

In all good conscience, Naar eer en geweten

Introduction by Susan Legêne, day chair, chair of KNHG, and prof. of political history at VU

Organized by KNHG,

(committee with Carla van Boxtel, Joost Dankers, Beatrice de Graaf, Leonie de Goei, Jouke Turpijn, Herman Paul and his team, Caroline van Vliet and Susan Leclercq – financial support: KB, Huygens ING, Harreveld Fonds)

Good morning colleagues, Happy to see so many colleagues, and students, from many different universities and from the Netherlands as well as Belgium. I hope this full day conference on 'The *persona* of the Historian' and organized in order to allow us to look from a certain distance to ourselves and our engagement with historical research in our time, will be inspiring.

To strengthen interaction and active reporting – see also #eereengeweten, and Historici.nl

Why this topic? Why talk about historical praxis, about professional standards, codes of ethics, academic attitudes and virtues or even codes of conduct?

The conference wells up from two sources: one is the current research projects by historians like Herman Paul and Mineke Bosch, who both we will hear today. Herman Paul, Leiden University, works in a programme called: "The Scholarly Self: Character, Habit, and Virtue in the Humanities, 1860-1930", whereas Mineke Bosch, in one of her research projects, focuses on the uses (or politics) of biography in the historical culture of the sciences, combining theoretical approaches to the 'scientific persona', mass media representations of scientists and narrative plots in popular and academic biography. Paul and Bosch differ in their approaches, as I hope we also will find out today, and although both do not necessarily focus on historians, but broader on humanities scholars, and social scientists, they both responded very positive to our invitation to share their historical approaches and views on this topic, and help us relating this to our own historical practice as well.

Because, and that is the second well for the flow of this conference: KNHG wishes to open up a debate on the issue of a professional code for historians. We very much appreciate that Antoon de Baets, who published on this topic in *Gebruik en misbruik van de geschiedenis* (2008), is with us here as well.

Why is this relevant, Do not the academic standards, the methodology of source criticism, the historiographic tradition, the review practice provide sufficient checks and balances for implicit and explicit standard setting? It was striking that some colleagues have perceived the very conference theme of In all good conscience as such as an insult: as a sign that a few control freaks wish to survey and control an area of historical inquiry, meaning making and interpretation as if the professional standards are under threat.

In this negative reaction, the intentions for today must have been misunderstood. History is a very diverse discipline, active in many institutional, formal and informal settings. We see many developments regarding historical research that need more theoretical and methodological reflection, such as the six themes selected for the workshops, regarding oral history and its sources, transparency with respect to provenance of data – both

archival and digital – , financial aspects of historical research, the historian's drive and ego, or our political and educational role. I will not further introduce these themes for you here; the keynote speakers and presenters in the workshops will do so. Indeed one of the aims of this conference is to start a discussion about a possible professional code for historians, not for a restriction the freedom of historians, but as a contribution to the development of our discipline in its contemporary context. We discuss this today in the way historians like to think: by reflecting on experiences, practices and repertoires of historical identity of other historians, in the past and the recent past. It will help us to develop a vocabulary in which to talk about these issues in the context of today.

The form: The program is structured as follows: **two key note lectures, workshops, and a final key note with discussion.** The morning is easy: you all stay here, with a coffee break and a lunch. After each lecture, we probably will have some time for a plenary discussion. During the lunch, the KNHG will have its annual meeting, and you all are invited to attend that. Without its members, KNHG would not be able to play such an active role, and we appreciate your commitment. After the lunch and meeting, we will get to the workshops. There, a case will be introduced, a referee will respond to the case presented and further elaborate on the central theme, followed by discussion. The first workshop has 1hou 15 minutes, the second somewhat shorter (everything goes faster second time) – in order to allow everyone to return to this auditorium in time for the final plenary session with the keynote lecture by Herman Paul.

Introction of the key note speakers:

Gadi Algazi (Tel Aviv, 1961) professor of history at the Department of History, Tel Aviv University, and senior editor of the journal *History & Memory*. He is also member of the editorial board of the journals *Past & Present* and *Historische Anthropologie*. He published extensively on medieval and early-modern history, on topics ranging from the history of the gift as a social transaction to the scholarly self, which is our topic today. Central in all of his work is the interplay between material, cultural and social structures and historical agency in mundane practices. In addition to his editorial work for several academic journals, Gadi Algazi publishes on contemporary Israeli politics. On 27 November prof. Algazi had a master class at the Huizinga Institute.

Mineke Bosch, professor of Modern History in Groningen. She wrote her PhD on 'The gender of science: women and higher education in the Netherlands, 1878-1948', and is also very well known for her impressive biography of Aletta Jacobs, 'A firm belief in justice' published in 2005. As mentioned before, her current research interest focuses among others on the uses (or politics) of biography in the historical culture of the sciences, combining theoretical approaches to the 'scientific persona', mass media representations of scientists and narrative plots in popular and academic biography; besides, she studies women as mediators and agents of change towards individualized society in the twentieth-century. Here concepts such as 'informal power', 'cultural mediation' and the relation between the personal and the public as mediated through a 'public persona', are used to study women's lives and women's organizations in relation to (male) politics, science and society.

Herman Paul (1978) is UHD of Historical Theory at Leiden University, Professor Extraordinarius in Secularization Studies at the University of Groningen, and a member of The Young Academy (KNAW). He is also an editor of *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*. His research project on the scholarly self examines character features, personality traits, and

(epistemic as well as moral) virtues that late nineteenth-century scholars believed to contribute to good scholarly performance. Focusing on the humanities in the decades around 1900, the project investigates how ideals of intellectual virtue were shared and traded across disciplinary boundaries, accepted or disputed on political and religious grounds, and negotiated in an ongoing interplay between the institutions that shaped the scholar's intellectual environment (universities, journals, learned societies, voluntary associations, etc.). His most recent book, published in 2014 is *Als het verleden trekt: kernthema's in de geschiedfilosofie*.