

# Henri Pirenne and Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*

## Intellectual transfer or *théorie fumeuse*?

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Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) and Henri Pirenne (1862-1935) are regarded as two of the finest historians in German and Belgian historiography at the turn of the 20th century. Lamprecht was a professor at the University of Leipzig (1891-1915), while Pirenne held the same post at the University of Ghent (1889-1930). They worked to expand historical research into the study of economic and social issues. They not only used new types of archives but also employed new methods of statistical analysis. A few illustrations of their innovative spirit are Lamprecht's book, *Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter*<sup>2</sup>, and Pirenne's articles, *Les dénombrements de la population d'Ypres au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (1412-1506): Contribution à la statistique sociale du Moyen Age*<sup>3</sup> and *Les documents d'archives comme sources de la démographie historique*.<sup>4</sup>

Both historians are also known for their life-works: Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte* (15 volumes, 1891-1909)<sup>5</sup> and Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* (7 vol., 1900-1932).<sup>6</sup> These two bestsellers<sup>7</sup> are masterpieces of liberal national historiography. Although they are different in outlook, both are based upon

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<sup>2</sup> The complete title is *Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung der materiellen Kultur des platten Landes aufgrund der Quellen zunächst des Mosellandes*, Leipzig, Dürr, 1885-1886, 4 vol. Henceforth, this will be abbreviated as DWLM. For the publication of methodologically important parts of this work, see Schleier (1988).

<sup>3</sup> Published in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1, 1903a, pp. 1-32.

<sup>4</sup> Pirenne (1903b) published in *Onzième congrès international d'hygiène et de démographie*. This article is a review of the German literature on that topic.

<sup>5</sup> The *Deutsche Geschichte* was first published by Gaertner in Berlin. In this paper I refer to the fourth edition published by the second editor of Lamprecht's work: Weidman, also in Berlin. Henceforth, it will be abbreviated as DG.

<sup>6</sup> The *Histoire de Belgique* was edited by Lamertin in Brussels. The first volume was first published in German in 1899 by Perthes (Gotha). Henceforth, HB.

<sup>7</sup> On the success of Lamprecht's work, see Chickering (1993, 178, 321). For the *Histoire de Belgique* as "a kind of Belgian historical Bible", see Lyon (1974, 403).

the principles of cultural history (*Kulturgeschichte*), which analyses a society in terms of its political, economic, social, religious and artistic structures.

What did Pirenne owe to Lamprecht in his use of *Kulturgeschichte*? The scholarly literature on Pirenne assumes Lamprecht's influence as if it were a fact, though without much evidence. Bryce Lyon, who wrote Pirenne's intellectual biography (Lyon, 1974) and published sources by and about Pirenne (such as his correspondence with Karl Lamprecht), insists that Lamprecht's ideas must have affected Pirenne because their relationship was so close (Lyon, 1974, 128; Lyon, 1966, 174). In her doctoral dissertation on Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, Luise Schorn-Schütte (1984) points out the influence of Lamprecht's *Kulturnation* on the historiography of countries which lacked the tradition of a centralised state, such as Belgium, The Netherlands and Poland (Schorn-Schütte, 1984, 320sq). Historians of these countries, which were trying to develop new national identities at the end of the 19th century, supported the concept of a cultural nation existing over time independently of political regimes (Schorn-Schütte, 1985, 448sq). More recently, Marc Boone assessed that for Pirenne

"de grote inspirator blijft evenwel Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915). [...]. Van Lamprecht neemt Pirenne essentieel het werk met aan de collectieve psychologie en aan de economie ontleende begrippen over" [However, Karl Lamprecht remained the great inspirator. From Lamprecht, Pirenne essentially adopted working with concepts derived from collective psychology and economics] (Boone, 2006, 6-7).

Concerning Pirenne's reception of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, there are three issues: the first is the intensive exchange between the two historians; the second addresses the notion of 'cultural nation', and the third considers the impact of Lamprecht's ideas on economics and social psychology. The first issue is quite well documented; the second and third need deeper analysis.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the question at issue in this article is: how shall we describe the intellectual transfer from Lamprecht to Pirenne in the area of *Kulturgeschichte*? My discussion has three parts: the first gives an outline of the evolution of Lamprecht's and Pirenne's relationship in the context of the internationalisation of historical research; the second part is related to Pirenne's perception of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* over time; and the third part focuses on its implementation in Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique*.

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<sup>8</sup>. See Lyon's studies on Pirenne. See also Sproemberg (1971, 377-446) and van Werveke (1972, 39-60), for the impact of the war on the relationship between Pirenne and Lamprecht.

## 1. PIRENNE AND LAMPRECHT AS WISSENSCHAFTSORGANISATOR

The first contacts between Lamprecht and Pirenne took place in the 1880s. At that time Lamprecht was *privat Dozent* at the University of Bonn and employed by the banker and businessman, Gustav von Mevissen, to run the *Rheinische Gesellschaft* and to co-edit the *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst*. To establish scholarly standards of historical research, both for this society and historical societies in the Rhine region, Lamprecht made contacts with foreign historians. His first concerns were to insure adequate conservation in local archives and improve their methods of classification. He invited Pirenne to write an article about archives in Belgium: *De l'organisation des études d'histoire provinciale et locale en Belgique* (1884).<sup>9</sup> Lamprecht also tried to encourage study of the border region in collaboration with Belgian, Dutch and French historians (Lewald, 1956, 286sq; Schorn-Schütte, 1984, 323).

In 1889, Lamprecht was approached by the publisher Perthes to take the helm of Heeren and Uckert's *History of the European States* (*Geschichte der europäischen Staaten*). He accepted on the condition that he would be allowed to revitalise the series and emphasise cultural history. Seeking to add a volume on Belgium to the series, Lamprecht first asked Paul Fredericq, a colleague of Pirenne at the University of Ghent, to write a "flandrisch-brabantisch burgundische Geschichte" (Sproemberg, 1971, 422; Lyon, 1966, 163-164). Fredericq refused and recommended Pirenne. Lamprecht, who had read Pirenne's (1894, 416-462) contribution to Lavissee and Rambaud's *Histoire Générale*, recognised that Pirenne had the ability to analyse a society as a complete unit. In this first survey, Pirenne had asserted that the economic and social cultural unity of Belgian principalities during the Middle Ages not only existed but even caused their political and institutional unification under the House of Burgundy. In a letter following their meeting at the Congress of German Historians in Leipzig (1894)<sup>10</sup>, Pirenne accepted Lamprecht's offer to contribute to the *History of the European States*. Meanwhile, he suggested expanding the scope from Flanders and Brabant to include Hainault, Holland

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<sup>9</sup> The article published in the *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst* (IV, 1885, pp. 113-138) was signed by Pirenne, Liège-Berlin. Pirenne, who had just finished his study of history, spent the academic year 1884-1885 in Germany. This mention of Berlin beside that of Liège can be interpreted as a forerunner of Pirenne's later activity as a mediator between French and German historiography and more generally as a promoter of a European and international historiography.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Sproemberg (1971, 422).

and Liège.<sup>11</sup> The correspondence between Lamprecht and Pirenne is the best evidence of their close contact. Whereas Lamprecht's letters remain unpublished in Pirenne's archives, Pirenne's letters to Lamprecht (1894-1915) were edited by Bryce Lyon. Over the years, the majority of their written dialogue concerned Pirenne's writing of the *History of Belgium*: plans for the successive volumes, development of ideas, translation into German, preparation of a French edition, etc. Pirenne's letters also include comments on Lamprecht's historical work, institutional activities and epistemological reflections on history. Besides responding to editing questions on Pirenne's *History of Belgium*, Lamprecht's letters express the development of his own ideas, from his main research interest during his tenure in the Rhine region to his enthusiasm for universal history while in Leipzig. Along the way, he worried about the corporative uprising against his *History of Germany* and *Kulturgeschichte*, his historical interpretation. As we will see, Lamprecht's letters also asked Pirenne for help in supporting the new direction he wanted to give to history in Germany.

Lamprecht was one of the initiators of the Congress of German Historians (*Historikertage*) and a member of the managing committee from 1893 to 1913. It is worth noting that the German Historical Association (*Verband der deutschen Historiker*) was the first nationwide organisation of professional historians in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The German association labelled Pirenne a *Stammgast* (Schumann, 1974, 74), since he attended the congresses, held annually or biennially, more often than any other foreign historian: Pirenne went to Leipzig (1894), Frankfurt (1895), Innsbruck (1896), Nuremberg (1898), Halle (1900), Heidelberg (1903) and Stuttgart (1906). He had the opportunity to talk at length with Lamprecht and other German historians, such as those he had met during his stay in Berlin in 1884-1885<sup>13</sup>, Robert Hoeniger, Erich Liesegang and Fritz Arnheim (later the translator of Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* into German), and to listen to lectures of influent historians of *German Wissenschaft*.<sup>14</sup> On occasion, Pirenne delivered a lecture, but this was not typical.<sup>15</sup> Attendance at the *Historikertage* allowed Pirenne to follow the trends of German historiography, the foremost historiographical tradition

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<sup>11</sup> Letter of Pirenne to Lamprecht from December 28, 1899, in Lyon (1966, 189).

<sup>12</sup> On Lamprecht and the *Historikertage*, see Middell (1996, 21-43).

<sup>13</sup> Pirenne stayed half a year in Leipzig and half a year in Berlin (Lyon, 1974, 60sq).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Hoeninger (1855-1929) and Erich Liesegang (1860-1931) were both medievalists specialised in economic and social history. As young historians they attended the club of the graduate students at the University of Berlin, the *Akademischer Historischer Verein*, like Fritz Arnheim. Pirenne met them all there (Lyon, 1974, 65).

<sup>15</sup> Like in Innsbruck (1896) with a lecture on *Les sources de l'histoire urbaine* (Henri Pirenne. *Hommages et souvenirs*, 1938, I, 132).

in Europe before the First World War. These congresses inspired Pirenne, as his review of one session from the Nuremberg Congress in 1898 shows. This session of the *Deutsche Publikationsinstitut* featured the many uses of historical maps of the Holy German Empire, and involved historians of several countries in the publication effort.<sup>16</sup>

After 1900 and the appearance of the international historical congresses, the occasional meetings between Lamprecht and Pirenne took place within a new framework.<sup>17</sup> Both attended all the congresses before the First World War: Paris (1900), Rome (1903), Berlin (1908) and London (1913). However, they did not participate in the same panels: Pirenne's lectures dealt with economic and social history, such as his noteworthy speech on *Les périodes de l'histoire du capitalisme*<sup>18</sup>; Lamprecht's lectures dealt with the theory and methodology of history, and called for the establishment of a new cultural and universal history.<sup>19</sup>

As their research evolved, Lamprecht and Pirenne did not follow the same path. In addition to writing the *Histoire de Belgique* (1899-1932), Pirenne never gave up his empirical study of the economic, social and institutional history of medieval Belgian principalities, but rather expanded it onto a European scale. Pirenne's publications in the 1920s, *Les villes du moyen-âge: essai d'histoire économique et sociale* (Pirenne, 1927)<sup>20</sup>, *Le mouvement économique et social* (1933)<sup>21</sup>, and *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (1937), exemplify his new historical range.

Lamprecht spent much of his life writing the *Deutsche Geschichte* (1891-1909), which is more intellectual than comprehensive in its narrative style. From the mid-1890s, with the controversy over his work (the so-called *Lamprechtstreit* or *Methodenstreit*), he turned to writing theoretical works in order to make an epistemological argument for his cultural history model. These works can be divided into three categories: first, Lamprecht's rebuttal to critics from the German historicist school, such as *Alte und neue*

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<sup>16</sup> From Pirenne's (1898b, 387-392) views these maps are important for the agrarian history, art history and linguistic history. See also Pirenne (1899). In this article, Pirenne mentioned Lamprecht as the leader of the movement for historical maps.

<sup>17</sup> On the history of the congresses, see Erdmann (2005).

<sup>18</sup> See Pirenne (1914, 258-299). In Berlin in 1908, Pirenne gave a lecture on *La formation et le développement des institutions centrales de l'État bourguignon* (published in English (Pirenne, 1909b, 477-502) and in German (Pirenne, 1909a, 896-925).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Lamprecht (1909, 33-63).

<sup>20</sup> Published in English as *Medieval cities: Their origins and the revival of trade* (Pirenne, 1925).

<sup>21</sup> In Pirenne, Cohen & Focillon (1933, 3-189). A contribution to Glotz's *Histoire générale* series. New edition of Pirenne's section was published by van Werveke (1963).

*Richtungen in der Geschichtswissenschaft*<sup>22</sup> and *Was ist Kulturgeschichte? Beitrag zu einer empirischen Historik*.<sup>23</sup> The second category, speeches and articles written at the beginning of the 20th century, pleaded for a new organisation of historical teaching and research, and finally resulted in the creation of the *Institute für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte* at the University of Leipzig (1909). In the third category of works, Lamprecht condensed his ideas in short books: *Moderne Geschichtswissenschaft* (1910) and *Einführung in das historische Denken* (1913).

Despite their increasingly different historical pursuits, Lamprecht and Pirenne agreed on the main goals for their academic discipline. They supported the development of international historical research, based on cooperation through common writing projects, collaboration in periodicals, participation at conferences and meetings, and promotion of exchanges among students and young scholars.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, they were convinced of the necessity of popular works, like their national histories, not only to educate public opinion, but also to maintain communication among historians, thus ensuring a common knowledge base. Both Lamprecht and Pirenne were conscious of the dangers of historical research becoming overly specialised; Lamprecht called it "Spezialistenthum von mikrologischer Genauigkeit" (Lamprecht, 1896, 250). Pirenne pointed out that the growing division of knowledge led to "érudition morte" and the lack of a synthetic perspective.<sup>25</sup>

Pirenne and Lamprecht were actually quite effective in their efforts to build institutional structures for historical research. Both worked with collaborators to create new research institutions. Lamprecht contributed to the creation of the *Königlich-Sächsische Kommission für Geschichte* and the *Historisch-geographisch Seminar* at the University of Leipzig, while Pirenne worked at the *Commission royale d'histoire* and supported the *Société belge de philologie et d'histoire*. The same is true of their active participation in historical journals which supported new trends in historical research, such as Lamprecht's work for the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* and the *Deutsche Geschichtsblätter*, and Pirenne's support for the

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<sup>22</sup> Lamprecht (1896), reprinted in Schönebaum (1974, 173-255).

<sup>23</sup> Lamprecht (1896/1897, 75-145), reprinted in Schönebaum (1974, 257-327).

<sup>24</sup> Pirenne encouraged his students to spend a year in Germany, particularly at the University of Leipzig. It was the case for Guillaume Des Marez (Lyon, 1999, 1051-1078) and for Ledoux, who taught at Lamprecht's *Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte*. The course's program for the academic year 1910-1911 announces: "Dr. ph. Ledoux: Übungen zur Entwicklung des belgischen, insbesondere flandrischen Städtewesens im Mittelalter (belgische Methode (Prof. Pirenne), französische Lehrsprache). [...]" (Lamprecht, 1910b, 15).

<sup>25</sup> "Mais le plus malheureux de cette méthode est qu'elle empêche de penser" (H. Pirenne in *Sur la spécialisation en histoire* (February 7, 1918) in Lyon, Lyon, & Pirenne (1994, 201)).

*Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* and the *Revue historique*.

Their mutual feelings of respect took concrete form in official recognitions. In 1903 Lamprecht was elected to the *Académie royale de Belgique* as a foreign member, and in 1909 the University of Leipzig honoured Pirenne with the title of *Doctor honoris causa*. In 1912 Lamprecht asked Pirenne and Fredericq to support his Institute's candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize. He received the support of Ghent's professors, but the Institute was not awarded the prize.<sup>26</sup>

The First World War was a turning point in the relationship between Lamprecht and Pirenne. Lamprecht's defence of German imperialism and the fact that he signed the Appeal *An die Kulturwelt!*<sup>27</sup> left Pirenne feeling betrayed. In 1919, at his request, the *Académie royale de Belgique* removed Lamprecht from the foreign membership. More generally, Pirenne no longer sought contact with German historians and became defiantly critical of developments within German historiography.<sup>28</sup>

Textual analysis also shows the nature and the context of the link between Lamprecht and Pirenne. In his text references, Pirenne makes no mention of the quantitatively huge correspondence between Lamprecht and himself. Pirenne did use the early volumes of the *Deutsche Geschichte* in his *Histoire de Belgique*, and he did borrow Lamprecht's concept of the 'microcosm' to identify Belgium as a composite of two major European cultures, French and German.<sup>29</sup> Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* explicitly refers to Lamprecht's *Deutsche Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter*.<sup>30</sup> Pirenne used this book as a principal reference for agrarian history in North Germany in his works on social and economic history through the 1930s (Pirenne, 1933, 3-5). However, even though Pirenne mentioned his intention to write a review of the second volume of the *Ergänzungsbände* of the *Deutsche Geschichte* (a panoramic view of Germany in Lamprecht's time), Pirenne never wrote the review.<sup>31</sup> A short while later, Lamprecht asked Pirenne, who regularly

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<sup>26</sup>. Letters of Lamprecht to Pirenne: January 19, 1912 and February 2, 1912 (ULB, 26. PP, *Papiers scientifiques d'Henri Pirenne*. Correspondance 1912).

<sup>27</sup>. The appeal echoes as a justification of the war by the Germans academics reacting against accusations coming from British academics. See vom Brocke (1985, 649-719).

<sup>28</sup>. See Schöttler (2004, 53-81) and Warland (2011, 219-261).

<sup>29</sup>. HB I (Pirenne, 1900, VIII). See below.

<sup>30</sup>. See HB I (Pirenne, 1900, 130), where Pirenne refers to DWLM I (1885, 864) concerning taxes on population of the countryside and HB I (Pirenne, 1900, 249), with the mention of Flemish coins as far as Koblenz (DWLM II, 1886, 434).

<sup>31</sup>. Letter from Pirenne to Lamprecht (Augustus 8, 1902) in Lyon (1966, 214).

received the successive publications of the *Deutsche Geschichte*<sup>32</sup>, to write a review of the three volumes of his *Ergänzungsbände*<sup>33</sup>, but Pirenne never complied.

An avid follower of new historical publications from Germany and elsewhere, Pirenne was interested in diverse case studies in economic, social, legal and institutional history, particularly those which considered the broader context and drew general interpretations.<sup>34</sup> Pirenne frequently quoted the economist and historian at Leipzig, Karl Bücher, not only for his statistical study on the demography of Frankfurt/Main<sup>35</sup> but also for his categories of economic development (*Naturalwirtschaft*, *Geldwirtschaft* and *Kreditwirtschaft*).<sup>36</sup>

After the Lamprecht controversy broke out, Pirenne first tried to escape Lamprecht's request for support via an article in the *Revue Historique*.<sup>37</sup> When Lamprecht insisted, Pirenne wrote *Une polémique historique en Allemagne* (1897).<sup>38</sup> Though Pirenne's (1897, 54) view accorded with Lamprecht's position ("l'histoire du point de vue des sciences sociales" [history from the perspective of the social sciences], in his words), Pirenne tried to balance the perspective of the historicist school, then dominant in Germany, with Lamprecht's marginal position. Although Lamprecht's views were not accepted among the traditional political historians, this was not (or less) the

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Lamprecht's letter from January 20, 1904 to Pirenne concerning the volumes VI and VII of the *Deutsche Geschichte* (ULB, 26. PP, *Papiers scientifiques d'Henri Pirenne*. Correspondance 1904-1905).

<sup>33</sup> Lamprecht's letter of Augustus 1903 (ULB, 26. PP, *Papiers scientifiques d'Henri Pirenne*. Correspondance 1902-1903).

<sup>34</sup> See Pirenne's articles on the origins of medieval cities in the *Revue historique* (Pirenne, 1893, 52-83; Pirenne, 1895, 57-98, 293-327) and *Villes, marchés et marchands au Moyen Age* (Pirenne, 1898c, 59-70). See also numerous Pirenne reviews on German books in economic and social history. A bibliographical list is given in Duesberg, (1938, 145sq).

<sup>35</sup> Bücher (1886). See again Pirenne (1903a, 14sq.) on Bücher's method for analysing statistical sources, which is revolutionary according to Pirenne.

<sup>36</sup> See Pirenne's preface to the French translation of Bücher (1893), in Bücher (1901, V-XII). Pirenne also reviewed Bücher's book in *Revue critique*, XLVII, 1899.

<sup>37</sup> "Vous me flattez beaucoup en m'engageant à écrire un article sur la querelle actuellement grondante. Je vous avouerai que j'avais déjà songé à le faire, car les questions qu'elle soulève sont d'une telle importance qu'elles méritent de préoccuper tous les historiens. J'ai toujours hésité jusqu'à aujourd'hui dans la crainte de ne pas être suffisamment compétent. Pourtant, je vais demander à Monod s'il accepterait un article sur ce sujet dans la *Revue historique*. Vous savez que les Français appartiennent la plupart à l'ancienne école et qu'en tous cas, ils ont peu de goût pour les questions théoriques. Mais c'est là plutôt une raison de prendre la parole que de se taire" (Letter from November 24, 1896, ULB, 26 PP, *Papiers scientifiques d'Henri Pirenne*. Correspondance 1892-1896).

<sup>38</sup> In *Revue Historique* (Pirenne, 1897, 50-57).



case among the broader world of political economists (*Nationalökonomie*) and economic and social historians. It is obvious that Pirenne's conciliatory approach in this article was intended to avoid irritating important figures of the German historical community, such as Georg von Below and Felix Rachfahl, whose work Pirenne used in his *History of Belgium*.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, in terms of intellectual development, it seems that the most decisive influence on Pirenne was Gustav von Schmoller, whose practical courses (*Übungen*) Pirenne attended in Berlin in 1885 and whose first studies treated economic and social conditions in medieval cities.<sup>40</sup> "(...) C'est le contact intellectuel avec Schmoller qui fit de lui un 'historien économiste'" [It was the intellectual contact with Schmoller that made him an 'economic historian'], Ganshof insightfully asserted (Ganshof, 1959, 673).<sup>41</sup>

Pirenne's stature as an economic historian was well established during his lifetime. In his review of Pirenne's *History of Belgium*, first published in German under the title *Geschichte Belgiens* (1899), Godefroid Kurth criticised the predominant role Pirenne had given to the commercial and industrial cities of Flanders. He categorised Pirenne as a historian who was a "fervent de l'école économiste" [an enthusiast of the economist school], by which he meant the school of Schmoller.<sup>42</sup> Other historians were fans of Pirenne's views and methods. In his review of *Histoire de Belgique* (volume II), Hubert Van Houtte wrote that Pirenne's book

"[...] démontre de façon péremptoire les grands services que la méthode sociologique, sagement appliquée, peut rendre notamment à l'histoire" [demonstrates preempторily the great service that the sociological method, wisely applied, can render to history].<sup>43</sup>

He defines this in the following way:

"[...] c'est nommément la méthode de la *Kulturgeschichte*, la méthode sociale ou sociologique, qui substitue le plus possible l'explication causale, psychogénétique de l'histoire à l'explication finaliste" [It is particularly the method of

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<sup>39</sup>. For example, Pirenne wrote about Rachfahl's short book on Margaret of Parma that it is "un petit livre si clair" (HB III, Pirenne, 1907, VI). He also reviewed another book by Rachfahl, *Wilhelm von Oranien und der Niederländische Aufstand* (see Duesberg, 1938, 162).

<sup>40</sup>. For example, see Schmoller (1875). More generally on that period of Pirenne's life, see Lyon (1974, 63sq).

<sup>41</sup>. This idea was first developed by Sproemberg, (1971, 406-407). See also Dhondt (1976, 100-101).

<sup>42</sup>. G. Kurth on Pirenne's *Geschichte Belgiens*, *Archives belges*, I, 1899, pp. 21-25. See also the letter from Pirenne to Kurth (2 March 1899) in Rion (1986, 220-221).

<sup>43</sup>. Review published in *Le mouvement sociologique* (1903), reprinted in Duesberg (1938, 273).

*Kulturgeschichte*, the social or sociological method, that best replaces causal, psychogenetic explanations by determinate explanation] (Duesberg, 1938, 273).

Van Houtte also pinpoints the heart of Pirenne's historical approach, an emphasis on the impact of global rather than individual concerns on the course of history. What does Pirenne really borrow from Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*?

## 2. PIRENNE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS LAMPRECHT'S *KULTURGESCHICHTE*

### 2.1. Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*: the *Methodenstreit*

Here I will not give a complete definition of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, because I will devote the next section to contrasting the different definitions given to this term by Pirenne and Lamprecht. I will briefly touch on the circumstances surrounding Lamprecht's development of this method, as well as how his ideas evolved.

From 1891 to 1895, Lamprecht published the first five volumes of his *Deutsche Geschichte*, which were harshly criticised by Rankean and Neo-Rankean historians, mostly from Berlin: Georg von Below (1893), Felix Rachfahl (1896), Max Lenz, and Hermann Oncken (1897). On the one hand, the critics focused on Lamprecht's many minor historical mistakes, which highlighted his rapid method of working. More deeply, they questioned Lamprecht's materialistic conception of history, in which economic matters underpinned political developments. Lamprecht had succeeded in elevating the argument to a scholarly controversy over the epistemological assessment of historical research and transforming it into a general debate about the social role of historiography. Many articles were published, not only in academic journals and reviews like *Historische Zeitschrift*, but also in general journals and newspapers: *Preußische Jahrbücher*, *Die Zukunft*, *Die Umschau*, *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Leipziger Zeitung*. In these argumentative texts, Lamprecht gradually clarified his conception of history.

In the 1880s and the beginning of the 1890s, Lamprecht was considered one of the young economic historians close to Schmoller's school of political economy, along with Liesegang, Hoeniger, and Karl Theodor Inama-Sternegg, all names we find as references in Pirenne's work.<sup>44</sup> Lamprecht's

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<sup>44</sup> Inama-Sternegg was well known for his *Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte des X. bis XII. Jahrhunderts*, as well as other works. See Pirenne's review in *Revue critique*, XLII, 1896.

early publications on the economic history of north Germany (particularly the *Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter*) were welcomed by historians both nationally and internationally (Chickering, 1993, 93). Lamprecht believed that the motor of historical development was provided by material conditions – the organisation of social life through the *Markgenossenschaft* and the *Agrarverfassung* – rather than by political actors.<sup>45</sup> He linked this assumption to the importance of men's collective action, the topic of *Kulturgeschichte*:

"Die Aufgabe ist es, die Entwicklung und der Fortschritt der menschlichen Zustände, die stetig zunehmende Selbstvervollkommnung des Menschen zu schildern, zu zeigen, in welcher Weise der Mensch für sich und in Vereinigung mit anderen seine ihm inwohnenden Fähigkeiten entwickelt und zu Zuständen ausgestaltet hat und wie dann wieder diese Zustände auf ihm einwirken und eine Reaktion bei ihm veranlassen" [Its role consists in describing the evolution and the progress of the human social life forms and the self-accomplishment of humanity, and in pointing out how men develops its own capacities in itself and in relationship with its fellows and thus creates social matters. Conversely, cultural history also shows how social matters act upon men, generating its further handling].<sup>46</sup>

In this early description of the role of cultural history, Lamprecht delineated two key ideas which formed the core of his *Kulturgeschichte* concept – the idea of increasing rationality in the historical development, and the idea that *Zustände* (social forms of life) should be the main object of historical study.<sup>47</sup> Afterwards, Lamprecht deepened his analysis of the psychological components of social life. He defined three categories of human activity: first, creativity in arts and literature (*Phantasietätigkeit, Anschauung* or *Gefühl*); second, the intellect (*Verstandestätigkeit, Erkenntnis* or *Vorstellen*), including the *Weltanschauung* or conceptions about the world (myth, religion and science); and third, the socio-economic structure of society (*Willenstätigkeit, Erfahrung* or *Wollen*): *Naturalwirtschaft, kommunistische Geldwirtschaft, organisatorische Geldwirtschaft, individualistische Geldwirtschaft*. He assigns each category a different form for each era of time. In his theoretical system, the special combination of forms sets the tone of a cultural epoch, called a *seelischer Diapason*. With this psychological focus, he delineates six cultural epochs (*Kulturstufen*) for German history: "animism" (prehistorical time); "symbolism" (ca. 500-700), "typism" (ca. 700-1100); "conventionalism" (ca. 1100-1450); "individualism" (ca. 1450-1700); and "subjectivism" (from 1700) which includes Lamprecht's own time of "restlessness"

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<sup>45</sup>. DWLM (1885-1886, 1486), in Schleier (1988, 50-51).

<sup>46</sup>. Lecture on *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, University of Bonn, 1881-1882, quoted by Schorn-Schütte (1984, 115).

<sup>47</sup>. See Lamprecht in Schönebaum (1974, 577-578).

(*Reizsamkeit*).<sup>48</sup> Lamprecht's conceptual framework does not relate to a politically-based chronology, such as the migrations in the first centuries of the first millennium, division of the Frankish Empire, the Hohenstaufen era, the Renaissance and Reformation, or modernity. He eschews political categories, such as feudalism, empire and monarchy, which others use to characterise periods of German history. Instead he prefers categories linked to people's beliefs and conceptions of the world and to the economic organisation of the society, such as those mentioned above.

## 2.2. Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*: Evolution of Pirenne's Opinion

It is interesting to consider how Pirenne's opinion of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* changed over the years. In a letter dated July 27, 1896, he shows empathy for Lamprecht's attitude and promotes the theoretical benefits of Lamprecht's writings written during the controversy over *Deutsche Geschichte*:

"J'ai lu avec le plus vif intérêt *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?* Les attaques dont votre livre a été l'objet de la part de la vieille école auront été pour vous l'occasion d'exposer votre point de vue et de faire réfléchir les historiens aux problèmes fondamentaux de la méthode. Je vais relire et méditer pendant les vacances votre dernier article et vos *Alte und neue Richtungen in der Geschichtswissenschaft*" ["I have read *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?* with great interest. The attacks on this book by the old school have been an opportunity for you to present your point of view and make historians reflect on fundamental methodological problems. During my vacation, I will re-read and think deeply about your last article and your *Alte und neue Richtungen in der Geschichtswissenschaft*"] (Lyon, 1966, 199).

Pirenne's letter from December 31, 1901, interprets the third edition of the *Deutsche Geschichte* as

"(...) un signe du temps et le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ne sera sans doute pas très vieux encore quand la nouvelle tendance historique, auquel votre nom restera attaché, sera maîtresse de l'avenir. Que vont dire les contempteurs de la 'materialistische Geschichtsauffassung' quand ils liront votre nouvelle préface *et les vues si profondes que vous y énoncez sur les ferments psychiques de la vie économique?*" (my emphasis) ["a sign of the times and the 20th century will doubtless not be very old yet when the new historical trend, to which your name will remain attached, will be mistress of the future. What will the critics of the 'materialische

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<sup>48</sup> For a synopsis of Lamprecht's philosophical system, see Spieß (1921, 166-167).

Geschichtsauffassung' say when they read your new preface *and the very profound view that you advance on the psychic leavening of economic life?*"] (*Ibid.*, 211-212).

Pirenne's final point is very important for our analysis, because it suggests that he agrees with the second version of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, which delineates the socio-psychological grounds of German society. It refers directly to the preface of the *Deutsche Geschichte*:

"Nicht die Entfaltung der Wirtschaftseinrichtungen, vielmehr die Entwicklung des Wirtschaftssinnes bildet den eigentlichen centralen Gegenstand der Wirtschaftsgeschichte" ["The genuine topic of economic history is not so much the evolution of economic institutions as the development of the economic capacity"] (my emphasis).<sup>49</sup>

After the First World War, Pirenne's (1921, 15) opinion changed radically. Visibly angry, he spoke out against Lamprecht's major work in the following terms:

"Prenez la dernière histoire d'Allemagne qui ait été écrite avant la guerre, la *Deutsche Geschichte* de Karl Lamprecht, débarrassez-la des théories fumeuses dont elle s'entoure, et dites s'il a jamais existé un ouvrage où le chauvinisme se révèle avec autant de volubilité" ["Take the last history of Germany that was written before the war, the *Deutsche Geschichte* by Karl Lamprecht, clear out the obscure theories which surround it, and tell me if there has ever been a work in which the chauvinism shows forth with such voluptuousness"].

Pirenne's inaugural speech as president of the University of Ghent for the academic year 1920-1921, entitled *Ce que nous devons désapprendre de l'Allemagne* (1921), lashed out at Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* as a body of obscure theories ("théories fumeuses"). Finally, in a letter to the medievalist Heinrich Sproemberg dated May 31, 1931, Pirenne summarised his view of Lamprecht:

"Vous caractérisez admirablement ma position à l'égard de Lamprecht. J'ai fait sa connaissance en 1883 et j'ai été intimement lié avec lui jusqu'à sa mort. Je possède de lui une collection de lettres où il me décrit mois par mois l'évolution de ses idées et de ses travaux. Son action a été grande sur mes idées pendant sa première période, mais je n'ai pas pu le suivre lors de la construction des *Kulturstufen* qu'il a élaborée dans la seconde et qui m'a toujours paru très arbitraire. Comme vous l'avez très finement observé, ce qui me frappe surtout dans l'histoire, ce sont les mouvements de masse que l'observation empirique révèle et qui m'apparaissent comme les réalités les plus scientifiquement observables de l'évolution historique. De là vient mon goût (qui s'est jadis précisé pendant mes études en Allemagne)

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<sup>49</sup> DG I (Lamprecht, 1894, XIV).

pour l'histoire économique et sociale. [...] Mais de là aussi découle ma conception, comme vous l'avez fort bien vu, de la formation de la Belgique et de sa civilisation internationale" ["You describe my position on Lamprecht admirably. I met him in 1883 and I was intimately connected with him up until his death. I have a collection of letters from him in which he describes month by month the evolution of his ideas and his work. He had great influence on me at first, but I could not follow him after the development of the *Kulturstufen*, which he elaborated later, and which always seemed very arbitrary to me. As you have very nicely observed, what especially strikes me in history are the mass movements that are revealed by empirical observation and that, for me, seem to be the most scientifically observable realities of historical change. That is where my taste (which had already become specified during my studies in Germany) for economic and social history comes from. But that is equally where I derived my conception of the formation of Belgium and its international civilisation from, as you have well seen"] (Sproemberg, 1971, 441-442).

Here Pirenne clearly distinguishes between two versions of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*: in the first version, Lamprecht worked as a classical economic historian, and in the second, Lamprecht employed a socio-psychological framework to interpret German history as *Kulturstufen*. Actually, Pirenne's assertion is a reinterpretation which is only partially true. It is hardly plausible that he entirely rejected the second phase of Lamprecht's ideas at the time they were produced. The two first excerpts show that Pirenne was interested in the article *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?*, which contained insights and early formulations of the *Kulturstufen* ideas, and in the socio-psychological basis of economic life as defined by Lamprecht in the preface to the third edition of *Deutsche Geschichte*.

### 2.3. "Une polémique historique en Allemagne" (1897): Pirenne's version of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*

Pirenne emphasised the ways in which Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* interpreted history through the lens of social science, as I mentioned above. Lamprecht did not write a political history, or in other words, a

"(...) histoire de l'État, c'est-à-dire d'un phénomène relativement artificiel et qui est bien loin de résumer en lui toute l'action sociale" ["a history of the State, which is to say a history of a relatively artificial phenomenon which does not adequately encompass all social activity"] (Pirenne, 1897, 52).

He has written a history of the nation, in which

"la société est l'élément universel et primitif, l'individu le phénomène contingent et passager" ["society is the universal and primal element, the individual a contingent and passing phenomenon"] (*Ibid.*, 55).

Pirenne states that Lamprecht explains the social development of a people through natural (or geographical) and collective (or socio-economic) factors. In Pirenne's view, *Kulturgeschichte* is a total and progressive history. Pirenne (1897, 53) reports that Lamprecht conceived his *German History* as a

"(...) produit d'une évolution d'états socio-psychiques s'engendrant les uns les autres et auxquels se ramène la diversité infinie des événements politiques, des faits économiques, des courants religieux, des mouvements artistiques, scientifiques et littéraires de chaque époque" ["product of an evolution of socio-psychological states that give birth to each other and that lead to an infinite diversity of political events, economic activities, religious trends, and artistic, scientific and literary movements of each period"].

Pirenne thus sees the core of *Kulturgeschichte* as social psychology, and points out that this type of historical construction aims at a universal history which interprets the records of relations among nations.<sup>50</sup>

Pirenne's definition gives only a partial view of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, as it is defined in *Alte und neue Richtungen* and *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?*, the two works Pirenne had read.<sup>51</sup> He did not mention the *Kulturgeschichte*'s special methodology, an empirical and comparative method based on the analysis of serial data and the search for causal links among data. He did not specify the kind of historical writing undertaken in the *Kulturgeschichte*: a historical synthesis which aims at presenting regular patterns underlying disparate individual historical events.<sup>52</sup> The reason for Pirenne's omission is quite evident: the connection between Lamprecht's method and the natural sciences was unattractive to German historians, whose cooperation Pirenne sought. Pirenne even says nothing about Lamprecht's claim to establish cultural history as the central branch or *science maîtresse* of the historical field:

"Die Kulturgeschichte ist mithin die vergleichende Geschichte der sozialpsychischen Entwicklungsfaktoren, und sie verhält sich zur Sprachgeschichte,

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<sup>50</sup>. The main characteristics of *Kulturgeschichte* emphasised by Pirenne appear like a partial summary of Lamprecht's conclusion to *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?* (Lamprecht, 1896/1897, 326-327).

<sup>51</sup>. See Pirenne's letters to Lamprecht from March 22, 1896 and July 27, 1896, in Lyon (1966, 196-197 and 199 respectively).

<sup>52</sup>. As an illustration of Lamprecht's ability to draw general historical interpretations, see *Europäische Expansion in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (in Schönebaum, 1974, 691-717).

Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Kunstgeschichte, usw. so, wie sich sonst vergleichende Wissenschaften zu den ihr untergeordneten Wissenschaften zu verhalten pflegen. Sie operiert infolgedessen auch, natürlich in der Übertragung auf ihren besonderen Stoff, mit den spezifischen Methoden der vergleichenden Wissenschaften: mit der induktiven Zusammenfassung, Vergleichung und Verallgemeinerung" ["The cultural history is the comparative history of social-psychological evolutionary factors, and it relates itself to the history of language, to economic history, to art history, etc. as other comparative sciences did towards their subordinate sciences. As a result, it also borrows the methods of the comparative sciences to study its own subject matter: induction, comparison and generalisation"] (Lamprecht, 1896/1897, 327).

He also failed to mention Lamprecht's use of a historical principle based on causality between collective historical phenomena (*Kausalprinzip*) rather than on the motivation or individual will of rational agents (*Zweckprinzip*).<sup>53</sup> Pirenne passed over Lamprecht's employment of a socio-psychological principle to explain the transformation from one epoch to the other, the theory that the arousal of social and mental factors resulted in a modification of society's components (*Gesetz der Überschufß*).<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the elements of Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* which Pirenne emphasises were quite consensual and avoided irritating the German historicist school. Moreover, those elements were related to his own ways of theorising and practicing history: the extension of the historical research domain from the state and institutions to society and the economy; and the expansion of classical philological historical methodology to include economic and statistical methods.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, with his article *Une polémique historique en Allemagne*, Pirenne joined the crusade of the *Revue historique*<sup>56</sup> to establish new standards of scientific historical research.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>. For Lamprecht's thesis on historical and psychological principles, see Lamprecht's *Individualität, Idee und sozialpsychische Kraft in der Geschichte* (Schönebaum, 1974, 331sq).

<sup>54</sup>. On this unconscious principle of *Überschuss*, which Lamprecht borrowed from the psychologist, W. Wundt, see Schorn-Schütte (1984, 124).

<sup>55</sup>. Pirenne's (1899, 2) above-mentioned article *À propos d'une entreprise récente relative à la cartographie historique* still bears the mark of Lamprecht's ideas: history is a social science which studies past societies, using methods which focus on the 'masses' or the "nations dans leur ensemble".

<sup>56</sup>. On Monod's *Revue historique*, founded in 1876, see Carbonell (1976, 332-351) and Gérard (1976, 353-406).

<sup>57</sup>. See Pirenne's letter to Lamprecht mentioned above, which justifies his motivation for writing *Une polémique historique en Allemagne*. This is not the only evidence; when Lamprecht asked Pirenne to name a potential contributor to the *Geschichte der europäischen Staaten*, Pirenne answered that in Paris it would be difficult to find a collaborator able to write a history of France as "(...) un exposé synthétique tel que nous le comprenons" (Lyon, 1966, 216). By the "exposé synthétique", Pirenne means a unified narrative of national development.



Those themes in Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte* which Pirenne neglected to mention concerned the epistemology and philosophy of history and were unlikely to be acceptable to historians: on the one hand, a method inspired by the natural sciences (Lamprecht's positivism) and, on the other, a progressive conception of history based on laws of development (Lamprecht's historical evolutionism).

### 3. WHICH FORMS DID LAMPRECHT'S *KULTURGESCHICHTE* TAKE IN PIRENNE'S WORK?

#### 3.1. Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* as a terminal view of historical evolution and an essentialist view of the nation

In contrast to Lamprecht, Pirenne gave no definition of cultural history. The concept only appears in discussions of methodology, especially in Pirenne's prefaces to his *History of Belgium*. Pirenne's method strives for

"(...) retracer le développement de la civilisation nationale, en faisant saisir les rapports qui lient les unes aux autres toutes les manifestations de l'activité collective du peuple" ["to retrace the development of the national civilisation, in elucidating the connections which tie together all the manifestations of the collective activities of a people"].<sup>58</sup>

In the same sense as Lamprecht, Pirenne meant to study social phenomena rather than political and diplomatic trends:

"Je me suis attaché surtout à l'étude et à l'explication de la vie nationale. Les transformations des partis, des théories politiques, des idées religieuses, des institutions, des phénomènes économiques et de l'état social ont beaucoup plus retenu mon attention que les guerres et la diplomatie" ["I am especially attached to the study and explanation of national life. The transformation of parties, political theories, religious ideas, institutions, economic phenomena and social status have retained my attention much more than wars and diplomacy"].<sup>59</sup>

Again, like Lamprecht, Pirenne insists on the supremacy of the cultural context over the political:

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<sup>58</sup>. HB III (Pirenne, 1907, VII).

<sup>59</sup>. HB IV (Pirenne, 1911, V).

"(...) L'Histoire politique ne se présente ici que dans l'ambiance morale, économique et sociale dont elle est inséparable. Au fond, les partis ne sont que la projection sur l'écran parlementaire des grands mouvements qui agitent une nation. Les sources d'énergie auxquelles ils s'alimentent coulent d'ailleurs trop largement pour qu'ils puissent les épuiser" ["Political history only occurs within the moral, economic and social environment from which it is inseparable. Basically, parties are only a projection on the parliamentary screen of the great movements which shake a nation. The energy sources on which they feed are too abundant to be able to be used up"].<sup>60</sup>

The main characteristics of cultural historical writing, therefore, are the following: first, it claims to provide a synthetic narrative which explains the historical process (from the perspective of the whole society); second, it considers cultural factors (in the broad sense of the word) – social and economic phenomena, institutions and culture – rather than politics and diplomacy. In the *History of Belgium*, Pirenne adds these elements to the narrative without putting them at the centre of historical evolution. In contrast to Lamprecht, Pirenne believed that the explanatory factor lay not in psychology but in economics, which again relates to Pirenne's famous thesis about the role of the urban culture of medieval cities in Belgian civilisation. In his preface to the first volume of the *History of Belgium*, Pirenne discusses the difficulty of finding the "contexture d'une histoire commune"<sup>61</sup> [contexture of a common history] for the varied regions between Rhine and Seine, given that they did not have an ethnic, linguistic or political unity. Instead it is the economy which gives Belgium its unity.

Pirenne's *History of Belgium* is, as a history of civilisation, a synthesis, which means a construction establishing links between historical phenomena. In doing so, it puts forward a hypothesis.<sup>62</sup> How does Pirenne demonstrate the continuity and the unity of Belgian history? One way is by arguing that the creation of the Belgian State was 'natural' because it was based on a common urban civilisation from the 14th century onwards, reinforced by the institutions established during the Burgundian period, and advanced by Charles V's Pragmatic Sanction, which kept the 27 provinces together. Another way involves his discursal strategies – comparisons and analogies over time – which pave the way for the emergence of a sort of Belgian mentality. Pirenne does not use Lamprecht's psychological model. Instead, his 'determinism' asserts a cultural nationalism corresponding to the Nation-to-State model, which argues for the existence of a Belgian nation since the

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<sup>60</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, VII).

<sup>61</sup> HB I (Pirenne, 1900, VII).

<sup>62</sup> HB I (Pirenne, 1900, X); HB III (Pirenne, 1907, VI); HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, X).

Middle Ages. At many places in the *Histoire de Belgique*, Pirenne shows the continuity and the distinctions of the Belgian character by comparing and contrasting different periods.

Pirenne emphasises three main qualities of the Belgian character: capacity for hard work, individualism and openness. Focusing on the end of the 19th century, Pirenne describes the Belgian people as one of the most industrious in Europe:

"Relativement à son étendue et à sa population, il était au premier plan du mouvement économique. (...) Et que de difficultés il avait fallu vaincre: la méfiance des puissances tout d'abord, puis la crise linière et la crise alimentaire, le protectionnisme des États voisins, le péage de l'Escaut, l'absence enfin de colonies et de marine marchande. De tout cela, à force d'énergie, la nation était venue à bout. Ce peuple était bien toujours le même, qui au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, entre les invasions annuelles des armées françaises, ensemençait ses champs sans se demander s'il en récolterait la moisson. Dans ce coin de l'Europe si exposé, si surpeuplé et que les péripéties de l'histoire avaient si durement balloté entre la richesse et la misère, le travail s'était toujours imposé comme la première condition de l'existence" ["Relative to its size and population, Belgium was on the highest level of economic movement. And what difficulties did it have to defeat: first the mistrust of powers, then the linen crisis and the food crisis, protectionism of neighbouring states, the toll on the Scheldt, finally the absence of colonies and a merchant fleet. All this, by force of energy, the nation overcame. These were still the same people as those who in the 17th century between the annual invasions from French armies sowed their fields without wondering if they would reap a harvest. In this corner of Europe which is so exposed and so overpopulated and which the vicissitudes of history have so harshly tossed between wealth and misery, work has always imposed itself as the first condition for existence"].<sup>63</sup>

Pirenne insists, interestingly, on both 'sides of the coin', the positive and the negative, of Belgian individualism. One example is the economic individualism of the Belgian people, who insist on respect for personal liberties or privileges through protectionist measures like those in the medieval cities<sup>64</sup> or, on the contrary, through the defence of freedom of trade in the 19th century.<sup>65</sup> The glorification of liberty and the ability of the Belgian people to fight for their autonomy are also expressed with the same ambivalence:

"L'individualisme invétéré de ce peuple qui l'avait toujours poussé aux discordes civiles, l'avait toujours aussi à l'heure du péril, groupé pour la défense de chacun par l'entente de tous. Le sentiment civique qui l'animait expliquait à la fois son

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<sup>63</sup>. HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 243-244).

<sup>64</sup>. In his *History of Belgium*, Pirenne regularly shows that the urban 'particularism' did not fit in with the changing economic order. See, for example, HB V (Pirenne, 1921, 148).

<sup>65</sup>. HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 168).

exubérance anarchique durant la paix et son énergie collective contre l'oppression. Il était encore tel au commencement du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle qu'il s'était montré à toutes les époques pour la défense de ses 'privilèges' représentés aujourd'hui par la constitution qu'il s'était donnée. L'énigme psychologique qu'il devait être après 1914 pour son gouvernement allemand, il n'avait cessé de l'être au cours des âges pour ses gouverneurs espagnols et autrichiens, pour les préfets de Napoléon et pour les fonctionnaires hollandais" ["The inveterate individualism of these people, which had always brought about civil discords, equally grouped them together in every hour of peril for the defence of each by the agreement of all. The civic sentiment which animated them explains at the same time their anarchic exuberance during peace and their collective energy against oppression. At the beginning of the 20th century, what had been shown in every era for the defence of its privileges still lived on, now represented by the constitution they had given themselves. The psychological enigma that they were for their German government after 1914 is what, over the ages, they had always been for their Spanish and Austrian governors, for Napoleon's prefects, and for the Dutch functionaries"].<sup>66</sup>

Pirenne also illustrated the Belgian glorification of liberty in the arts: the artist's individualism<sup>67</sup> and the diversity of styles in architecture.<sup>68</sup> Similarly to Lamprecht, Pirenne viewed the arts as the "miroir d'une époque".<sup>69</sup> Art expressed the trends of the new time period:

"Comme à toutes les époques de renom, c'est par l'art, la plus spontanée, la plus instinctive et la moins rationnelle des manifestations de la civilisation, que s'atteste tout d'abord le mouvement" ["As in all renowned periods, it is by art, the most spontaneous, the most instinctive and the least rational of the manifestations of culture, that the movement is first attested"].<sup>70</sup>

Finally, the Belgian national character is profoundly open and receptive<sup>71</sup>: it includes both Germanism and Romanism, as Pirenne wrote in his preface to volume I of *Histoire de Belgique*:

"Comme notre sol, formé des alluvions des fleuves venant de France et d'Allemagne, notre culture nationale est une sorte de syncrétisme où l'on retrouve, mêlés l'un à l'autre et modifiés l'un par l'autre, les génies des deux races. Sollicitée

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<sup>66</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 398).

<sup>67</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 254).

<sup>68</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 257). In Lavis and Rambaud's *Histoire générale*, Pirenne (1894, 460) wrote: "c'est par elle [painting in the Middle Ages] que se sont manifestés le plus brillamment les tendances du caractère national".

<sup>69</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 253).

<sup>70</sup> HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 253).

<sup>71</sup> In Lavis and Rambaud's *Histoire générale*, Pirenne (1894, 441-442) had already emphasised the "caractère profondément ouvert des peuples de commerçants, artisans et industriels, axés sur l'activité économique et moins sensibles aux différences ethniques".

de toutes parts, elle a été largement accueillante. Elle est ouverte comme nos frontières, et l'on retrouve chez elle, à ses belles époques, le riche et harmonieux assemblage des meilleurs éléments de la civilisation franco-allemande" ["Like our soil, formed from the alluvia of rivers which come from France and Germany, our national culture is a kind of syncretism in which is found, mixed together and modified by each other, the spirits of the two races. Entreated from all sides, it is largely welcoming. It is open like our frontiers, and in it is found, in its beautiful eras, the rich and harmonious assembly of the best elements of Franco-German civilisation"].<sup>72</sup>

More concretely, as Pirenne wrote about his own time, the army is organised on the French model, the universities on the German model, while industrial methods are borrowed from England.<sup>73</sup>

In this sense, Pirenne did not explain the development of this continuity in his *History of Belgium* by means of a philosophical interpretation of history such as Lamprecht's *Kulturstufen*. Pirenne expressed it through argumentative tools and based it upon an essentialist conception of Belgian nationality. Without characterising each period by a distinctive spirit, Pirenne showed nonetheless an evolution at work in Belgian history, characterised in turn by periods of cultural and economic growth and periods of decline, such as the contrast between the cultural flowering of the Burgundian 15th century and the 17th century, which Pirenne described as lifeless.<sup>74</sup> The general principle informing this evolution is a sort of necessity which required the Revolution of 1830 and the creation of the Belgian State: Pirenne's determinism, linked to the model of "Nation-to-State".

### 3.2. Is the main thesis of Pirenne's *History of Belgium* – that of the urban civilisation as the mould for Belgian nationality – a Pirennean thesis or a Lamprechtian thesis?

A comparison of Pirenne's *Histoire de Belgique* (after 1899) and Pirenne's contribution to Lavissee and Rambaud's *Histoire générale*: "Les Pays-Bas. De 1280 à 1477" (1894) shows very clearly that Pirenne had already formulated

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<sup>72</sup>. HB I (Pirenne, 1900, IX). See also further: "Européenne dans son fond, formée de la substance de l'Allemagne et de celle de la France, mélange de romanisme et de germanisme, notre civilisation est identique en partie avec celle des deux grands États qui nous entourent" (HB I, Pirenne, 1900, XI).

<sup>73</sup>. HB VII (Pirenne, 1932, 392).

<sup>74</sup>. HB V (Pirenne, 1921, 3-7).

his thesis on Belgian history by the time the latter book was written. Summarising the period from the Middle Ages to the 15th century, Pirenne wrote:

"Cette puissante vitalité commerciale et industrielle a contribué autant que la politique à faire les Pays-Bas. Sous la force d'attraction qu'exercent les grands ports de la côte, leurs divers territoires sont, pour ainsi dire, tous orientés dans le même sens. En dépit de la diversité des races et des langues, l'unité de la vie économique les a réunis dans une même activité" ["This powerful commercial and industrial vitality contributed as much to the making of the Low Countries as politics did. Under the attractive force put out by the great ports on the coasts, its diverse territories were, so to speak, all oriented in the same direction. Despite the diversity of races and languages, the unity of economic life reunited them in the same activity"] (Pirenne, 1894, 441).

Hence, Pirenne's thesis did not derive from his correspondence with Lamprecht, but was formulated beforehand. The question now shifts to the following: Was this thesis inspired by Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte*, the third volume of which was first published in 1892? For the record, Pirenne explicitly borrowed from Lamprecht the characterisation of Belgium as a "microcosme de l'Europe occidentale" in his first volume of the *History of Belgium*.<sup>75</sup> Admittedly, he modified Lamprecht's reference to these lands as a "Mikrokosmos des gesamten Landes zwischen Rhein und Seine" [microcosm of the whole territory between the Rhine and the Seine] by broadening it to Western Europe.<sup>76</sup>

What results from comparing Pirenne's text of 1894 and Lamprecht's text of 1892? In a sense similar to Pirenne's, Lamprecht referred to this "microcosm" as a "geschlossenes Gebiet" [enclosed space] under the influence of France on one side and Germany on the other. Lamprecht also insisted on the mediating role of this region between the two countries, the unity of its artistic culture composed of Walloon and Flemish elements, and the impact of trade on the region's development. Unlike Pirenne, however, Lamprecht did not posit the activity of cities and urban institutions as the main factor in the creation of Belgian identity. He approached the cause of Belgian unity more from a cultural perspective by basing his analysis on the

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<sup>75</sup>. HB I (Pirenne, 1900, VIII).

<sup>76</sup>. DG III (Lamprecht, 1895, 195). The whole passage is the following: "Mittel- und Treffpunkt der französisch-deutschen Beziehungen mußten naturgemäß Flandern und Brabant sein, die zentralen Länder des Gebietes, Flandern selbst politisch aus deutschen und französischen Bestandteilen zusammengesetzt, ein Mikrokosmos gleichsam des gesamten Landes zwischen Rhein und Seine".

art and literature of noble society.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, Pirenne based his thesis on extensive analysis of the cities and institutions of Brabant and Flanders.

Therefore, the contrast shows that Pirenne's thesis, as it was expressed in his contribution to Lavissee and Rambaud's *Histoire générale* in 1894, is independent from Lamprecht's arguments from the third volume of *Deutsche Geschichte*. It was only later, in his *History of Belgium*, that Pirenne adopted some of Lamprecht's ideas, such as the "microcosm" and the mediating role of the "Belgian" region between France and Germany.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: HOW MUCH DOES PIRENNE'S "HISTOIRE DU POINT DE VUE DES SCIENCES SOCIALES" OWE TO LAMPRECHT'S *KULTURGESCHICHTE*?

As far as history as an academic discipline is concerned, Lamprecht and Pirenne were very active in its scholarly and scientific development and internationalisation. They both agreed that these were the main goals of history, as I have shown in the first part of the article.

However, it would be difficult to attest that Pirenne owed a 'debt' to Lamprecht for *Kulturgeschichte* in particular. It is more accurate to say that they shared in a community of thought which conceptualised history as the study of primarily social phenomena using historical methods informed by the social sciences. This community did not preclude differences or disagreements. In contrast to Lamprecht, who created a socio-psychological history, Pirenne strictly distinguished the study of society and men provided by history on the one hand, and psychology and sociology on the other.<sup>78</sup> Both employed comparison as a fundamental research method of *Kulturgeschichte* rather than merely a discursive tool of the historical narrative.<sup>79</sup> I stress this last point particularly for Pirenne. I have briefly shown that, unlike Lamprecht, Pirenne's philosophy of history is implicit and best illustrated in his determinism and essentialism. His *History of Belgium* draws upon a large

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<sup>77</sup>. See DG III (Lamprecht, 1895, 194). Dealing with the French influence on art (especially Roman architecture) and literature in Germany, Lamprecht states that the region between Rhine and Seine acted as an intermediary: "Die Hauptländer der Vermittlung aber bleiben die Niederlande und der Niederrhein, das linke Rheinufer von Köln abwärts Flandern und Brabant".

<sup>78</sup>. See Pirenne (1931, 435-445). See also Pirenne's (1898a) review of Langlois et Seignobos and *De la Méthode comparative en histoire* (Pirenne, 1923).

<sup>79</sup>. Unfortunately I could not fully develop this argument in the context of this article.

body of evidence, from the 'naturalness' of the process which resulted in the creation of a Belgian state to the definition of a Belgian character. Apart from reference to concepts like 'the masses', meaning the whole nation, probably imported from Lamprecht, and from the idea of Belgium as a 'European microcosm', the Belgian historian did not use many concepts of *Kulturgeschichte* such as *Kulturstufen* or the socio-psychic categories of human activity. Therefore Pirenne's 1931 analysis, which distinguished between two periods in Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*, seems to be relevant. Even though Pirenne did not completely disagree with Lamprecht at the time, the latter developed *Kulturgeschichte* as collective psychology; Pirenne never directly applied it to the evolution of Belgian history.

Referring to the title of the article, *Kulturgeschichte* as defined in Lamprecht's and Pirenne's points of view and through their interaction as historians, appears to have been more an example of an intellectual transfer than a "théorie fumeuse" utterly rejected by Pirenne.<sup>80</sup> I have shown that the use of *Kulturgeschichte* in Pirenne's work was selective and partial, comparable to many other cases of cultural transfer.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

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DG	Deutsche Geschichte
DWLM	Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung der materiellen Kultur des platten Landes aufgrund der Quellen zunächst des Mosellandes
HB	Histoire de Belgique

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<sup>80</sup> On the theoretical (and practical) question of cultural transfer, see a.o. Espagne (1999).



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## **Henri Pirenne en de *Kulturgeschichte* van Karl Lamprecht: intellectuele transfer of vage theorie?**

GENEVIÈVE WARLAND

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### SAMENVATTING

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Pirenne en Lamprecht waren ervan overtuigd dat geschiedenis als academische discipline zowel wetenschappelijk als internationaal moest zijn. Deze beide aspecten worden behandeld in het eerste deel van het artikel. In het tweede deel wordt aangetoond dat Pirennes werk enkel deels beïnvloed was door Lamprechts *Kulturgeschichte*. Beide auteurs meenden inderdaad dat geschiedenis hoofdzakelijk bestond uit sociale fenomenen en dat de geschiedkundige methode haar instrumenten ontleent aan de sociale wetenschap. Desondanks hield Pirenne in zijn eigen werk geen rekening met Lamprechts sociaal-psychische kader om nationale geschiedenis te interpreteren, noch met het daarbij horend concept van "culturele periodes" (*Kulturstufen*). In tegenstelling tot Lamprecht, was Pirennes opvatting van geschiedenis impliciet, zoals de teleologische en essentialistische vooronderstellingen van zijn *Histoire de Belgique* aantonen.

## Henri Pirenne et la *Kulturgeschichte* de Karl Lamprecht: transfert intellectuel ou *théorie fumeuse*?

GENEVIÈVE WARLAND

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### RÉSUMÉ

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L'objectif principal de l'histoire comme discipline académique est d'être scientifique et internationale: telle est la conviction partagée tant par Pirenne que par Lamprecht, qui cherchèrent à développer ces deux aspects, comme je l'évoque dans la première partie de l'article. La seconde partie montre que la *Kulturgeschichte* de Lamprecht n'a influencé que partiellement l'œuvre de Pirenne. Certes, tous les deux conçoivent l'histoire comme principalement constituée par les phénomènes sociaux et la méthode historique comme empruntant ses outils aux sciences sociales. Cependant, Pirenne ne prend en compte, dans son propre travail, ni le cadre socio-psychique de Lamprecht servant à interpréter les histoires nationales ni le concept afférent d'"époques culturelles" (*Kulturstufen*). Contrairement à Lamprecht, la philosophie pirenienne de l'histoire est implicite, comme le montrent les présupposés finalistes et essentialistes de son *Histoire de Belgique*.