsychologie* – collective psyche – an idea that Meinecke ridiculed for its speculative and romantic foundations which he counterpoised to the respectable study of political events that dominated his own work and stood at the centre of German historiographic thinking in the period.¹⁴

German academic cultures were marked by a drift toward nationalism in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century following the unification of Germany under Prussian domination. That ambiance became increasingly contagious around the time of the First World War. Both German and French intellectuals underwent considerable pressure from journalists, political opponents and colleagues to manifest an unambiguous nationalism – a pressure that Lamprecht, like Emile Durkheim in France, tried to resist while maintaining a softer cultural patriotism. Meinecke's critique of Lamprecht in particular focused on these kinds of questions: Cosmopolitanism was a lower stage in the evolution of culture toward nationalism, and a scientific conception of history in the style

¹¹ See Warland, "Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*," 432.

¹² Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856-1915)* (Atlantic Highlands, 1993), 53; Lamprecht, "Was ist Kulturgeschichte?"

¹³ Karl Lamprecht, *Deutsche Geschichte erste und zweite Auflage* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1905).

¹⁴ See Kelley, *Fortunes of History*, 304-306.

of Ranke (as he imagined it) represented the pinnacle of academic maturity.¹⁵ Lamprecht, with his careless mysticism, his fascination with cross-cultural comparison, and his multi-disciplinary borrowings helped Meinecke to see how nationalism and scientific historical specialization might be linked. As Roger Chickering noted, “In Meinecke’s eyes, the development of national consciousness corresponded to the maturation of German historiography.”¹⁶

The *Methodenstreit* was reported in French and Belgian circles. Hence, solely on the basis Lamprecht’s fame throughout Europe at the turn of the century, and his positive reception in France during Febvre’s youth, it is credible to situate the *Annales* within the same intellectual genealogy of cultural historicism that began with Burckhardt and continued through Lamprecht and his students. Furthermore, Febvre himself claimed Jacob Burckhardt among the principle influences on his approach, along with Jules Michelet and Jean Jaurès.¹⁷ Lamprecht too credited Burckhardt with inspiring his own fascination with the pursuit a holistic account of past cultures.¹⁸

Bloch spent the year from 1908-9 in Germany and followed the lectures of Karl Lamprecht at Leipzig.¹⁹ However, his correspondence from this time reveals little of his thoughts about that experience. Ernst Cassirer, Roger Chickering and Georg Iggers all agreed that Lamprecht was a poor exemplar for the opening of historiography toward cultural concerns.²⁰ He had exciting ideas, but he executed them badly. And yet something about his work, like that of Burckhardt, was generative to a large number of scholars who either despised his approach or imagined how they could do it better. It is likely that Bloch and Febvre were among the latter. Lamprecht’s “*Volkseele*” bore many elements in common both with the later “*Begriffsgeschichte*” of Rienhard Kosselleck, but also with the notion of “*l’histoire des mentalities*,” first proposed by Febvre in the nineteen-twenties and later elaborated by *Annales*-associated historians such as Michel Vovelle, Jacques le Goff, Robert Mandrou and others.²¹

The emergence of cultural anthropology in the second half of the twentieth-century and its spectacular adoption by the younger *Annales* generation displaced the earlier influences with a more elaborate language of ritual, text and “thick description.”²² But Bloch in particular had already made such interdisciplinary crossings in the nineteen-twenties through his uptake of the ideas of both the ethnographer Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and the sociologist Emile Durkheim.²³

Around the time of the German *Historikerstreit*, France was witness to a movement against what young historians at that time termed “positivism.” That movement had in fact begun the generation before Bloch and Febvre. The positivist

¹⁵ F. Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, trans R. B. Kimber (Princeton, 1970 [1908]).

¹⁶ Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht*, 261.

¹⁷ Burke, *The French Historical Revolution*, 13.

¹⁸ Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht*, 53; K. Lamprecht, “Was ist Kulturgeschichte?,” 75-150.

¹⁹ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 52.

²⁰ Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge; Philosophy, Science, and History Since Hegel*, trans W. H. Woglom and C. W. Hendel (New Haven, 1950), 281; Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht*; xiii; G. Iggers, “The Historian Banished: Karl Lamprecht in Imperial Germany,” *Central European History*, 27 (1994): 92.

²¹ Michel Vovelle, *Idéologies et mentalities* (Paris, 1992); Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris, 1981); Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1968).

²² André Burguière, *L’École des Annales: Une histoire intellectuelle* (Paris, 2006).

²³ Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 108-111.

vision of history as the scientific recovery of political facts was modelled by Philippe Buchez' 1833 *Introduction à la science de l'histoire*.²⁴ This text had been heavily critiqued already by Bloch's teacher Charles Seignobos in the manual *Introduction aux études historiques* which he authored with Charles-Victor Langlois in 1898. That was one year before Lucien Febvre began his doctoral studies at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and five years before Bloch had graduated from the Lycée Louis le Grand.²⁵ The Seignobos/Langlois manual presented a view of historical method that was unmistakably hermeneutic and interpretative, and the second part of the manual, penned by Seignobos alone, emphasised the inevitable separation of the historian from facts about the past, mediated by textual analysis. He concluded, "La méthode de la science historique doit donc différer radicalement de celle des sciences directes."²⁶

As Hans Dieter Mann's biography of Febvre emphasises, the historical epistemology of Seignobos still rested heavily on historicist techniques of close documentary reading, and it prescribed historical practice according to a precise set of methodical precepts.²⁷ Febvre, unlike Bloch, viewed that constraint as hangover of German positivism, what he termed, "l'histoire des vaincus de 1870."²⁸ In fact, it had been part of French academic traditions from the time of the July monarchy. Philippe Buchez, to whom Langlois and Seignobos were opposed, was a Saint-Simonian and Christian Socialist who had developed his own brand of scientific political historicism through a highly interdisciplinary education in medical sciences, history and politics, not through any kind of mimesis of Ranke.²⁹ Carolina Amenteros suggests credibly that Buchez' positivism was influenced most by Auguste Comte.³⁰ And while Ranke's fame had certainly spread to France in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is not clear if in the eighteen-thirties and forties Buchez or others of his generation were at all aware of their German contemporary's epistemology.

Nor was Ranke in particular the target of Langlois and Seignobos, whose gripes against the philosophy of history were more directed against Hegelian thought and were to do with its abstraction from practical historical methods. They viewed that tendency as a misguided European-wide phenomenon, though there was no doubt that the Germans excelled in it. They were sharp critics of Ernst Bernheim, author of the influential *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* of 1894. At the same time, their emphasis on systematising the methodology of source criticism and event interpretation bore much in common with Bernheim's *Lehrbuch*.³¹

In 1893 a new German journal, *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, was devoted entirely to the history of social life and economic

²⁴ P.J.B Buchez, *Introduction à la science de l'histoire* (Paris, 1842), 2 vols.

²⁵ Charles-Victor Langlois et Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris, 1898). Hans Dieter Mann, *Lucien Febvre la pensée vivante d'un historien* (Paris, 1971).

²⁶ Langlois et Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques*, 38.

²⁷ Hans-Dieter Mann, *Lucien Febvre: La pensée vivante d'un historien* (Paris, 1971).

²⁸ Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch, A Life in History* (Cambridge, 1989), 137.

²⁹ Robert Flint, *Philosophy of History in Europe* (London, 1874), 242-252.

³⁰ Carolina Amenteros, *The French Idea of History: Joseph De Maistre and His Heirs, 1794-1854* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 297.

³¹ Langlois et Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques*, 9.

forces.³² Bloch, who was a fluent German speaker, evidently read it, and Carole Fink, in her biography of Bloch, suggests that the *Annales* were heavily inspired by its model of an interdisciplinary journal of social and economic historical scope.³³ The renowned Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne, whom Bloch and Febvre both greatly admired, was on the editorial board of the *Vierteljahrsschrift*, along with an impressive international array of scholars from most parts of Europe apart from France.³⁴ Bloch and Febvre consulted closely with the elder Pirenne in the planning stages of the *Annales*. Pirenne in turn had been heavily influenced by Karl Lamprecht.³⁵ His correspondence with Lamprecht and collaborations with him throughout the eighteen-eighties and nineties have been well established by Geneviève Warland.³⁶ After 1914 though, Pirenne turned away from Lamprecht in disgust at the drift of the latter's vision of culture toward an assertion of German national continuity.³⁷

But perhaps most significantly, the very meeting of Bloch and Febvre, as well as the heady excitement of interdisciplinary aspirations that gave rise ultimately to the *Annales*, was enabled by the return of Alsace to France at the end of the First World War. In December 1918, the French occupying army in Strasbourg closed the *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität* and expelled all the German scholars who worked there.³⁸ A movement en masse of French scholars now found position there – among them both Febvre and Bloch who both embraced wholeheartedly the project of “*la francisation*” of the University of Strasbourg, as their correspondence of this period reveals.³⁹ Bloch's teacher, the historian Christian Pfister, headed both the government report and later commission on the revival of French language and culture at the University of Strasbourg.⁴⁰ A new divide emerged in this time between French and German scholars who had previously engaged in a fruitful, if competitive, dialogue. For many natives of these regions, the German attempt to make Strasbourg a thoroughly German city had been suffered with much bitterness, and its demise was exuberantly celebrated. Febvre, born and raised in Nancy in the Lorraine, still referred with great resentment in his later writing to the German presence in Alsace-Lorraine from 1870 to 1918.⁴¹

In French scholars' accounts of the reclamation of the University of Strasbourg and the previous German efforts at building an intellectual culture there were systematically denigrated, while in the German sources, the expulsion was righteously bemoaned.⁴² Hence it is difficult to judge just how much the destruction of the faculty that was forced to depart in 1919 might be considered a genuine loss to intellectual

³² Burke, *The French Historical Revolution*, 8.

³³ Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 130.

³⁴ Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 133-134.

³⁵ Bryce Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent, 1974).

³⁶ Warland, “Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*.”

³⁷ Warland, “Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*.” 433.

³⁸ Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 83.

³⁹ Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, *Les Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale. Correspondance, tome 1, 1928-1933*, ed. Bertran Müller (Paris, 1994), xix.

⁴⁰ Fink, *Marc Bloch*, 82.

⁴¹ Febvre, *Combats pour l'histoire*, 177.

⁴² Gustave Lanson, “La renaissance de l'université de Strasbourg,” *Revue Universitaire* 28 (1919): 323-326; Martin Spahn, “Die letzten Tage des Zusammenbruchs,” *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 29 (December 1931): 224-231.

heritage. Given the nationalistic agendas that were at the heart of the Wilhelmine culture-building project in Strasbourg, it is likely that the University was in fact home to a large number of the kind of Germano-centric and rigid political historians that the cosmopolitan French thinkers most despised.⁴³

There is some evidence, however, that in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the University of Strasbourg had in fact housed an array of innovative, even controversial German scholars, such as the pioneering economist and historian Gustav Schmoller who had held a post as professor at the University of Strasbourg from 1872-1882. Schmoller was a central influence on Henri Pirenne, who attended Schmoller's lectures in Berlin in the eighteen-eighties and was probably more singularly responsible than any other scholar for popularising economic historiographic approaches.⁴⁴ The German Jewish philologist and historian of ancient Rome and Greece Richard Laqueur had earned his doctorate in classics from the University in 1903 and was appointed professor there two years later. Like Bloch and Febvre, he fought throughout the First World War, only on the German side.⁴⁵ He avoided being among the expelled German professors of 1919 because he obtained another post at Giessen at the very end of the war.⁴⁶ He was among a considerable cohort of German historians of the same generation as Bloch and Febvre who had likewise turned away from the political history of facts towards the fashionable new branch of economic history, inspired by the work Gustav Schmoller. But the *Annales* historians had no contact with him, neither before they hypothetically fired at one another over the top of trenches, nor certainly after.

In 1919 German professors of the University of Leipzig protested the Strasbourg expulsions to the deans of universities around the world, receiving a generally unsympathetic response. German troops had behaved especially abominably in that region at the outbreak of the war, committing atrocities against civilian populations and burning the inestimably valuable university library of Louvain to the ground in a show of German cultural supremacy.⁴⁷ German scholars were weakly positioned to claim that such acts had little to do with them: 93 professors, Karl Lamprecht and Gustav Schmoller among them, had signed the manifesto of October 1914 defending their nation's war-mongering as a righteous defence of German *Kultur*.⁴⁸ The rupture of academic collegiality in this time, though most poignantly salient in Alsace-Lorraine, was not unique to the Franco-Germanic relationship. As Robert Anderson, notes, the succumbing of so many German scholars to bellicose nationalism in 1914 shattered esteem for German erudition internationally, and European universities never again regained a sense

⁴³ John E. Craig, *Scholarship and Nation Building: The universities of Strasbourg and Alsatian society, 1870-1939* (Chicago, 1984).

⁴⁴ Warland, "Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*," 435.

⁴⁵ Joseph Sievers, "Herod, Josephus, and Laqueur: A Reconsideration," in *Herod and Augustus, Studies in Judaica 6*, ed. David M. Jacobson and Nikos Kokkinos (Leiden, 2009), 84.

⁴⁶ Karl Christ, *Römische Geschichte und deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft* (Munich, 1982), 176.

⁴⁷ "German Professors Kicked Across the Rhine," *The Literary Digest* (10 May 1919): 30.

⁴⁸ Manifesto of the Ninety-Three German Intellectuals, http://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Manifesto_of_the_Ninety-Three_German_Intellectuals (accessed 18 April 2012).

of shared intellectual values such as that which had sporadically flourished since the late Middle Ages.⁴⁹

Febvre and Bloch had both fought four long years in the First World War.⁵⁰ Following their return from combat there appears to have been no further contact with the German cultural historiographic movement which their project so closely resembled and with which they had previously been at least momentarily associated. Karl Lamprecht had died in 1915, but there were other followers of Jacob Burckhardt in Leipzig around the German Jewish polymath Aby Warburg, a student of Lamprecht, whose Renaissance art and document collection attracted large numbers of art historians of the Vienna School during the nineteen-twenties. At the turn of century Warburg travelled to the U.S. and undertook ethnographic research into Native American cultures, in particular the Hopi Indians of the South-West, and developed his own unique style of “iconology,” a system of reading images and symbols within a kind of anthropological contextualisation.⁵¹ Despite their shared interest in anthropological methods, the Warburg group and the *Annales* historians appear to have had no contact with one another, though they had a friend in common in the Dutch philologist, sociologist and cultural historian Johan Huizinga.⁵²

While Lucien Febvre’s exploration of the place of cultural psychology in historiography was not unlike Lamprecht’s notion of *Volksseele*, one important distinction was that Febvre’s version rejected the mystical framework of the nation as the basis of collective psyche, and he was consistently critical of that approach. Throughout his life Febvre remained committed to a cosmopolitan outlook, and rejected the notion of long histories constituted in national terms, declaring a “cardinal virtue of the historian” to be “Ce refus de prendre comme postulat une sorte nécessité perpétuelle des nations et des formations politiques, supposées permanents de droit à travers les siècles.”⁵³ Both he and Bloch despised the cynical attempt by numerous German historians to write the past of the German nation as story of destiny and continuity, and the cooption of German cultural and economic historians into that agenda at the outbreak of the war may have further driven the French scholars away from even acknowledging them.

It is perhaps rather unsurprising that the *Annales* historians tended to minimize their common ground with the German *Kulturgeschichte* and economic history movements given the bitterness and traumas of the tensely nationalist hostilities between France and Germany, localized specifically in their own native regions. But it is worth noticing this silence for the implication it bears on the historical understanding of social, and in particular, cultural histories’ own origins. The *Annales* must certainly feature in any genealogy of ideas about cultural historiographic epistemology, but the historicity of

⁴⁹ R.D. Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914* (Oxford, 2004), 293.

⁵⁰ George Huppert, “Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch: The Creation of the *Annales*,” *The French Review* 55 (1983), 511.

⁵¹ A. Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans D. Britt (Los Angeles, 1999); Aby Warburg, “A Lecture on Serpent Ritual,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 4 (1939): 277-292.

⁵² Lucien Febvre, “Préface,” in Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus*, trans V. Bruncel (Paris, 1955). Ernst Gombrich, “Huizinga’s Homo Ludens,” in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden. Deel 88* (Haag, 1973), 275-296.

⁵³ Febvre, *Combats pour l’Histoire*, 98.

that trend itself warrants revision. Indeed the earlier German and French traditions may have been a much more important part of the *Annales* School's own intellectual genealogy than is commonly recognized. French and German historians inhabited a shared community of thought across a period of at least 40 years, but the conflicting relations between their nation states produced a rupture in historical accounts of their common genealogy.

Many recent accounts of cultural historiography have continually emphasized its recent popularity as the "new" trend in historical thinking, with the *Annales* referenced as the oldest precedent to current forms.⁵⁴ While it is certainly true that cultural historians nowhere occupied a position of dominance before the very end of the twentieth century, it is also inaccurate to suggest that following the genealogy linking Burckhardt to Lamprecht, no link existed from Lamprecht to the *Annales*.

While we might wonder how much less inspiring historical study might have been were it not for Febvre and Bloch's footprint, there is reason to believe that neither of them would be offended to think that we might doubt their testimonies of the *Annales'* intellectual origins. Bloch in the 1949 work, penned much earlier in the century, entitled *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien*, remarked:

Nous sommes désormais capables à la fois de déceler et d'expliquer les imperfections du témoignage; nous avons acquis le droit de ne pas le croire toujours, parce que nous savons mieux que par le passé quand et pourquoi il ne doit pas être cru.⁵⁵

We are enabled henceforth both to expose and to explain the imperfections of evidence. We have acquired the right of disbelief, because we understand better than in the past when and why we ought to disbelieve.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Peter Burke, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Cultural History," *Cultural History* 1(2012): 1-13.

⁵⁵ Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Paris, 1949), 66

⁵⁶ March Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (Manchester, 1954), 136.