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Conflicting virtues of scholarship : moral economies in late nineteenth-century German Academia

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3. A Review of Book Reviews

Criticism and Community Formation in Book Reviews

The genre of the book review

The genre of the book review developed hand in hand with the scholarly journal. Early scholarly periodicals already printed overviews of newly published literature. From the second half of the 18th century onwards the review journal gained increasing prominence.¹ Its growing popularity was related to broader developments in scholarly communication. It had become more difficult for scholars to earn a good reputation by erudition alone. Innovative research became an increasingly indispensable requirement. The only way to ensure that your peers would be aware of the originality of your work was to publish it. This caused a strong growth of book publications.² This process was further accelerated by changes in the book printing industry. Between 1700 and 1770 European book production tripled in size.³ During these years of growth, book reviews, bibliographies and book fair catalogues provided scholars an overview of the enormous amount of newly published literature.

The reviews in these early journals are somewhat different from modern-day ones. Their function of providing an overview of the most important new publications shaped them decisively. They usually summarised the contents of the work under review without judging its merits.⁴ Soon, however, new reviewing styles became more common. The 18th-century theologian Johann Christoph Greiling recognised three ways of reviewing, stating ‘Reviewing can be seen in a historical and a philosophical meaning. In the first one it would mean: to state the contents of a book: reporting. In the philosophical meaning, however, reviewing must mean: to examine the spirit (*Geist*) of a book on the basis of the principles of the discipline (*Wissenschaft*) to which it [...] belongs. The first type of review is called announcements, the second reviews in the narrow sense. Reviewing in its wider meaning brings together both types.’⁵ Greiling first published his essay in

¹ Schneider, Ute, ‘Die Funktion wissenschaftlicher Rezensionen im Kommunikationsprozess der Gelehrten,’ in: Schneider, Ulrich Johannes Schneider (ed.), *Kultur der Kommunikation: Die europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter von Leibniz und Lessing*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2005, 279–291. 283.

² Ibid. 281–282.

³ Nicoli, Miriam, ‘Faced with the flood: scholarly working practices and editorial transformations at the highpoint of scientific publication,’ in: Holenstein, Andre, Huberts Steinke, Martin Stuber and Philippe Rogger (eds.) *Scholars in action: the practice of knowledge and the figure of the savant in the 18th century*, Brill, Leiden, 2013, 609–629. 610.

⁴ Habel, Thomas, *Gelehrte Journale und Zeitungen der Aufklärung: Zur Entstehung, Entwicklung und Erschließung deutschsprachiger Rezensionen des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Edition Lumière, Bremen, 2007. 222.

⁵ Greiling, Johann Christoph, ‘Einige allgemeine Grundsätze zu einer Theorie der Recensionen,’ *Archiv für die Physiologie*, Dritter Band, 1799, 349–385. 353.

1799 and his emphasis on the more evaluative character of the ‘philosophical review’ and the ‘review in its wider meaning’ illustrates a change in reviewing practices. Even if discussion about the preferred character of reviews — should they be informative reports or critical evaluations — continued throughout the 18th century, the latter view had already become widely accepted by the time Greiling published his analysis.⁶

By the 19th century, a third type of review had also become increasingly common. More and more reviewers refused to limit themselves to simply discussing a book and used their reviews to present their own thoughts and findings instead. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim, for example, ‘often used reviews as a platform for the elucidation of his own theories and for rebuttal of the attacks of his critics’.⁷ Late 19th-century German historians, likewise, used their book reviews to present their ‘own points of view, concepts and current research’.⁸ By the end of the 19th century, the book review had developed into a highly diversified genre that could contain elements of summarising, evaluation and the presentation of one’s own findings and convictions.

In the aftermath of the political turmoil of 1848–1849 Germany’s leading review journals had closed down.⁹ Zarncke and his collaborators jumped at this opportunity and published the first issue of the *Literarische Centralblatt* in 1850. The opening words of this issue reflected the early ideal of the review as a summary: ‘The journal [...] has given itself the task to provide a complete [...] overview of the full literary activity in Germany. To this effect, it will announce every book published in Germany [...] and it will provide explanatory notes and short reports of all important books [...]’.¹⁰ Twenty-five years later, however, Zarncke looked back at his journal as a platform for evaluation as well. He argued that the summaries had been aimed at achieving ‘a wider and higher purpose; to carry the sense for correct and exact methods of research into the widest circles and let them be established as commonly as possible’.¹¹ A quick glance at the pages of the *Centralblatt* shows that it indeed presented a mix of what Greiling would have called announcements, and reviews in both a narrow and wider sense.

One modern-day commentator has argued that ‘[...] the acknowledgement or non-acknowledgement of the scholarly accomplishment in the journal decides to a large extent about the reputation of the individual scholar and at the same time defines the scholars as a group, whose

⁶ Habel, *Gelehrte Journale und Zeitungen der Aufklärung*, 224.

⁷ Giddens, Anthony, ‘Durkheim as a Review Critic,’ *The Sociological Review*, New Series, 18(2), 1970, 171–196. 171.

⁸ Müller, ‘Geschichte machen,’ 430.

⁹ Lick, *Friedrich Zarncke*, 11–12.

¹⁰ [Zarncke, Friedrich], untitled editorial introduction, *LC*, 1 October 1850. 1.

¹¹ Zarncke, Friedrich, ‘An unsere Leser,’ *LC*, 26 December 1874. 1–2.

norms are to be observed'.¹² In this chapter I investigate how scholars assessed their peers in their capacity of reviewer. First, I will focus on the content of book reviews. What were the most common reasons to criticise a book? What were the most frequent reasons to judge an author? What qualities were reason for praise? This analysis will be based on the way in which Nöldeke and Wundt discussed the works of authors who can be categorised on the basis of very different criteria. The first section looks at authors from different disciplines. Next, the chapter pays attention to non-protestant and non-German scholars. The subsequent section takes a closer look at differences in the assessment of authors with and without academic affiliations. Initially, I also planned to consider female authors. This, however, turned out to be impracticable, because, among Nöldeke's and Wundt's more than 200 reviews, only one deals with a book written by a woman.¹³ Following these analyses, the final section deals with the way in which the language of book reviews has contributed to processes of group formation.

In the first half of this chapter the evaluation of the reviewers' attitudes towards different groups will largely be based on their most critical reviews. This analysis has both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative side is based on a distinction between positive and negative reviews. After reading all of Nöldeke's 96 reviews I have concluded that 12 of them were unambiguously negative, while 19 of Wundt's 123 reviews fit into this category.¹⁴ After counting the number of reviews of, for example, Jewish authors or authors without university affiliation I can then determine if they are more or less likely than others to be reviewed favourably. The main focus of my analysis, however, will be qualitative. I will collect the many criticisms of a variety of works of different types of authors. The resulting wide range of comments will provide an outline of the qualities Nöldeke and Wundt seized on to criticise scholarly works as well as their authors.

I have not limited myself, however, to an analysis of negative reviews. This chapter also provides an overview of the most common reasons for praise. It pays attention both to reasons to applaud a book and to the personal qualities of the authors that often merited praise. The combination of Nöldeke's and Wundt's criticisms of various groups of authors and the overview of reasons for

¹² Schneider, 'Die Funktion wissenschaftlicher Rezensionszeitschriften,' 290.

¹³ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rubinstein, Dr. Sus., die sensorielle und sensitive Sinne,' *LC*, 1875, 22.

¹⁴ In making such distinctions I follow the example of Claudia Profos Fick in her analysis of Albrecht von Haller's reviews for the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*. She distinguishes between very negative, negative, undecided, positive, and very positive reviews. I have chosen not to make a judgement on the sometime subtle difference between very negative and negative reviews: both are categorised as negative. I have categorised all others as positive. See: Profos Frick, Claudia, *Gelehrte Kritik: Albrecht von Hallers literarisch-wissenschaftliche Rezensionen in den Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen*, Schwabe, Basel, 2009. 286–287, 299. A similar subdivision in critical and uncritical reviews can be found in: Salager-Meyer, Françoise, María Ángeles Alcaraz Ariza and Maryelis Pabón Berbesí, 'Collegiality, critique and the construction of scientific argumentation in medical book reviews: a diachronic approach,' *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 2007, 1758–1174, 1752. I have been able to retrieve the sometimes anonymous reviews after consulting Maier, Bernhard, *Gründerzeit der Orientalistik*, 430–438 and Wundt, Eleonore, *Wilhelm Wundts Werk*, 7–16.

praise illustrates the way in which review journals allowed 19th-century German scholars not only to list and evaluate relevant new publications, but also to draw the outlines of a group of scholars with shared norms and practices. The final section of this chapter draws on linguistic analyses of politeness to further illustrate the way in which book reviews contributed to the shaping of a scholarly community.¹⁵ After all, book reviews can be a medium through which processes of both inclusion and exclusion can be facilitated.

Nöldeke on theology and linguistics

The *Centralblatt* presented its reviews in sixteen thematic sections, covering all the major disciplines taught at German universities. There was also a section for reviews of works that did not fit under any of the main headings.¹⁶ The expertise of Nöldeke and Wundt allowed them to write reviews for different sections. Because of the traditionally close relationship between Old Testament studies and Semitic languages, Nöldeke contributed reviews in both fields. Half of his 96 reviews featured under *Theology*, while forty were published in the *Linguistics* section. Most others were published under *History*. After all, his extensive knowledge of old Semitic texts had turned him into an expert of the early history of the Middle East as well. Wundt started writing for the *Centralblatt* before he had turned from a physiologist into a philosopher. Since he continued to review medical books after accepting his Chair of Philosophy in 1874, most of his reviews, 73 in total, were printed in the *Medicine* section. After 1874 he would, however, diversify his output. He contributed 32 reviews to the *Philosophy* and fifteen to the *Natural Sciences* section.

Nöldeke was most critical in his theological reviews: eight of his twelve negative reviews were printed in this section. In addition, one was printed in the *Linguistics* and three in the *History* section. Because he published only seven historical reviews in the 1870s, it is hard to draw any conclusions about his severity in this field. The difference between his theological and linguistic reviews, however, is noteworthy. While 8 of his 48 reviews on theological subjects were negative, this was only the case for 1 out of his 40 linguistic reviews. The one negative review on linguistics discussed a booklet by the Italian attorney Giuseppe Barzilai.¹⁷ Nöldeke admitted that ‘each dilettante has the full liberty to play with scholarly issues and to create a building without a steady fundament with

¹⁵ I will mostly draw on: Brown, Penelope and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness, Some universals in language usage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; Hyland, Ken, *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor (MI), 2004 and Myers, Greg, ‘The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles,’ *Applied Linguistics*, 10(1), 1989, 1–35.

¹⁶ Lick, *Friedrich Zarncke*, 33–35.

¹⁷ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Barzilai, Dr. G., le lettere dell’alfabeto fenicio,’ *LC*, 1876, 30.

some effort of phantasy and ingenuity'. Barzilai, however, should not have published his sloppy work — 'the reader will agree with our advice that Mr Barzilai would from now on deploy his 'nourishment — consolation — energy' more purposefully than on [...] printing [...] such a work'.

Why then, was Nöldeke so much more critical of theological works? One historian's characterisation of him as a positivist might provide a clue.¹⁸ Nöldeke repeatedly argues that theologians improperly neglect the essential distinction between scriptural authority and church dogma on the one hand and independent thinking and the use of modern critical methods of textual analysis on the other. In one review, he complained that '[...] the times when a catholic clergyman could, [...] without apostatising his church, examine the Bible with true criticism have long passed. Mr Zschokke invariably chooses the official views held by the church'.¹⁹ In another review he mockingly paraphrases a section from a book about the authenticity of the Pentateuch, in which the author argued that he knew of 'no other authority than that of the church, which leaves every examination aiming for truth the freest manoeuvring room'.²⁰ Nöldeke sneered that it indeed 'requires much less subjection of reason, to believe in the 'authenticity' of the Pentateuch [...] than to believe in the infallibility of the pope'. Another book received similar criticism; 'Indeed, for Mr Böhl, scholarly criticism no longer has any value when it is in contradiction with his religious views'.²¹ Nöldeke finally concludes that 'after all what has been said, the final verdict of this book cannot be positive'. Even people whose lack of religious dogmatism he wholeheartedly admitted were not free from Nöldeke's strict surveillance of the thin line between religion and scholarship. In his review of a history of biblical literature, he complains that even though the author 'is free from religious-dogmatic prejudices,' his attempts to paint a vivid picture make him 'clamp down too heavily on the accepted tradition, often even to its smallest features'.²²

Wundt on philosophy and medicine

A similar distinction in the treatment of works in different fields can be observed in Wundt's case. Of his 73 reviews in the *Medicine* section, only 3 were strongly dismissive. In the *Natural Sciences* section, he also published three negative reviews. Of the 32 reviews he contributed to the *Philosophy* section, however, 13 were highly critical. A closer reading of his negative reviews in the *Natural*

¹⁸ Paret, *Arabistik und Islamkunde*, 14.

¹⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Zschokke, Dr. Herm., Prof., historia sacra Antiqui Testamenti,' *LC*, 1873, 1.

²⁰ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Neteler, B., Studien über die Echtheit des Pentateuchs,' *LC*, 1873, 1.

²¹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Böhl, Ed., Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel zur Zeit Jesu,' *LC*, 1873, 37.

²² Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Fürst, Jul., Geschichte der biblischen Literatur und des jüdisch-hellenistischen Schriftthums,' *LC*, 1871, 14.

Sciences section shows that they mostly dealt with investigations in one of his own primary fields of interest, the physiology of perception. He dismisses Susanna Rubinstein's dissertation by stating that it would have been better if 'the faculty in question would have added to their gift the advice that this treatise should not be printed'.²³ A work on Weber's law was even more harshly evaluated: 'The reading of this work could be recommended as a good exercise for future natural scientists and especially physiologists. They could learn some very striking examples from this of what they should *not* do, when they aim to engage in research'.²⁴

The three dismissive reviews published in the *Medicine* section are all about works that would have fit in the philosophical section as well. Though Wundt makes some comments about the lack of originality in Ludwig Büchner's *Physiologische Bilder*, he is mostly bothered with the fact that most of the book deals with philosophical questions rather than physiological issues.²⁵ The book contained theories about the nature of the soul, consciousness and the character of thoughts. Wundt disapprovingly paraphrased Büchner's analysis of consciousness, as follows: 'The author makes it easy for himself with the problem of consciousness. Consciousness has to lie dormant in matter, we don't have the right to ask how and why'. Another medical work is criticised for its acceptance of vitalistic theories about 'life energy'.²⁶ The final book negatively reviewed in the *Medicine* section is even more harshly criticised.²⁷ The author tries to show that 'the biblical story about the descent of all people from one couple, should not just be discarded to the realm of fairy tales'. Wundt concludes that the author should not have dealt with this question because he lacked the necessary knowledge of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Most of the books critically dismissed by Wundt, however, share one characteristic: they try to understand the world through philosophies that he considered to be obsolete and speculative. Authors influenced by the tradition of *Naturphilosophie* are among his favourite foes. Johannes Volkelt's conception of dreams as 'the miraculous and the mystical, the opposite of the laws of the awake consciousness' sadly reminds him of the 'idolisation of dreams practiced in the earlier *naturphilosophische* mysticism'.²⁸ Other books are likewise dismissed for their reliance on *Naturphilosophie*.²⁹ This tradition is not the only one dismissed as old-fashioned and obsolete. One book is criticised for the way in which it compares the assumption that 'air, water, certain chemical

²³ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rubinstein, Dr. Sus., die sensoriiellen und sensitiven Sinne', *LC*, 1875, 22. The 'gift' in question would be her doctorate.

²⁴ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Preyer, W., das myophysische Gesetz', *LC*, 1874, 32. Wundt's emphasis.

²⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Büchner, Dr. Ludw., physiologische Bilder', *LC*, 1875, 49.

²⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Ranke, Dr. Joh., Prof., Grundzüge der Physiologie des Menschen', *LC*, 1873, 21.

²⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rauch, P.M., die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes', *LC*, 1873, 12.

²⁸ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Volkelt, Dr. Joh., 'Die Traum-Phantasie', *LC*, 1876, 31.

²⁹ Wundt, Wilhelm, Schellwien, Rob., 'das Gesetz der Causalität in der Natur', *LC*, 1877, 33; Wilhelm Wundt, 'Entleutner, A.F., Naturwissenschaft, Naturphilosophie und Philosophie der Liebe', *LC*, 1877, 52.

primordial matter and heat' are the 'external elementary conditions of life' to the classical theory of the four elements.³⁰ Other books are brushed off as too dependent on Fichtean idealism or dismissed as a product of Schopenhauerian idealism.³¹ An avid follower of Hegel was harshly reviewed, as well: 'In this volume, we basically have only an account of the Hegelian logic, which distinguishes itself from the master's dry tone only somewhat by the fact that it has been abundantly spiced up with more or less fitting poetic quotes'.³² After mockingly citing some of these quotes, Wundt concluded: 'These examples should suffice to show how the author has not failed to bestrew the thorny road of dialectics with manifold flowers'. A similar dismissive attitude was shown towards a book on phrenology.³³

In the light of his discussions with Fechner it is not surprising that Wundt also disapproved of any works supporting a notion of spiritism.³⁴ Since his review of Owen's and Aksakov's spiritist publications was written a full year before Zöllner's publications on spiritism and two years before Wundt's debates with Fechner and other supporters of spiritist theories, he was still convinced that it would not catch on in Germany: 'In Germany, we can only find two scholarly so-called authorities that are known to be held in high regard in spiritist circles, namely Prof. of Zoology Max Perty in Bern and Prof. of Philosophy Franz Hofmann in Würzburg, and even these men have affiliated themselves with the spiritist efforts with some reservations'.

Even though Wundt used his reviews to discredit specific philosophical traditions, he did not dismiss every author with whom he disagreed. He praised one Hegelian for his efforts to bring together Hegelian speculation and modern scientific psychology: 'Even if one cannot agree with the author on all his views, nobody will put down the lucidly and appealingly written little book without feeling very inspired'.³⁵ A book by an orthodox Herbartian was also praised. Even if Wundt was rather critical of Herbart's philosophy, he welcomed the book 'with honest pleasure, and partly exactly because it provides an understandable exposition which is as faithful as possible and which is also suitable for a wider circle, for whom Herbart's own works are hardly palatable'.³⁶ Even Wundt's favourite antagonists, the *Naturphilosophen*, could sometimes get a benevolent review. Though he negatively compares one author's 'fanciful combinations' with Darwin's bold but 'sober and careful' studies, his final judgement is mild; he wholeheartedly recommends the book to anyone

³⁰ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Preyer, Wilh., über die Erforschung des Lebens,' *LC*, 1873, 25.

³¹ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Schmitz-Dumont, Zeit und Raum,' *LC*, 1876, 30; Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Meynert, Th., Prof., zur Mechanik des Gehirnbases,' *LC*, 1875, 5.

³² Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Michelet, C.L., das System der Philosophie als exacter Wissenschaft,' *LC*, 1877, 9.

³³ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Noel, R.R., die materielle Grundlage des Seelenlebens,' *LC*, 1874, 41.

³⁴ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Owen, R.D., 1) das streitige Land 2) Psychische Studien,' *LC*, 1877, 21. For a short account of the discussion about spiritism between Wundt and Fechner, see: Chapter 2, 52.

³⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Carneri, B., Gefühl, Bewußtsein, Wille. Eine psychologische Studie,' *LC*, 1877, 9.

³⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Volkmann v. Volkmar, Dr. Wilh., Prof., Lehrbuch der Psychologie,' *LC*, 1876, 2.

interested in investigating the similarities and differences between Darwin's theory of evolution and certain ideas of growth and change that can be found in *Naturphilosophie*.³⁷

The above case studies suggest that different disciplines were shaped by different ideals of good scholarship. Researchers in linguistics and medicine had a shared understanding of these ideals. Therefore, book reviews in these disciplines tended to either take the shape of announcements or to be mostly positive. In theology and philosophy, however, there was no consensus. Both Nöldeke and Wundt defended an ideal of scholarship informed by positivism and empiricism, against what they saw as the dogmatism of grand ideas and idle speculation. In Nöldeke's theological reviews this was articulated through a recurring criticism of work marred by dogmatic religious thinking. In Wundt's philosophical writing this was expressed through a series of dismissive reviews of books influenced by equally dogmatic speculative philosophies, such as *Naturphilosophie*, phrenology, vitalism, spiritism and idealism. Before jumping to further conclusions, however, it is worthwhile to take a look at other ways in which Nöldeke's and Wundt's reviews can be categorised.

Nöldeke on nationality and religion

Especially after the Franco-German War fervent nationalism was very common among German academics. Many thought that German scholarship was superior to foreign scholarship and intimately connected to a specifically German way of thinking.³⁸ The existence of such beliefs suggests that non-German publications might be reviewed more critically than German ones. German nationalism could also take the shape of anti-Catholicism. Because a large number of German scholars were Catholic and many foreign scholars were Protestant, this religious divide did not exactly coincide with the national divide. Therefore, it is worth looking at the reception of works by both non-German and non-Protestant authors. The latter group includes not only Catholics but also Jews. After all, as one commentator argues, in the 19th century 'the place of Jews and Judaism in society and theology was a perennial question'.³⁹

In one of Nöldeke's main fields of specialisation, Old Testament studies, the question of the position of Jews is especially relevant. Nöldeke's aversion of religious — and therefore, in his eyes, uncritical — approaches to this field raises the question to what extent he might be more critical

³⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Baumgärtner, Heinr., die Weltzellen,' *LC*, 1876, 18.

³⁸ For example, see Goschler, Constantin, 'Deutsche Naturwissenschaft und naturwissenschaftliche Deutsche: Rudolf Virchow und die »deutsche Wissenschaft«, in: Jessen, Ralph and Jakob Vogel (eds.), *Wissenschaft und Nation in der Europäischen Geschichte*, Campus, Frankfurt/New York, 2002, 97–114. 110–111.

³⁹ Gerdmar, Anders, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, From Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann*, Brill, Leiden, 2009. 3.

of Jewish authors than of others. If we take Robert Irwin's description of him as a 'racial bigot' at face value, at least some antisemitism can be suspected of him.⁴⁰ After all, a tacit dislike of Jewish scholars was not uncommon in German academia.⁴¹ In addition the ideology of *Kulturprotestantismus* was widely shared among a majority of German academics and its appeal to secular teaching and research methods encouraged the portrayal of religiously inspired scholars as blatantly unscientific.⁴²

Nonetheless Jewish scholars were quite well-represented in 19th-century German Oriental and Old Testament studies. They were sometimes seen as Orientals whose customs and thoughts were closer to Biblical peoples than to Christian Germans. Therefore they were assumed to be able to mediate between East and West as well as between Biblical times and the present.⁴³ There was also a tacit assumption that their Hebrew might be better than that of others.⁴⁴ One contemporary author even started his analysis of the role of Jews in Semitic and Old Testament studies with the observation that hardly any anti-Semitic statement could be found in the scholarly literature of late 19th-century *Altorientalistik*.⁴⁵ He admitted that some scholars harboured such sentiments, but argued that 'no evidence can be found for the exclusion of Jews in this field'.⁴⁶ Even if this may be overly optimistic, Nöldeke's reflections on his Jewish students support the idea that his anti-Semitic prejudice did not run very deep: 'I now have two more Jews in my audience [...]. It seems as if through time my lectures change into an actual seminar for higher Judaism. Well, if people are this industrious, it is fine with me!'⁴⁷

Still, some of Nöldeke's reviews were quite critical of Jews and their religion. This is especially obvious when he discussed books about modern-day Judaism. His review of the first volume of Abraham Geiger's posthumously published essays mixed praise and criticism.⁴⁸ He called him 'an educated, brilliant, erudite, humane, yet spirited man', recognising the mentality of *Kulturprotestantismus*: 'He knows as an erudite researcher how so much of that which is unchangeable

⁴⁰ Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, 198.

⁴¹ Pawliczek, Aleksandra, 'Kontinuität des informellen Konsens': Die Berufungspolitik der Universität Berlin und ihre Dozenten im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik,' in: Bruch, Rüdiger von, Uta Gerhardt and Aleksandra Pawliczek (eds.), *Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Franz Steiner, Stuttgart, 2006, 69–92. 70.

⁴² Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 77.

⁴³ Joskowicz, Ari, *The Modernity of Others: Jewish Anti-Catholicism in Germany and France*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA), 2014. 5.

⁴⁴ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 77.

⁴⁵ Renger, Johannes, 'Altorientalistik und jüdische Gelehrte in Deutschland – Deutsche und österreichische Altorientalisten in Exil,' in: Barner, Wilfried and Christoph König (eds.), *Jüdische Intellektuelle und die Philologien in Deutschland 1871–1933*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2001, 247–262. 249.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁴⁷ UBL: BPL 2389, Theodor Nöldeke to Michael Jan de Goeje, 9 November 1874.

⁴⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Geiger's, Abrah., nachgelassene Schriften,' *LC*, 1875, 32.

and holy to the rigid old believers has been formed, over the course of time, and how Judaism, too, has found itself in continual development, albeit not always in a progressive way'. But Nöldeke also had some major complaints. He accused Geiger of incorrectly retracing too many features of contemporary life to Jewish traditions. He also criticised the Jewish religion, arguing that three of its practices were incompatible with modern society: the dietary laws, the 'unreasonable strictness' of the Sabbath and the practice of circumcision. Nöldeke finally characterised Geiger's positive qualities as inconsistent with his attachment to Judaism, even though his general verdict of Geiger's book was positive.

Nöldeke's review of Seligmann Meyer's critical reply to a series of anti-Semitic articles published by Hermann Messner was ambivalent, as well.⁴⁹ He called Messner's writing 'a judgement of modern Judaism that is as loveless as it is ignorant' and stated that it is easy for Meyer to counter these 'superficial and hateful allegations'. A few sentences later, however, the criticism starts again: '[he] lapses back into an apologetic style, which tends to praise everything Jewish as such and does not want to acknowledge that the tragic histories of the Jews are largely based on their own faults'. Referring to his earlier Geiger review he again mentioned dietary laws, the strictness of the Sabbath and circumcision. He even added a few lines in which he repeated the old anti-Semitic trope about the Jewish commercial spirit! Notwithstanding these elaborations, his final verdict of Meyer's booklet was again quite positive.

When reviewing books by Jewish authors that do not touch on contemporary religious practices Nöldeke's rarely mentioned their Jewishness. Still, some of his reviews would draw attention to two major weaknesses that he presented as typically Jewish. One criticism was that some Jewish authors would stick too close to 'the authority of the old Jewish tradition'.⁵⁰ I have already discussed this type of accusation in the above section on Nöldeke's most common criticism of books in the *Theology* section. The second weakness Nöldeke mentioned was one of style rather than content: 'A flaw that is, alas, common among Jewish writers, which can be found in the work of this author as well, is a too flowery account and a tendency to embellishment in the depiction of Jewish events'.⁵¹ This observation recurs repeatedly. One author was encouraged to use a more 'prosaic' style in his follow-up study.⁵² Another received the criticism that, first and foremost, he should have 'cut out some pompous expressions'.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Meyer, S., ein Wort an Herrn Hermann Messner,' *LC*, 1877, 52.

⁵⁰ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Bloch, J.H., Ursprung und Entstehungszeit der Buches Kohelet,' *LC*, 1873, 12.

⁵¹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Gross, Dr. Siegm, Menahem ben Saruk,' *LC*, 1872, 28.

⁵² Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Cassel, Dr. David, Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur,' *LC*, 1873, 12.

⁵³ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Masechet Soferim. Der talmudische Tractat der Schreiber,' *LC*, 1879, 16.

Even if Nöldeke thought that he had pointed out some typical Jewish weaknesses, we cannot conclude that he was more critical of Jews than of others. In total, he wrote 27 reviews of books by Jewish authors and four of these reviews were highly critical. These numbers do not allow us to infer that Nöldeke was strongly biased in this respect. It should also be noted that 15 out of 27 of the reviewed works written by Jewish authors were reviewed in the *Theology* section. So, although Nöldeke may have been somewhat more likely to provide a critical review of books by Jewish authors, this can also be explained by the fact that Jewish authors seemed to be more likely to publish on exactly those theological issues about which he tended to be more critical to begin with.

Nöldeke's opinion of Catholicism was not more favourable than his thoughts on Judaism. When he was asked to be an expert witness in an Austrian blood libel court case, he sarcastically commented on it to De Goeje by quoting from a Heinrich Heine poem: 'But it simply seems to me / That the rabbi and the monk / That both of them they stink'.⁵⁴ Some of his earlier critical discussions of dogmatism were also directed against Catholic scholars rather than Jews. His criticism is clearly summarised in the summary evaluation of one Catholic author's book on the Old Testament: 'The book may not contain many independent judgements'.⁵⁵ It is noticeable, however, that he usually did not discuss works by vocal Catholic authors this dismissively.

A large number of these works were text editions and translations of the Syriac Church Fathers and their contemporaries. Nöldeke's main complaints were not that these editions were lacklustre, but rather that the editor or translator could have selected texts that were more worthy of publication. An important reason for Catholic scholars to decide to publish a certain text, he noted, was the orthodoxy of their faith. He for example strongly disagreed with the grouping of texts in Gustav Bickell's *Conspectus Rei Syrorum* which was based on whether the Catholic church considered these texts to be 'orthodox' or 'heretic'.⁵⁶ Nöldeke also criticised Bickell's selection of texts in his *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter*, which showed a 'restriction to such older Church writers, who he deems to be strictly orthodox'.⁵⁷ He also dismissed a commentary on a selection of Syriac texts from archives in Rome, as follows: 'The content of most pieces contained in this

⁵⁴ UBL: BPL 2389, Theodor Nöldeke to Michael Jan de Goeje, 8 March 1885. In German, it reads: 'doch es will mich schier bedünken daß der Rabbi und der Mönch daß sie alle beide stinken'. The English translation is taken from: Schlesier, Renate, 'Homeric Laughter by the Rivers of Babylon: Heinrich Heine and Karl Marx,' in: Gelber, Mark H. (ed.), *The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine*, Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1992, 21–44. 36. Nöldeke ended up defending the Jewish defendant against the accusations.

⁵⁵ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Zschokke, Dr. Herm., Prof., historia sacra Antiqui Testamenti,' *LC*, 1873, 1.

⁵⁶ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Bickell, Gustavus, conspectus rei Syrorum,' *LC*, 1871, 30.

⁵⁷ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter übersetzt von Prof. Dr. Gust. Bickell,' *LC*, 1877, 12.

volume is, alas, once more quite insignificant, at least in comparison to the many important things that the editor could have found among the Roman manuscripts'.⁵⁸

All these boring and insignificant pieces, however, still had one point of interest; they provided an insightful picture of early Christian thought. Even if Nöldeke initially denied the value of the writings of Isaac of Antioch, he admitted that 'they are still important as a document of the views, feelings and desires of the Christian Syrians at a time, when these played a very significant role in the development of the church and its dogmas'.⁵⁹ And since he also considered many of these editions to be competently edited, he repeatedly urged his Protestant compatriots to buy these inconsequential products of Catholic scholarship anyway.⁶⁰ It should be noted, however, that this verdict cannot unequivocally be interpreted as approval of the proficiency of all Catholic scholarship; more than half of the reviewed works by vocally Catholic authors were either by Gustav Bickell or by Antonio Maria Ceriani. Still, based on his praise for these men, Nöldeke was about as likely to be critical of the work by a Catholic author as of that by a Protestant one.

Finally, there is the question of Nöldeke's verdict on foreign works. In his private correspondence, he repeatedly criticised French scholarship: 'It's a sad situation with the Arabists in Paris, anyway. Who holds the chairs of De Sacy and Quatremère? Ever since Guyard died, Derenbourg junior has the whole field for himself. Zotenberg, who's superior to all of them, is pushed completely into the background'.⁶¹ In addition, Nöldeke also repeatedly stressed that vanity was a typical French character trait.⁶² This criticism did not, however, translate into highly critical reviews of French scholarship. He was dismissive of Sédillot's *Histoire générale des Arabes*, but not remarkably critical of other French books.⁶³ The other reviewed foreign books are from various countries, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy and Russia. In total, there are 36 reviews of non-German books, 6 of which were dismissively reviewed. He may have been somewhat more critical of non-German books, but the difference is hardly significant.

Wundt on nationality and religion

Wundt's attitude towards scholars who did not fit the mould provided by the liberal nationalism of *Kulturprotestantismus* is even harder to define than Nöldeke's stance. For a start, there was less of

⁵⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Monumenta syriaca ex Romanis codicibus collecta,' *LC*, 1878, 29.

⁵⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'J. Isaaci Antiocheni,' *LC*, 1873, 8.

⁶⁰ For example, see Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Ausgewählte Gedichte der syrischen Kirchenväter,' *LC*, 1872, 28.

⁶¹ UBL: BPL 2389, Theodor Nöldeke to Michael Jan de Goeje, 3 August 1886.

⁶² UBL: BPL 2389, Theodor Nöldeke to Michael Jan de Goeje, 27 November 1858 and 15 September 1859.

⁶³ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Sédillot, L.-A., Prof., histoire générale des Arabes,' *LC*, 1877, 35.

a Jewish presence in both the medical and the philosophical community than in Old Testament studies and Semitic linguistics. Alexandra Pawliczek's study of Jews appointed at the University of Berlin suggests that the faculty of law was the most welcoming to Jews; more than a quarter of the appointees were from Jewish families.⁶⁴ Almost 10% of the people of Jewish descent who finished their *Habilitation*, would end up as full professors. Although the number of Jews at the medical faculty was higher than at the law faculty, only 3% of the Jews with a medical *Habilitation* would become full professors. The faculty of philosophy, finally, offered even fewer career opportunities to Jewish scholars. And, since Jewish scholars were not uncommon in Semitic studies, the share of people with a Jewish background in other disciplines within this faculty, such as philosophy, must have been strikingly low.

The people of Jewish decent whose books Wundt reviewed are a religiously diffuse group. Many of the Jewish orientalists either taught as *Privatdozenten* at the periphery of the university system or worked at Jewish religious and educational institutions.⁶⁵ Staying at the periphery of the academic hierarchy, they did not have to compromise their religious convictions and could maintain a close relationship with their faith communities. The medical authors discussed by Wundt, however, were more dependent on institutions. Physiological and anatomical investigations required workspaces, research materials and tools that were only available at the well-endowed research institutes of German academia. Within these institutions there was a high pressure to convert to Christianity. Of all German professors of Jewish descent about 13% had not been baptised.⁶⁶ Most people with a Jewish background reviewed by Wundt had made their career as mainstream supporters of *Kulturprotestantismus*. Authors like Julius Bernstein, Jacob Henle and Rudolf Heidenhain came from Jewish families but presented themselves as Protestants. And since one's religious background is not as self-evidently relevant to medical research as to Old Testament studies, it is hardly surprising that it is not possible to discern a distinct attitude towards the work of Jewish authors in Wundt's reviews.

Wundt did not have any religiously motivated reason to be sceptical of the medical literature written by Catholics either. Many books by Catholic authors at the German market were written by Austrians. During the second half of the 19th-century Austrian medical research was highly regarded across Europe. The re-emergence of the Vienna Medical School heralded what has been

⁶⁴ Pawliczek, 'Kontinuität des informellen Konsens,' 73–75.

⁶⁵ On Jewish research and educational institutions, see: Trautmann-Waller, Céline, 'Selbstorganisation jüdischer Gelehrsamkeit und die Universität seit der »Wissenschaft des Judentums«, in: Barner, Wilfried and Christoph König (eds.), *Jüdische Intellektuelle und die Philologien in Deutschland 1871–1933*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2001, 77–86.

⁶⁶ Hammerstein, Notker, 'Universitäten in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik und der Antisemitismus,' in: Barner, Wilfried and Christoph König (eds.), *Jüdische Intellektuelle und die Philologien in Deutschland 1871–1933*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2001, 25–34. 30.

called a ‘Golden Age of medicine in Vienna’.⁶⁷ The Vienna General Hospital led the way in pathological anatomy and clinicopathological correlations.⁶⁸ Physiology was well represented by Ernst Brücke.⁶⁹ Wundt recognised the merit of the leading figures of the Vienna School and reviewed their works positively. In one review he even explicitly mentioned the merit of Vienna’s physiological institute.⁷⁰ His review of Brücke’s *Vorlesungen über Physiologie* was also concluded with praise: ‘Neither the professional physiologist nor the student will indeed put these lectures aside without having derived a large amount of instruction from it’.⁷¹ In the same issue of the *Centralblatt*, he also praised a study by Brücke’s colleague, Joseph Hyrtl: ‘We have no doubts that [this research method] will receive more attention than it has received so far, thanks to this work by the famous Viennese anatomist’.⁷²

All in all, there’s no compelling reason to assume that Wundt was more critical of either non-Germans or non-Protestants. Even if I have not been able to establish the nationality of all authors whose work he reviewed, it is likely that he is as critical of works by German authors as of those by others. At least 39 of his reviews discuss books by non-German authors, so a maximum of 84 reviews are of books by Germans. I have not been able to identify the nationality of four of the authors whose books were harshly reviewed, though they all have German-sounding names.⁷³ If we assume that of these people Jos. Raith is Austrian, based on the fact that his book has been published in Vienna, it seems permissible to assume that the other three authors, whose books have been published in Germany, are German.⁷⁴ If this is the case that would mean that thirteen out of a maximum of 84 German books have been reviewed dismissively. This amounts to more or less the same ratio of critical reviews as can be found for the total corpus.

⁶⁷ Vogl, Alfred, ‘Six hundred years of medicine in Vienna: A History of the Vienna School of Medicine,’ *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 1967, 43(4), 292–299. 290–291.

⁶⁸ Schagen, Udo, ‘Germany, Austria, and Switzerland,’ in: *The Oxford Companion to Medicine*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001. (accessed 25 October 2017 at:

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192629500.001.0001/acref-9780192629500-e-208>)

⁶⁹ Vogl, ‘Six hundred years of medicine in Vienna,’ 293.

⁷⁰ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Exner, Dr. Sigm., Privatdoc., Leitfaden bei der mikroskopischen Untersuchung thierischer Gewebe,’ *LC*, 1873, 26.

⁷¹ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Brücke, Ernst, Vorlesungen über Physiologie,’ *LC*, 1873, 39.

⁷² Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Hyrtl, Dr. Jos., Prof., die Corrosions-Anatomie,’ *LC*, 1873, 39.

⁷³ The reviews in question are: Wilhelm Wundt, ‘Schmitz-Dumont, Zeit und Raum,’ *LC*, 1876, 30; ‘Raith, Jos., Entdeckungen im Gebiete der geistigen Verrichtungen des Centralnervensystems,’ *LC*, 1877, 10; ‘Krause, Alb., die Gesetze des menschlichen Herzens,’ *LC*, 1877, 14; ‘Entleutner, A.F., Naturwissenschaft, Naturphilosophie und Philosophie der Liebe,’ *LC*, 1877, 52.

⁷⁴ Schmitz-Dumont is published in Leipzig, Widemann in Schoss-Chemnitz, Krause in Schauenburg, and Entleutner in München.

Nöldeke on academic insiders

The authors whose books have been reviewed can be categorised in a different way, as well. Most works have been written by people with a university affiliation. Some books, however, were published by unaffiliated authors. Because I have not been able to collect sufficient biographical details about all authors, I have defined this group of unaffiliated authors as consisting of two sub-groups. The first contains all people whose non-academic career could be established. This group largely consists of clergymen, high school teachers and publicists. The second sub-group contains people about whose career I could not find any information. Because German biographical dictionaries usually include lesser-known publishing *Privatdozenten*, and since authors with an academic affiliation often mention this on the title pages of their books, I have assumed that these people also worked outside of the academic establishment.⁷⁵

One of the tasks that reviewers set themselves was to clearly distinguish true academic accomplishments from the work of dilettantes. Some expressions in Zarncke's 1874 retrospective essay also emphasise this ambition: 'Serious scholarly criticism has retreated to specialised journals, the wider public and even the scholar with an interest outside his own field are clueless. It was necessary to create an organ that envisioned a comprehensive overview of scholarly literature, aiming for the most exhaustive completeness while still not renouncing the strictest standards of our scholarship in any way. [...] In this way, one can hope to accomplish another, higher goal — that of carrying the sense of correct and exact research methods into wider circles'.⁷⁶

The scholars with an academic affiliation form quite a diverse group. There is a significant difference in status between someone who just finished his dissertation and a full professor. Before I discuss the evaluation of the work of established scholars and academic outsiders, I will therefore look at reviews of dissertations. Their authors found themselves in an intermediate category between the establishment and the scholarly periphery. They did not have the academic experience of even the most recently appointed *Privatdozent*, but they were affiliated to universities where their work was held up to the scholarly standards of examination committees and *Doktorvaters*. It is noticeable that Wundt hardly reviewed any dissertations for the *Centralblatt*. The only one was Susanna Rubinstein's study.⁷⁷ Not only does this one, highly critical review tell us little about Wundt's attitude towards young scholars, the author is also untypical as the only woman to have her book reviewed by Wundt or Nöldeke in the *Centralblatt*, in the 1870s.

⁷⁵ References to a large number of biographical dictionaries and lexica can be found at: <http://www.zeno.org/>.

⁷⁶ Zarncke, Friedrich, 'An unsere Leser,' *LC*, 26 December 1874. 1.

⁷⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rubinstein, Dr. Sus., die sensorielle und sensitive Sinne,' *LC*, 1875, 22.

More than 10% of Nöldeke's reviews, however, concerned dissertations. Only one of these reviews was highly critical.⁷⁸ This dissertation argued that Muhammed used to be a faithful Christian until pride and lewdness made him stray from the path of righteousness. Nöldeke concluded that, 'it will not be easy to convert this reviewer to such curious views as those presented here, even if they would have been put forward in a less dilettantish fashion'. This stern judgement of a dissertation was not typical. Though Nöldeke often found something to criticise in the work of the new doctors, he usually praised them, as well. He then brushed his initial criticisms aside as trivialities and concluded with a variation on the same welcoming words. 'We hope that we can meet the author again as a contributor to the field of Oriental studies,' were the closing words of one of his reviews.⁷⁹ 'We expect quite some contributions to scholarship of this young scholar, who can already present such a competent accomplishment and we express the hope that he will not limit himself to the Arabic grammar,' was the last sentence of another review.⁸⁰ Martin Houtsma's dissertation merited a review which closed as follows: 'We are looking forward with high expectations to Houtsma's promised investigations about the further development of the Islamic dogmatics'.⁸¹ Dissertations were evaluated by Nöldeke not only on their content, but also on the promise they showed.

The ultimate insiders of the academic community were the professors. Of the books reviewed by Nöldeke, however, only about one third had been published by someone who was either an *Ordinarius* or an *Extraordinarius*. These professors received dismissive reviews as often as others did. Most of these critical reviews were published in the *Theology* section. Although Nöldeke admitted that he was free from 'religious-dogmatic prejudice' he argued that a Leipzig professor still clung too much to 'tradition' in order to paint a 'colourful picture'.⁸² The work by a Professor of Old Testament Studies in Vienna was casually dismissed with the observation that he 'invariably chooses for the official views held in the church'.⁸³ About a German Protestant teaching in Vienna, Nöldeke concluded that, for him, 'scholarly criticism no longer has any value, when it is in contradiction with his religious views'.⁸⁴ A professor at the *Collège de France* was criticised for a lack of criticism. Nöldeke argued that he did not seriously make use of the critical investigations by

⁷⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Bethge, Frideric., Raḥmān et Aḥmad,' *LC*, 1872, 26.

⁷⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Sasse, C.J. Franz, Prolegomena in Aphrastis Sapientis Persae sermones homilecticos,' *LC*, 1879, 13.

⁸⁰ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Fünf Streitfragen der Basrener und Kufenser [...] herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Dr. Jaromir Košut,' *LC*, 1878, 38.

⁸¹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Houtsma, M.Th., de strijd over het dogma,' *LC*, 1875, 34.

⁸² Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Fürst, Dr. Jul., Prof., Geschichte der biblischen Literatur und des jüdisch-hellenistischen Schriftthums,' *LC*, 1871, 14.

⁸³ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Zschokke, Dr. Herm., Prof., historia sacra Antiqui Testamenti,' *LC*, 1873, 1.

⁸⁴ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Böhl, Ed., Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel zur Zeit Jesu,' *LC*, 1873, 37.

others, did not show the ability to be critical himself, and was too dependent on secondary sources.⁸⁵ All in all, someone's position as a professor hardly seems to have influenced the severity of Nöldeke's reviews. Most of his dismissive reviews of professorial production can be traced back to his earlier observed tendency to be highly critical of works influenced by religious dogma or tradition, which is discernible in his reviews of scholars of all denominations.

Wundt on academic insiders

The difference between the evaluation of work by professors and that by others is more clear in the reviews by Wundt. Of his 79 reviews of works by *Ordinarien* and *Extraordinarien*, only 5 were explicitly dismissive. This number is very low, compared to his total number of 19 out of 123 negative reviews. The above sections already mention that a remarkably high number of Wundt's most critical reviews can be found in the *Philosophy* section. Even his negative reviews in other sections tend to deal with philosophical issues.

Of Wundt's dismissive reviews of professorial publications, only one was printed in the medical section and one other in the section dedicated to the natural sciences. Two of the dismissively reviewed professorial books are by one author: Wilhelm Preyer. The first is his *Über die Erforschung des Lebens* in which he expounds his theory of the four elements. The other is *Das myophysische Gesetz*, which Wundt criticised for containing mistaken interpretations of physiological experiments that invalidate the books attempts to understand Weber's Law.⁸⁶ The other negative reviews — all published in the *Philosophy* section — criticise the outmoded idealistic character of the discussed works. Even if Schopenhauerian idealism and Hegelian dialectics were perfectly respectable in late 19th-century German academia, we have already seen that Wundt was highly critical of these traditions, which he considered to be irremediably old-fashioned and unscientific.⁸⁷ All in all, however, Wundt seems to have either highly valued the work of his professorial peers or to have been careful not to be too dismissive of those people who had proved to be able to make an academic career. This inclination is particularly noticeable in his reviews of books about medical and the natural sciences. Works on philosophical topics could still expect critical scrutiny.

A quick comparison of Nöldeke and Wundt shows that in both cases an author's academic affiliation could have high predictive value for his chance to receive a positive review. However, in

⁸⁵ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Sédillot, L.-A., Prof., histoire générale des Arabes,' *LC*, 1877, 35.

⁸⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Preyer, W., das myophysische Gesetz,' *LC*, 1874, 32.

⁸⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Meynert, Th., Prof., zur Mechanik des Gehirnbanes,' *LC*, 1875, 5; 'Michelet, C.L., das System der Philosophie als exacter Wissenschaft,' *LC*, 1877, 9.

Nöldeke's case this mostly shows in his treatment of doctoral dissertations. These were judged not only on the value of their contents but also on whether they promised valuable future contributions by their authors. This benevolent interest in doctoral dissertations cannot be recognised in Wundt's reviews because he hardly reviewed any. What is noticeable, however, is that authors with a professorial appointment were more likely to be positively reviewed than authors without such a position. Professorial authors could not, however, get away with everything. If they discussed philosophical issues, they still risked critical scrutiny.

Nöldeke on academic outsiders

Academic outsiders also stand out. Seven of Nöldeke's negative reviews are of books by academic outsiders. Bernard Neteler was the vicar of Loburg Castle, Joseph Samuel Bloch was still two years away from his doctorate in Zürich, Adolf Brühl was a teacher at the *Philanthropin* in Frankfurt, Adolf Koch was a gymnasium professor in Schaffhausen, Giuseppe Barzilai was an attorney in Trieste, and John Mühleisen-Arnold was the rector of St. Mary's Church in Capetown. I could hardly find any information about Georg Janichs. The title page of the 1871 edition of his *Animadversiones criticae* shows that he held a doctorate in philosophy and a licentiate in theology.⁸⁸ Nöldeke seems not to have known Janichs; he did not recognise the book as a reprint of his licentiate's thesis.⁸⁹ Nöldeke's main criticism of him was that his knowledge was simply insufficient. He described the small book as 'merely preparatory work', arguing a point that would 'not be doubted by any modern-day expert', based on unsatisfactory knowledge of Syriac.⁹⁰ Nöldeke criticised some of the other outsider authors for their lack of basic academic skills, as well. Giuseppe Barzilai is put aside as a 'dilettante'.⁹¹ Mühleisen-Arnold is said to miss 'the necessary knowledge for scholarly judgement of the Islam'.

Apart from the accusation of dilettantism, we also find the well-known accusation of a religiously inspired lack of criticism. This comes as no surprise because Arnold-Mühleisen and Bernard Neteler were clergymen, while Bloch would choose for the rabbinate after finishing his doctorate. On Mühleisen-Arnold, Nöldeke commented that 'his theological point of view and his theological bias do not allow him an unprejudiced judgement about a non-Christian religion at all'. Neteler

⁸⁸ Janichs, Georgius, *Animadversiones Criticae in versionem Syriacam Peschitthonianam Librorum Kobeleth et Ruth*, Schletter'sche Buchhandlung, Breslau, 1871.

⁸⁹ This becomes apparent from the title page of the earlier edition: Janichs, Georgius, *Animadversiones Criticae in versionem Syriacam Peschitthonianam Librorum Kobeleth et Ruth*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1869.

⁹⁰ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Janichs, Georg, animadversiones criticae in versionem Syriacam Peschitthonianam,' *LC*, 1871, 49.

⁹¹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Barzilai, Dr. G., le lettere dell'alfabeto fenicio,' *LC*, 1876, 30.

‘knows no other authority than that of the church’.⁹² Bloch, finally, allows ‘the authority of the old Jewish tradition’ to inform an uncritical relationship with his source material.⁹³ All in all, people from outside the university system, often, were more likely to be critically evaluated by Nöldeke than others, because among them he found not only a large contingent of dilettantes but also an above-average number of religiously informed authors. And in his eyes both dilettantism and religious dogmatism were among the biggest threats of good scholarship.

Wundt on academic outsiders

Wundt’s critical attitude towards non-academic authors is even more pronounced than Nöldeke’s. Though he wrote fewer reviews of works of such outsiders, he wrote a higher number of critical ones. Out of a total of 24 reviews of outsiders 13 reviews were dismissive. Seven of these outsiders worked as either a surgeon, doctor or assistant doctor, and only one of Wundt’s reviews of these medical professionals was negative. That means that almost two thirds of the authors who were affiliated to neither a university nor a hospital were reviewed critically. Among these people we find the rector of a Catholic Gymnasium, an attorney, a philosophically inclined politician and a theologian.

Almost all the authors dismissively reviewed by Wundt wrote books that he reviewed in the *Philosophy* section. This discipline clearly attracted the highest number of unaffiliated authors. However, two books about both medicine and the natural sciences received Wundt’s disapproval as well. One of these was the book that aimed to show that ‘the biblical story about the descent of all people from one couple, should not simply be discarded to the realm of fairy tales’.⁹⁴ The other critically evaluated medical treatise was the book in which the author did not allow the reader to ask why consciousness had the character he ascribed to it.⁹⁵

Even though many negatively reviewed philosophical authors lacked a university affiliation, this did not necessarily imply their lack of academic education. Two of them, for example, were closely associated with Friedrich Nietzsche. Paul Widemann was a former student of Nietzsche, while Paul Rée was one of the philosopher’s best friends.⁹⁶ Wundt, however, was very critical of Nietzsche’s philosophy. In a 1877 contribution to *Mind*, he summarised his position as follows: ‘In the writings

⁹² Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Neteler, B., Studien über die Echtheit des Pentateuchs,’ *LC*, 1873, 1.

⁹³ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Bloch, J.H., Ursprung und Entstehungszeit der Buches Kohelet,’ *LC*, 1873, 12.

⁹⁴ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Rauch, P.M., die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes,’ *LC*, 1873, 12.

⁹⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Büchner, Dr. Ludw., physiologische Bilder,’ *LC*, 1875, 49.

⁹⁶ Small, Robin, *Nietzsche and Rée: A star friendship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005. Though the emphasis of the book is on the relationship between Nietzsche and Rée, Widemann is mentioned on page 4.

of Nietzsche and others of his stamp, the pessimistic mood is combined in a very peculiar way with an enthusiastic devotion to certain ideas closely related to religious mysticism'.⁹⁷ This did not bode well for his reviews of Nietzsche's associates and indeed the sour conclusion to his evaluation of Rée's book states that though it is 'not without interest as a peculiar product of the ethics of modern-day pessimism,' this interest, was 'psycho-pathological' rather than intellectual.⁹⁸

The other highly critical reviews of authors without academic affiliation can be divided into three categories: people advocating new but unpromising fads, authors propagating outmoded philosophies and those who misrepresented Kant. The first group largely consisted of the advocates of spiritism. The only redeeming value of Johannes Volkelt's work on dreams was that it showed that '[...] where superstition has gained such a regrettable pervasion as is the case with contemporary spiritism, the philosophical expression of such intellectual currents cannot be absent either'.⁹⁹ He was also glad to notice in another review that spiritism's reception in Germany convincingly showed it to be 'an exotic growth in Germany [...] that does not truly prosper among us'.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, a critical discussion of spiritism merited praise: 'Hopefully [this booklet] contributes to this purpose, which is that the unhealthy fusion of alleged natural science with spiritist mysticism [...] will soon have played its part'.¹⁰¹

Examples of negative reviews of works propagating outdated philosophies have already been mentioned in this chapter. These were the books grounded in Schopenhauerian idealism, Fichtean idealism, phrenology, vitalism, and, most importantly, *Naturphilosophie*.¹⁰²

Finally, interpreters of Kant received strong criticism. Wundt was not a supporter of the Neo-Kantianism that had gained popularity at Germany universities in the late 19th century. Since he believed that 'the philosophy of a time is a mirror image of the spirit of that time,' he did not believe that a century-old philosophy would be the most promising intellectual starting point to understand modern-day questions.¹⁰³ He valued Kant's work, however, both as an important barrier against the high-minded claims of idealism and as a counterweight to the crude positivism of the late 19th century.¹⁰⁴ A strong indebtedness to Kant was therefore on itself not a reason to single someone out for criticism. A misrepresentation of his thought, however, was a sure-fire way to find yourself

⁹⁷ Young, Julian, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010. 238.

⁹⁸ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rée, Dr. Paul, der Ursprung der moralischen Empfindungen,' *LC*, 1877, 52.

⁹⁹ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Volkelt, Dr. Joh., 'Die Traum-Phantasie,' *LC*, 1876, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Wundt, Wilhelm, '1) Owen, H.D., das streitige Land 2) Psychische Studien,' *LC*, 1877, 21.

¹⁰¹ Wundt, Wilhelm, Schmidt, Osc., Prof., die naturwissenschaftlichen Grundlagen der Philosophie des Unbewussten,' *LC*, 1877, 30.

¹⁰² See, 101–102.

¹⁰³ Wundt, Wilhelm, *Erlebtes und Erkanntes*, 124–125.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

critically reviewed by Wundt. An attempt to explain the nature of feeling through Kantian categories of understanding is dismissed in a short review. Even if Wundt acknowledges the author's 'ingenuity and great labour', he states that he has 'to deny that the result corresponds with these efforts of ingenuity and labour'.¹⁰⁵ In his eyes, the proposed relationships between Kantian categories and feeling were highly implausible. Another discussion of Kant was dismissed for a very different reason. Wundt argued that the book was about its author's own interpretations rather than about Kant.¹⁰⁶

Nöldeke's praise

Even if the criticism that Nöldeke and Wundt levelled against those publications that they did not like provides rather clear outlines of the sort of scholarship they appreciated, their positive commentary merits a closer look as well. An investigation of this yields a more clearly defined picture of what these liberal *Kulturprotestanten* considered to be praiseworthy in scholarly works. A first look at their positive reviews shows that their praise can be divided into two broad categories: praise of the work under review and praise of its author.

Many of Nöldeke's reviews contain rather similar observations. '[These texts] may not be very valuable, poetically, but they are interesting as attempts at Christian epic poetry and they have some importance for grammar and lexicon,' was his comment on a chrestomathy.¹⁰⁷ His review of another book concluded with the following encouraging words: 'May it be granted to him that he will bring his life's work to an end with serene energy, a work that will be of great use for scholarship for a very long time'.¹⁰⁸ De Goeje's edition of al-Mokadassi's geographical work was praised as 'a book that increases our knowledge of the Orient in an excellent way' while an edition of an old dictionary was praised as 'a most rich reference book about the localities found in the ancient Arabic poetry and in a part of the traditional literature'.¹⁰⁹ In these and other reviews certain terms appear over and over again. These include important (*wichtig*), significant (*bedeutend*), rich (*reich*), valuable (*werthvoll*) and useful (*nützlich*). These words suggest a view of the production of new knowledge as adding pieces to a jigsaw puzzle. The more pieces we collect, the better we will be able to see the full picture.

¹⁰⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Krause, Albr., die Gesetze des menschlichen Herzens,' *LC*, 1877, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Kirchmann, J.H. v., Erläuterungen zu Kant's Schriften zur Naturphilosophie,' *LC*, 1878, 24.

¹⁰⁷ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Zingerle, P. Pius, Chrestomathia Syriaca,' *LC*, 1872, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Frensdorff, Dr. S., Prof., die Massora Magna,' *LC*, 1876, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Descriptio imperii Moslemici,' *LC*, 1877, 28; 'Das geographische Wörterbuch,' *LC*, 1877, 52.

All new text editions and analyses could be important and useful, from this point of view. These new pieces of scholarly production could also be seen as belonging to a number of different puzzles. An old edition of ancient Arabic poetry would not only add to a more complete picture of a poetic tradition, but it would also contribute to our knowledge of the Arabic language and to the understanding of the culture and history of its era. Because of the many fields to which any new piece of knowledge could contribute, it was not a problem if a text was not relevant to all fields. Bad poetry could still be linguistically valuable and editions of dogmatic theological treatises by minor Church Fathers could still be historically significant.

Another form of praise dealt with the aesthetic qualities of a text. ‘We do not only find here a history but also an aesthetic evaluation of the poetic parts [of the Old Testament] with numerous tasteful translations, which are well-suited to give the educated lay person a notion of this literature,’ is Nöldeke’s opinion on a history of Jewish literature.¹¹⁰ He also states that the second volume of Geiger’s posthumously published writings is ‘fresh and warm’ and emphasises ‘the humane undertone of [Geiger’s] being’ that characterises all his work.¹¹¹ Dozy received similar praise: ‘That the book commends itself through its brilliant conception and glowing exposition, goes in Dozy’s case without saying’.¹¹² A good writing style was highly appreciated. Complimentary words like clear (*klar*), attractive (*anziehend*), tasteful (*geschmackvoll*), stimulating (*anregend*), or a more modest very readable (*recht lesbar*) recurred often in Nöldeke’s reviews. These compliments, however, were not as weighty as those about significance and usefulness. Nöldeke did not bother to compliment otherwise useless books with engaging writing styles, while badly written books could still be praised for their importance.

A final common type of praise consisted of compliments that referred to an authors’s supposed character traits. Nöldeke’s review of a catalogue of the Oriental manuscript collection of the University Library in Leiden states that ‘[...] the work will forever stay a monument to the industriousness, the scholarship and the ingenuity of several generations of Leiden orientalis’t.¹¹³ Reviewing a text edition by his former student, Barth, he emphasised that ‘[...] the editor was very well prepared for such a task, which requires painful diligence, even in details’.¹¹⁴ Another work was described as ‘a worthy monument to the industriousness and the cautiousness of the editor’.¹¹⁵ The most common words of praise were industriousness (*Fleiß*), diligence (*Sorgsamkeit*) and

¹¹⁰ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Cassel, Dr. David, Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur,’ *LC*, 1873, 12.

¹¹¹ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Geiger’s, Abraham, nachgelassene Schriften,’ *LC*, 1876, 7.

¹¹² Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Dozy, R., Essai sur l’histoire de l’Islamisme,’ *LC*, 1879, 13.

¹¹³ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Catalogus codicum orientalium,’ *LC*, 1874, 15.

¹¹⁴ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Ta’lab’s Kitāb al-Faṣiḥ,’ *LC*, 1876, 1.

¹¹⁵ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Berliner, Dr. A., die Massorah zum Targum Onkelos,’ *LC*, 1877, 10.

cautiousness (*Umsicht*). These could be complemented with terms referring to the intellectual prowess of the author, such as ingenuity (*Scharfsinn*), scholarship (*Gelehrsamkeit*) and the ability and willingness to think critically. A praiseworthy book, then, was written by an author showing both industriousness and intellectual prowess and added another piece of the puzzle to at least one field of knowledge. Only if the book met both of these demands, it could also be praised for its engaging presentation.

Wundt's praise

The first section of this chapter notes that reviews can take different shapes; some are primarily announcements while other have a highly evaluative character. Nöldeke's reviews were highly evaluative, but not exclusively so. Many of his reviews were long and contained some of his own findings, too. These long reviews contrasted with Wundt's usually shorter reviews. A good deal were basically announcements in which he provided a short description of the work under review without explicitly judging its merit. This means that, of the books that he did not dismiss, many did not receive a large amount of explicit praise, either.

He did, however, also give some compliments. One recurring reason for praise concerned the relevance of the reviewed book. A book on microscopic research was praised as follows: 'As a result of its inclusion of many completely new ways of experimenting, it will be a welcome addition for those who own one of the major works on microscopic technology by Frey, Harting, and others'.¹¹⁶ A study on bone growth also received an honourable mention: 'In the work at hand, Kölliker has extensively outlined one of the most important parts of his research about the growth and development of bones. The presented facts are particularly relevant to [a] recently much discussed question [...]'¹¹⁷ Another book was praised because 'our literature does not yet possess a work that, in a similar way, provides a generally understandable [...] exposition of the brain's anatomy'.¹¹⁸ The continued emphasis on newness suggests another view of the growth of knowledge than that of Nöldeke. Nöldeke's jigsaw model of knowledge production did not emphasise the newness of findings, but the way in which these findings would fit in with existing ideas about scripture, history, or language. Wundt, however, was enthralled by the possibilities of new insights as more than just enrichments of received knowledge. New intellectual developments

¹¹⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Exner, Dr. Sigm. Privatdoc., Leitfaden bei der mikroskopischen Untersuchungen thierischer Gewebe,' *LC*, 1873, 26.

¹¹⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Kölliker, Alb., Prof., die normale Resorption des Knochengewebes,' *LC*, 1874, 22.

¹¹⁸ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Luys, J., Arzt, das Gehirn, sein Bau und seine Verrichtungen,' *LC*, 1878, 1.

and new research methods had the power to refute and replace older ideas.¹¹⁹ In Wundt's eyes, the most promising scholarship built on such new insights and tools. Contribution to new developments, therefore, was the most sure-fire way to get Wundt's praise.

Like Nöldeke, Wundt also discussed matters of presentation. Some of his praise sounds similar to that by Nöldeke: 'everywhere, the elegant form has been made to fit the brilliant content, which often sparkles with wit and passion'.¹²⁰ Most of his praise, however, was reserved for effective and beautiful illustrations. A work on the larynx was praised because 'it was illustrated with numerous and excellent woodcuts in such a way that it can indeed not be difficult even for the anatomically and physiologically uneducated to obtain a rather extensive knowledge of the important organ'.¹²¹ Sometimes Wundt also shared some more general reflections on the usefulness of new methods of illustration. One of these was *Lichtdruck*, a collotype process developed in the late 1890s by Max Gemoser. Collotype was 'the first viable commercial printing process capable of translating the continuous tones of photography into [...] printer's ink'.¹²² Wundt was very enthusiastic about it, in his following review: 'The attached four plates in collotype have turned out excellently and give a renewed proof of the beautiful enrichment, which the anatomic exposition has gained with the adaption of photography'.¹²³

In another review, however, he expressed some doubts about the technique: 'Several of the lithographed plates have been taken from the author's *Anatomie de Gehirnnerven*. The others contain cross-sections of the head in Gemoserian collotype. [...] The delicate proportions of the construction of [the brain] can clearly still be reproduced more faithfully through copperplate and even through woodcut [...] than by means of collotype'.¹²⁴ Wundt's ambiguous attitude towards photography is typical of his time. From the 1870s onwards, collotype was successfully used for the 'illustration of some grosser abnormalities and pathologies' while the depiction of more delicate phenomena 'suffered from an absence of clear spatial and colouristic differentiation'.¹²⁵ Even if presentation and illustration obviously mattered to Wundt, a book did not receive a positive review

¹¹⁹ The theory of evolution is a constantly recurring theme in Wundt's reviews. For example, see Wundt, Wilhelm, 'His, Wilh., unsere Körperform,' *LC*, 1875, 32; 'Lamarck, Jean, 'zoologische Philosophie,' *LC*, 1876, 18; 'Sterne, Carus, Werden und Vergehen,' *LC*, 1876, 31. On the benefits of microscopy, for example, see Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Henle, Dr. J., Prof., Handbuch der Nervenlehre des Menschen,' *LC*, 1872, 39; 'Boll, Dr. Franz, Privatdoc., die Histologie und Histogenese der nervösen Centralorgane,' *LC*, 1873, 51; 'Strassburger, Dr. Ed. Prof., über Zellbildungen u. Zelltheilung,' *LC*, 1876, 2.

¹²⁰ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Henle, J., anthropologische Vorträge,' *LC*, 1877, 27.

¹²¹ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Merkel, Dr. C. Ludw., der Kehlkopf,' *LC*, 1873, 32.

¹²² Ward, Gerald W.R. (ed.), *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, 113.

¹²³ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Braune, Wilh. Und A. Trüdiger, die Venen der menschlichen Hand,' *LC*, 1874, 19.

¹²⁴ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Rüdinger, Dr. u. Prof., topographisch-chirurgische Anatomie des Menschen,' *LC*, 1874, 37.

¹²⁵ Kemp, Martin, 'Medicine in View: Art and Visual Representation,' in: Loudon, Irvine, *Western Medicine: An Illustrated History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, 1–22. 6.

on the strengths of its illustrations alone. This mirrors Nöldeke's unwillingness to praise a book based only on its engaging presentation.

Wundt's praise of authors also shows similarities to Nöldeke's. Words like 'industrious' and 'cautious' pop up repeatedly. More striking, however, is his continuous emphasis on methods of data collection. Time and time again, he favourably singles out experiments and observations made by the author himself. An edited volume is described as containing 'important papers' mainly because 'the experiments of these researchers seem to have been conducted with great caution and partly with the use of a very ingenious technique'.¹²⁶ One author's experiments are characterised as 'ingeniously thought out and cautiously conducted' and even if Wundt did not agree with his inferences the 'physiological significance' of the study was 'not compromised' by it.¹²⁷ In one review, Wundt reflected explicitly on the importance of experiment and personal observation: 'Especially the caution in the study and conclusion prevail [in this work]. The author does not deduce final pictures of the structural coherence from his observations; we can be all the more sure that the trustworthiness of the latter does not suffer from the influence of hypotheses made in advance'.¹²⁸

In Wundt's eyes experiment and personal observation could serve as a counterweight to the bold hypotheses and speculative metaphysics. Furthermore, this emphasis on experiment and observation was not just an impersonal evaluation of the merit of an individual's studies, but a morally charged evaluation of this person as well. As one modern-day scholar stated: 'Lab venues and practices, such as experiment and precise measurement, exemplify moral values of objectivity [...]. It is in labs that cultural boundaries — for example, between the realms of nature and of religion and politics — are made visible'.¹²⁹ For Wundt, laboratory experiments and exact measurements exemplified a freedom from and renunciation of the mysticism and unwarranted speculation of earlier philosophical traditions.

Community and the language of book reviews

This chapter's introduction claims that book reviews contribute to the shaping of an academic community. The most obvious way in which this occurs is through the exclusion of some scholars by dismissing their work and the welcoming of others by praising their accomplishments. One

¹²⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Arbeiten aus der physiologischen Anstalt zu Leipzig,' *LC*, 1873, 12.

¹²⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Mach, Dr. E., Prof., Grundlinien der Lehre von den Bewegungsempfindungen,' *LC*, 1875, 15.

¹²⁸ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Stieda, Dr. Ludw., Prof., über den Bau des centralen Nervensystems der Amphibien und Reptilien,' *LC*, 1876, 2.

¹²⁹ Kohler, Robert E., 'Lab History: Reflections,' *Isis*, 99(4), 2008, 761–768. 765.

modern-day author, however, argued for a detailed linguistic approach to book reviews because they play not only ‘an important role in supporting [...] the manufacture of knowledge’ but also in ‘the social cohesiveness of disciplinary communities’.¹³⁰ In a similar vein, another modern-day linguist characterised various rhetorical strategies often found in scholarly publications as a means of ‘indicating the writer’s deference before the scientific community’.¹³¹ This social component of book reviewing ‘involves charting a perilous course between critique and collegiality’.¹³² The importance of book reviews for the expression of critical independence and loyal collegiality is underlined in another recent paper as well. Its authors argue that the continuous ‘calls for a polite realisation of critical remarks’ serve the establishment of a ‘proper balance between collegiality and critique’.¹³³ In the book review genre, they add, hedges help ‘maintain social harmony and solidarity’.

All of the abovementioned authors underline hedges as important elements of maintaining solidarity. This interest in hedges can be retraced to an influential study on politeness by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in which they argue that hedges ‘modify the force of a speech act’.¹³⁴ We found that such modifications are indeed often used in book reviews to tone down fierce criticism. This is an example of what Brown and Levinson call ‘negative politeness’.¹³⁵ Before I turn to a closer investigation of negative politeness, however, I will take a look at what they describe as ‘positive politeness’. This consists in satisfying one’s audience’s desire for recognition ‘by communicating that one’s own wants (or some of them) are in some respects similar to the addressee’s wants’.¹³⁶ This can be accomplished in a myriad of ways, such as through markers of a common identity, explicitly pointing out shared commitments, or even joking.

The book review is characterised by its twofold audience; it is directed at both the reviewee and a wider peer group. These two audiences might require a different tone of voice. One modern-day scholar even argued that the relationship between reviewer and reviewee requires only ‘little deference, while one researcher must always humble himself or herself before the community as a whole’.¹³⁷ Although Nöldeke and Wundt did not put much effort into appearing humble, they involved the wider peer group by explicitly addressing their readership. In one review, Nöldeke, for example, calls upon ‘[...] all friends of sound interpretation of the OT’.¹³⁸ In another, he states

¹³⁰ Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses*, 43.

¹³¹ Myers, ‘The pragmatics of politeness,’ 18.

¹³² Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses*, 41.

¹³³ Salager-Meyer et al., ‘Collegiality, critique and the construction of scientific argumentation,’ 1771.

¹³⁴ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 145.

¹³⁵ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 129.

¹³⁶ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 101.

¹³⁷ Myers, ‘The pragmatics of politeness,’ 4.

¹³⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Tuch, Weil. Dr. Fr., Commentar über die Genesis,’ *LC*, 1871, 24.

that '[...] there will not be many readers, however, who will be bothered by the mentioned shortcomings'.¹³⁹ In a similar fashion, Wundt involves his readers by writing that '[...] nobody will hesitate to acknowledge that a certain advance is possible and desirable in this direction, as well'.¹⁴⁰ In another review, he concludes that he does not have any doubts that 'this minor work will be used with benefit by those readers who have some educational background in the natural sciences [...]'.¹⁴¹

Though the above turns of phrase are exclusively directed at a wide audience of peers, Nöldeke and Wundt also include expressions aimed at underlining solidarity between themselves, the broader audience and the reviewees. These expressions can usually be characterised as claiming common ground or indicating that they all 'belong to some set of persons who share specific wants, including goals and values'.¹⁴² In one review, Nöldeke stated that the publication of a previously unpublished old poem is 'very desirable'.¹⁴³ He also characterises elements of a new study of Semitic church history as important and 'instructive'.¹⁴⁴ Wundt praises a new anatomical compendium in a similar manner: 'Indeed we have always lacked a guidebook of this kind until now'.¹⁴⁵ Another work is praised because its editors 'have acquired a true merit for science' and the book fills up certain recently recognised gaps in physiological knowledge.¹⁴⁶

Two other forms of positive politeness emphasised by Brown and Livingston are gift giving and joking.¹⁴⁷ The gifts most commonly granted in book reviews are compliments and the recommendation of the reviewed book to potential readers. The wide range of frequently used compliments has already been outlined in the above section. Jokes are rarer, however, although not completely absent. The few humorous expressions tend to be cases of somewhat mean-spirited irony inviting the reader to join the reviewer in making fun of a reviewed work or its author. Nöldeke's mocking remarks about the authenticity of the Pentateuch and the infallibility of the pope fall into this category.¹⁴⁸ One very short review by Wundt shows a similar biting irony:

The conclusion of this work is contained in the proposition that logic is an *a posteriori* science. If the arguments of the author would have been as substantial as this proposition,

¹³⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Fürst, Jul., Geschichte der biblischen Literatur und des jüdisch-hellenistischen Schriftthums,' *LC*, 1871, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Aeby, Chr., der Bau des menschlichen Körpers,' *LC*, 1872, 8.

¹⁴¹ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Huxley, Thom. H., Grundzüge der Physiologie,' *LC*, 1872, 33.

¹⁴² Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 103.

¹⁴³ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'S. Jacobi Sarugensis [...] Editus a Josepho Zingerle,' *LC*, 1871, 39.

¹⁴⁴ Nöldeke, Theodor, 'Baudissin, Wolf Wilhelm, Studien zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte,' *LC*, 1879, 12.

¹⁴⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Henle, J., anatomischer Hand-Atlas,' *LC*, 1872, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der Anatomie und Physiologie,' *LC*, 1874, 26.

¹⁴⁷ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 124, 129.

¹⁴⁸ See, this chapter, 100.

which he calmly expresses, the opus at hand would be an epoch-making publication. But because these arguments are basically limited to the well-known possibility of the geometrical conception of logical relationships, we can suffice with this short note.¹⁴⁹

Neither Nöldeke nor Wundt, however, were as skilled humorists as Fechner. Under the moniker of Dr Mises, he had earlier published satirical essays in which he had proved, among other things, that the moon was made of iodine and engaged in a comparative anatomy of angels.¹⁵⁰ As such he was eminently suited to poke fun at a poetically framed analysis of the relationship between the soul and the body:

We would like to ask the author only this one question, [...], why, while otherwise [...] paying attention to all details in his depiction of the human form and especially the human face, he has overlooked the nose, which, in our opinion, hardly deserves this poetic neglect; a flaw that will by the way easily be mended in a second edition [...]. The author should just imagine it himself; a face without a nose!¹⁵¹

In his accompanying letter to Zarncke he claimed that he ‘has constructed the review in such a way that [...], at best, a light wholesome doubt might arise in him, whether he is being treated ironically’. He added that he would, however, not mind if Zarncke would eventually delete his jokey comments about the noseless face.¹⁵²

In addition to these instances of positive politeness the reviews of Nöldeke and Wundt also contain many instances of negative politeness, which ‘performs the function of minimising the particular imposition that [a face threatening act] unavoidably effects’.¹⁵³ Since criticism in a book review typically threatens the reputation of the reviewee, examples of negative politeness are very common in this genre. This form of politeness usually consists of different types of hedges that soften the impact of otherwise serious critiques.

One way in which both Nöldeke and Wundt tone down their criticism is by insisting that they are highlighting relatively minor issues found in otherwise important and well-executed works. In one review, Nöldeke, for example, stated he ‘only has to deviate from [the author] on a few trivialities’.¹⁵⁴ Wundt, likewise, wrote that he could think of numerous criticism about specific

¹⁴⁹ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Widemann, Paul, über die Bedingungen der Uebereinstimmung des discursiven Erkennens mit dem intuitiven,’ *LC*, 1877, 10. This is the full review.

¹⁵⁰ Arendt, Hans-Jürgen, ‘Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1887) und die Leipziger bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert,’ *N.T.M. Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin*, 9, 2001, 2–14. 5.

¹⁵¹ [Fechner, Gustav Theodor], ‘Hauschild, Ed. Ferd., Psyche, oder der Becher Giamschid’s,’ *LC*, 1853, 26.

¹⁵² Gustav Theodor Fechner to Friedrich Zarncke, no date, UBLE: NL 249/1/F/61.

¹⁵³ Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 129.

¹⁵⁴ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Smend, Rud., Moses apud prophetas,’ *LC*, 1875, 42.

details of a reviewed booklet, but instead concluded that even if he could not agree with the author ‘about all of his views, nobody will put down the lucidly and appealingly written little book without feeling very inspired’.¹⁵⁵

Another way in which both reviewers hedged their criticisms is by pointing out that the reviewees had undertaken a very ambitious task that simply could not have been completed without at least some minor shortcomings. In the opening sentence of an otherwise highly critical review, Nöldeke remarked that the author’s research was ‘extremely difficult, in part’.¹⁵⁶ In his review of a book that attempts to distinguish certain knowledge from mere opinion in physiology, Wundt admitted that this was especially challenging in ‘a science like physiology which finds itself in continuous transformations’.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless he had no doubt that the book would be useful to those scholars who had some basic knowledge of the latest developments in the field.

A final recurring hedging strategy is the admittance of one’s own lack of relevant specialist knowledge. After all, even a harsh review loses some of its sting when it is written by a reviewer who admits to potentially misunderstanding or overlooking elements of the work in question. Wundt rarely reverts to this strategy, but Nöldeke repeatedly confesses gaps in his knowledge. In his review of a book on Christian Syriac texts, he admits that he is ‘alas, not well-versed [...] in liturgical issues’ which means that he ‘has to declare himself incompetent to judge exactly those excerpts, to which the author attaches the most importance’.¹⁵⁸ Commenting on a text edition based on Coptic sources, he likewise admits that the ‘final judgement of their critical value’ should be left to ‘the experts of the Coptic language’.¹⁵⁹

All in all, Nöldeke and Wundt use a wide range of the positive and negative politeness strategies that Brown and Levinson and others have recognised. Their continuous performances of politeness in book reviews contributes to the shaping of scholarly communities in at least two ways. The negative politeness expressed through hedging allows reviewers to welcome reviewees into the peer group, while preserving the opportunity to be critical of their work. The expressions of positive politeness are generally expressed through an emphasis of shared commitments among reviewer, reviewee and readership, and therefore contribute to the shaping of a sense of common purpose and values among the peer group as a whole.

¹⁵⁵ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Carneri, B., Gefühl, Bewußtsein, Wille. Eine psychologische Studie,’ *LC*, 1877, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Janichs, Georg, animadversiones criticae in versionem Syriacam Peschitthonianam,’ *LC*, 1871, 49.

¹⁵⁷ Wundt, Wilhelm, ‘Huxley, Thom. H., Grundzüge der Physiologie,’ *LC*, 1872, 33.

¹⁵⁸ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Bickell, Gustavus, conspectus rei Syrorum,’ *LC*, 1871, 30.

¹⁵⁹ Nöldeke, Theodor, ‘Psalterium. Job. Proverbia arabice. Paulus de Lagarde edidit,’ *LC*, 1879, 2.

What do book reviews do?

This chapter starts with some remarks on the genre of the book review, drawing attention to the two main functions of reviews acknowledged in modern-day literature: the announcement and the evaluation. A closer look at the reviews by Nöldeke and Wundt shows another type of non-evaluative review, as well: the review as a minor contribution to scholarship, providing lists of comments that could be of use to the author whose work was being reviewed. Even if reviews as announcements and those as addition to the shared body of knowledge were not uncommon, most reviews did contain evaluative content. Furthermore, these evaluations show certain patterns that teach us something about the demands and expectations of a 19th-century member of the German academic world.

The scholarly values emanating from Nöldeke's and Wundt's reviews can be compared to Fritz Ringer's famous description of the late 19th-century academic self-image. Ringer observed a general agreement among late 19th-century intellectuals that 'the modern German idea of the university and of learning was irrevocably tied to its intellectual origins in German Idealism and neohumanism' and argues that '[...] the decades around 1800 came to seem a period of primitive purity'.¹⁶⁰ The ideals of *Kulturprotestantismus* seem to partially fit Ringer's description. The ideal of the educated man as an 'autonomous personality' can be traced back to the tenets of idealism and the classical *Bildung* of the German gymnasiums is indebted to the neo-humanism of the late 1700s. This emphasis on autonomy and individuality contributed to a religiousness that went hand in hand with a strong interest in science and scholarship as well as 'a laicist persuasion'.¹⁶¹

Nöldeke and Wundt expressed this persuasion through a critical attitude towards religious dogmatism and speculative philosophies. Even if they did not conceive of such speculation and dogmatism as particularly threatening to linguistics or medicine, they considered these to be very real dangers to the study of theology and philosophy. Nöldeke repeatedly puts orthodox Protestant, Catholic and Jewish authors back in their place. Wundt argues, over and over, against the influence of *Naturphilosophie*, idealism and other intellectual frameworks that he considered to be obsolete. Such reviews not only evaluate the work in question, they also emphasise ideals of good scholarship characterised by a healthy distrust of dogma and speculation. Noteworthy is also that national or religious affiliations have only a limited predictive value for the severity of the reviews.

¹⁶⁰ Ringer, Fritz K., *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA), 1969. 103–104.

¹⁶¹ Hübinger, Gangolf, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik: Zum Verhältniss von Liberalismus und Protestantismus im wilhelmschen Deutschland*, Mohr, Tübingen, 1994. 15.

A second defence of autonomous scholarship and a detached attitude towards dogma and mysticism is illustrated by the reasons Nöldeke and Wundt find to praise authors. Religiously informed certitudes are to be replaced by caution, industriousness, diligence and ingenuity. Important as these virtues are for all scholars, they gain even more significance when they are applied to a laboratory setting. The ingeniously conducted experiments, careful measurements and diligent series of personal observations are the perfect means to draw a line between the realm of scholarship and the realm of religion and superstitious speculation. Only studies undertaken with diligence, caution and ingenuity can add our understanding of the world, either by filling in gaps in existing knowledge or by opening up whole new fields of investigation. It might not come as a surprise that especially this type of study was characterised as ‘significant’, important, valuable, or useful.

To some extent this guarding of the distinction between scholarship and speculation takes the shape of emphasising the distinction between academic insiders and outsiders. Fields like theology and philosophy attracted more non-academic authors than linguistics and medicine. Though university professors are criticised for dogmatism and mysticism, a strikingly large share of the authors receiving this reproach were not affiliated with a university. The religiously and mystically inclined academics were to some extent able to compensate for these views by drawing on their other academic skills. A Catholic bias was not too much of a problem if it resulted in a skilfully edited text edition of a Church Father who happened to be highly valued by the Catholic church. A speculative work of philosophy could be valuable if it was based on rigorously conducted experiments and exact measurements. However, since most academic outsiders lacked either the skills or resources to do such things, Nöldeke’s and Wundt’s reviews — deliberately or indeliberately — drew a line between academic insiders and outsiders.

If, and only if, the scholar and the work under review would live up to the requirements of caution, ingenuity, diligence and industriousness, their work could be considered for further praise. This praise had to do with the lucidity and clarity of the exposition. In Nöldeke’s reviews, lucidity and clarity were accomplished through a well-developed writing style. In Wundt’s reviews, especially those of medical works, the quality of the illustrations was at least as important. Even if good illustrations were not sufficient reason for a positive review of a study, they were wholeheartedly acknowledged as contributing to its value and usefulness.

As the above reasons for praise illustrate, book reviews not only provided a medium through which reviewers could assert their own independence by subjecting their peers to critical evaluation, but also contributed to the creation and perpetuation of a community of scholars. Because nobody

could possibly read all new literature that was published in his discipline, the more easily accessible book review ensured a shared awareness of new research. The community was further strengthened by the language used in book reviews. By directly addressing a broad scholarly audience, by complimenting deserving authors and by hedging their criticism of less convincing scholarship reviewers acknowledged and strengthened scholars' self-image as, for example, scientific theologians, meticulous philologists, modern medical men, or critical and level-headed philosophers.

Nöldeke and Wundt contributed to an understanding of scholarship as a cautious and industrious endeavour that was primarily produced in institutions of higher learning by independently thinking men. As the other chapters illustrate, this notion of independence in academia could be quite ambiguous. However, Wundt, Nöldeke and their associates could agree that independence defined as freedom from religious dogma and speculative mysticism should be the starting point of every scholarly effort.