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

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4. State and Scholarship

Recommendations and Appointments under the 'Althoff System'

The Althoff system

Reflection on the virtue of scholars and their work can take place in many different ways. The preceding chapters pay attention to informal evaluation and the role of scholarly journals. This chapter takes a closer look at yet another element of scholarly life shaped by continuous evaluation of each other's merit: professorial appointments. On the one hand, discussions about appointments invited sharp criticism of all candidates. An explicit exposé of a person's shortcomings could be enough to slow down someone's career. At the same time, however, letters of recommendation allowed for a display of loyal collegiality towards one's closest peers in a way that could actually benefit their careers. Because a professorial appointment is more substantial than a book review, criticism and praise might even be more consequential in letters of recommendation than in book reviews.

In 19th-century imperial Germany, the decision about appointments was made by the governments of its constituent states. Professorial appointments at Leipzig University had to be approved by the Saxon government in Dresden, those in Heidelberg by the Baden authorities in Karlsruhe, and those at Prussian universities by the Ministry of Education in Berlin. The decision-making process in Berlin is especially interesting as a subject for research for two reasons. One reason is that the Prussian relationship between state and university provided the blueprint for those in the whole of imperial Germany.[1] The other reason is that, for a quarter of a century, this process was largely controlled by one man, whose correspondence has been very well preserved. This correspondence allows us a close look into Prussian appointment policies during an extensive period.

The one man in charge of appointments in Prussia was Friedrich Theodor Althoff. His official position in the ministerial hierarchy was modest in comparison to his actual influence. Between 1882 and 1897 he was one of the 33 *vortragende Räte* (executive officials) and between 1897 and 1907 he was one of the four *Ministerialdirektoren* (ministerial directors) at the Ministry of Education.[2] His

[1] Brocke, Bernhard vom, 'Friedrich Althoff: A Great Figure in Higher Education Policy in Germany,' *Minerva*, 29(3), 1991, 269-293. 280.

[2] Schilfert, Sabine, 'Friedrich Althoff – ein preußischer Geheimrat von Format? Bemerkungen zu einem wissenschafts-historischen Kolloquium anläßlich seines 150. Geburtstag,' *Zentralblatt für das Bibliothekswesen*, 103, 1989, 546–552. 546. I will refer to the Prussian '*Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten*' with the shorter term 'Ministry of Education', which seems appropriate in the context of dealing with university appointments.

far-reaching influence, however, is clearly illustrated by the way he was described in the contemporary news media. He was referred to as 'the almighty ruler of the Prussian universities', 'the secret Prussian minister of education' and 'the Bismarck of the university system'.[3] It has become common to refer to his legacy as the Althoff system. The word 'system', however, says more about the perceived inescapability and decisiveness of his influence than about the coherence of his vision. One leading modern-day scholar argues that above all he 'was a practical man, not at all doctrinaire' and emphasises that 'the 'Althoff system' slowly emerged in the course of decades of educational policy-making'.[4]

Although Althoff was not at all doctrinaire, his legacy shows a number of common threads. One salient feature of his policies was his unwillingness to discriminate against minorities.[5] He proudly claimed never to have 'participated in any rabble-rousing propaganda, not against Catholics and not against Jews'.[6] A second characteristic was an emphasis on research institutes that functioned outside of the faculty structure of the universities.[7] His support of the establishment of Koch's Institute for Infectious Diseases is a typical example of this. Another feature of Althoff's rule was his ability to find new ways to fund research. The budget of his ministry was insufficient to cover the costs of all new research institutes, but Althoff successfully forged bonds between academia and private and corporate investors.[8] Finally, if we insist on describing his legacy as a system, it is best characterised as a system for gathering information.[9] He made sure that he had at least one informant at every Prussian faculty to keep him updated him about the accomplishments, ambitions and character traits of scholars. This allowed him to make well-informed decisions about professorial appointments and to influence decision-making processes at faculty meetings.

Althoff's decision-making process was not popular among all his contemporaries. Most complaints were a response to his inclination to sidestep the existing power structures manifested in the universities' faculty structure. The professorial appointment procedure was traditionally a collaborative effort of the faculties and the state government. The faculties usually sent a proposal to the ministry in which they would express their preference for three ranked candidates. Though the ministry was not obliged to follow this proposal, it would often appoint one of the preferred

[3] Ibid., 446; Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 289.
[4] Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 278.
[5] Pawliczek, 'Kontinuität des informellen Konsens', 79.
[6] Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 278.
[7] Schilfert, 'Friedrich Althoff – ein preußischer Geheimrat von Format?,' 546.
[8] Peirce, William.S. and Peter. Krüger, 'Entrepreneurship in a Bureaucracy: The Case of Friedrich Althoff,' *Journal of Economic Studies*, 20(4,5), 1993, 52–70. 68.
[9] Zott, Regine, 'Hochgeehrter Herr Geheimer Rath! … Friedrich Theodor Althoffs Beziehungen zur Chemie,' *Chemie in unserer Zeit*, 42(5), 2008, 322–328. 323.

candidates.[10] In the eyes of his critics, Althoff's policy was not in line with this traditional practice. Both his emphasis on the establishment of new independent research institutes and his tapping into new sources of funding threatened the traditional powers of the faculty boards. In addition, his welcoming attitude towards Catholics and Jews was not always appreciated by the faculties, whose members often held more conservative views.[11] Looking back at Althoff's hold on German university life, the philosopher Max Dessoir even suggested a relationship between his rule and the powerlessness of German academics towards the Nazis, a quarter of a century after his death: 'We forgot how to speak and to act like free men; even after Althoff's death, we continued to live in 'fear of the Lord' and readily changed to another line of policy when National Socialism began to 'coordinate' us'.[12]

Althoff was sometimes criticised during and immediately after his years at the ministry, but hardly any traces of criticism of his informants have survived. One author, however, argued that critics viewed these *Vertrauensleute* 'with great suspicion, and some thought of them as unscrupulous informants, practically akin to academic spies'.[13] Although this observation is hardly surprising, my sources will not allow me to elaborate on this issue. The correspondence between Althoff and his informants contains some reports by scholars failing to obtain the desired consensus, but lack reflection on the informants' power and status among their peers.

It should also be noted that Althoff's critics may have painted too unfavourable a picture of him. An analysis of the number of forced appointments shows that there were relatively few during his years of tenure.[14] Since he cultivated warm relationships with many influential scholars, he was often able to shape the opinions within the faculty without resorting to his administrative powers. Rather than forcing his critics into accepting his views, he outwitted them.[15] One case study shows that his power was not unlimited. The faculty of philosophy of Greifswald resisted his pressure and successfully advocated their own candidate for the Chair of Classical Philology, the young classicist Eduard Norden. Because its members were able to present themselves as a united front, the faculty was able to appoint this talented young scholar instead of a mediocre older man.[16] Finally it should be emphasised that Althoff's preferences were based on a very extensive exchange of ideas with a large number of well-respected scholars. He was therefore usually well able to support

[10] Paulsen, Friedrich, *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium*, A. Asher & Co., Berlin, 1902. 101.
[11] Backhaus, Jürgen G., 'The University as an Economic Institution: The Political Economy of the Althoff System,' *Journal of Economic Studies*, 20(4,5), 1993, 8–29. 13.
[12] Quoted in: Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 270.
[13] Rowe, David E., *A Richer Picture of Mathematics: The Göttingen Tradition and Beyond*, Springer, Cham, 2018. 12.
[14] Backhaus, 'The University as an Economic Institution,' 13.
[15] Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 284.
[16] Leppin, Hartmut, 'Eduard Nordens Berufung nach Greifswald: Handlungsspielräume im „System Althoff",' *Philologus*, 142(1), 1998, 162–172. 167–169.

his decisions with both good arguments and the back-up of well-respected members of the academic community.

Since I am more interested in the assessments that scholars make in their capacity as authors of letters of recommendation than in actual governmental decision-making practices this is not the place to look into the exact relationship between these letters and eventual appointments. Unlike most literature about Althoff, this chapter will rather deal with the way in which scholars used this correspondence to confidentially evaluate their peers with full knowledge of the fact that their evaluation could decisively shape their careers. The first section of this chapter illustrates the in-depth level of knowledge Althoff acquired, not only of the scholarly merit of the people he appointed but especially of their personalities and the character of their cooperation, by looking at his intimate knowledge of the events and relationships at the Institute for Oriental Languages. The following sections present case studies of how scholars tried to use their connection to Althoff to influence appointments to medical and philosophical professorial chairs. These case studies further illustrate the work performance and character traits praised and condemned by the 19th-century German professoriate. In addition, they give an overview of the way in which letters of recommendation gave scholars the opportunity to loyally support some of their closest peers, as well as provide a chance to critically distance themselves from colleagues with whom they shared less.

Althoff's intimate knowledge

The Institute for Oriental Languages was established in 1887, shortly after the young sinologist Wilhelm Grube had informed the Ministry of Education about the lack of knowledge of the local language at the German embassy in China. He pointed out that in France and the United Kingdom institutions had been founded to educate future diplomats and businessmen in Asian vernaculars, but that Germany lacked such institutions.[17] Grube suggested that an institute should be established on the model of the French *École des langues orientales vivant*, where European professors were supported by native speakers to teach Asian languages. Only a few days after the minister of education, Gustav von Goßler, had brought this idea to Bismarck's attention, he received the latter's fiat.[18] Althoff was entrusted with the preparations and two years later the Institute for Oriental Languages opened its doors under the direction of Eduard Sachau, a former student of Nöldeke and Professor of Arabic at the University of Berlin. Even if the short time it took to

[17] Gustav von Goßler to Reichskanzler von Bismarck, 8 April 1885, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.
[18] Reichskanzler von Bismarck to Gustav von Goßler, 11 April 1885, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.

establish the institute suggests a smooth course of events, relationships between the Institute's staff members were strained. Very few people knew more about these simmering tensions than Friedrich Althoff.

Althoff extensively corresponded with several Institute staff members, such as Sachau and the Arabist Martin Hartmann. One of his most important confidants was Professor of Chinese Language Carl Arendt. In 1889, Althoff asked Arendt for a detailed confidential report about working atmosphere at the Institute. If we are to believe the writer of one of Arendt's obituaries, Althoff had picked the wrong person. He argued that one of his most praiseworthy qualities was the fact that he had 'absolutely no talent for gossip'.[19] But, even though Arendt repeatedly emphasised his strong dislike of discussing his colleagues in such a frank way –calling it a 'painful and probably questionable assignment' — his depiction of the relationships at the Institute was almost juicy and certainly worrying.[20] Though he praised some of his colleagues, such as the Chinese lectors working under his direction, many staff members were harshly criticised. And, although he repeatedly claimed to value his great working relationship with the director of the Institute, he saved some of his strongest criticism for Eduard Sachau.

Arendt's main reproach of his leadership was the distance he maintained between himself and the teaching staff. He was seldom present at the Institute and almost all communication between him and the staff was through written missives. His office hour at the Institute was scheduled at a time when none of the teaching staff had good reason to be there and requests for meetings were usually turned down with a short note. The fact that staff and director were more or less strangers to each other led to a neglect of day-to-day classroom experiences in Sachau's planning. People who complained about this state of affairs were rebuffed; their comments were interpreted as 'revolt against his authority' and 'impermissible criticism of his practices'. To add insult to injury Sachau did not treat all member of the teaching staff equally. A request for a translation was very politely worded to most professors, but one of them received the same request 'in the shape of a decree bordering between business-like and almost rude'. Especially the Arabist Martin Hartmann and the Persianist Friedrich Rosen suffered from Sachau's antics. His dislike of them was so obvious that even their students picked up on it.

Arendt also criticised Sachau's confidants, Arabic lecturer Bernhard Moritz and institute attendant (*Seminardiener*) Heyde. If Sachau decided not to announce his new ordinances in writing, they were

[19] Foy, Karl, 'Zur Persönlichkeit Carl Arendt's: Einige Erinnerungen,' *Ostasiatische Studien. Mittheilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, 1, 1902, 177–182. 181.
[20] Professor Arendt über die Zustände am Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen. 4.VII 1889, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.

usually passed on by these men. Arendt claimed not to care about Moritz's derogative remarks on his teaching and his unfriendliness that went 'as far as the neglect of the most common forms of courtesy'. He argued, however, that the general feeling of uneasiness at the Institute was largely to blame on 'the behaviour of Dr Moritz, who behaves towards us as the mouthpiece of the director and occasionally even as our superior'. The institute attendant also appeared to have a closer relationship with Sachau than the teaching staff. The eventual discharge of Friedrich Rosen and Carl Friedrich Andreas, the Professor of Turkish and Persian Languages, was first made public by Heyde. Through his indiscretion students were also able to figure out the pecking order at the Institute. Finally, he would occasionally be rude towards the professors. When one of them did something Sachau would not have approved of, Heyde was reported to have answered with an ominous: 'It is getting windy'.[21] With all these personal frictions Arendt concluded that the Institute had an 'unpleasant general mood'.

Althoff did not exclusively rely on Arendt's extensive exposition and corresponded with other members of the Institute as well. In the subsequent years the picture of the poisoned atmosphere at the Institute grew more detailed. Hartmann defended Heyde.[22] He argued that the mistakes he had made were caused by the inappropriately confidential attitude towards him taken by Sachau and Moritz. When Heyde had tried to refuse some orders that he had deemed improper, his superiors had rebuffed him and told him that 'he was cowardly' and that 'he was too good'. Hartmann therefore stated that 'the improprieties and ineptitudes of attendant Heyde can be fully traced back to improprieties and ineptitudes of director Sachau'. Even worse incriminations of Sachau and Moritz reached Althoff's office soon. The Prussian consul in Damascus, Johann Gottfried Wetzstein and Carl Friedrich Andreas accused Sachau of plagiarism.[23] A former co-student of Moritz at the Berlin Faculty of Theology accused him — without being able to provide proof — of having stolen his lecture notes of an introductory course to the Old Testament, which was why he had been forced to make his career in New Testament studies instead.[24] Althoff carefully filed these incriminations.

Sachau's correspondence with Althoff confirms the partisan character of his management. He advised Althoff to keep Rosen at a distance because 'he deserves no special entitlement to your time'.[25] One year later he stated that because of his 'character and current state of mind' Rosen was

[21] 'Es wird windig". Ibid.
[22] Martin Hartmann to 'Sehr geehrter Herr Kreisschulinspektor', 26 September 1889, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.
[23] Georg Humbert to Friedrich Althoff, 20 January 1890 and 16 February 1890, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.
[24] Ernst Kühl to Friedrich Althoff, 16 October 1890, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.
[25] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 22 February 1888, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 912.

not qualified to be an examiner and asked Althoff to dismiss him before the end of the month.[26] He also accused Hartmann of being the only staff member who did not show up to attend a holiday course; a failure that was all the more serious because his status as one of the best-paid staff members came with the responsibility of being a role model to others.[27] He also spoke up for Moritz, who seemed to be 'somewhat sullen and dispirited because of the hostilities of Hartmann and Arendt'.[28] A year later he again put in a good word for Moritz, emphasising that 'his position towards the unpeaceful elements of the Institute is very difficult and unpleasant'.[29] In the same letter, he also underlined that Moritz was not the only one to suffer from his hostile colleagues; the lector Amin Maarbes was also 'pursued with secret and public hostility by Hartmann'. Another year later, he even asked if Althoff could put Hartmann on administrative leave, so that Moritz could take over his course.[30]

It is not traceable what use Althoff made of the information he received about the job performance, character and relationships of the Institute staff. The careers of the infighting scholars don't show a clear preference for the representatives of either side. Sachau was never relieved of his responsibilities; Arendt would teach at the Institute until his death in 1902; Hartmann stayed until his death in 1918; Rosen continued his career at the diplomatic service; Andreas was hired in by the university in Göttingen after spending two decades as a freelance language teacher in Berlin; Moritz finally left the Institute for a job at the Khedivial library in Cairo in 1896, to return fifteen years later as the head of the Institute's library.

This short look into the infighting at the Institute for Oriental Languages shows two things. First, it shows the way and the degree to which Althoff was able to stay in touch with strongly opinionated opposing parties. Second, it shows the information he was able to get out of these contacts. This did not only, or even primarily, concern the professional and scholarly merit of the appointees, but included detailed accounts of personal relationships, working atmosphere, character appraisals and even vicious gossip.

A medical mess in Breslau

In some respects, the Institute for Oriental Languages was a special case in the German academic landscape. Though it was affiliated with the university of Berlin and professorships were awarded

[26] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 16 July 1889, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 912.
[27] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 18 September 1888, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 912..
[28] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 9 October 1890, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 156.
[29] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 16 July 1889, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 912.
[30] Eduard Sachau to Friedrich Althoff, 4 January 1890, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 912.

to its most prominent teachers, it was situated outside of the university's faculty structure and did not have a strong interest in research. The evaluations of most scholars discussed in Althoff's correspondence therefore differ from those described above. Academics were usually judged on a broader range of qualities. In addition, most discussions were influenced by faculty boards who had the power to shape discussions about hiring decisions by drawing up ranked lists of candidates. The following sections illustrate the complexity of these discussions by taking a close look at Althoff's correspondence with some of his most trusted informants at medical faculties: the Breslau gynaecologist Heinrich Fritsch and the Marburg physiologist Eduard Külz.

The correspondence with Fritsch is of interest because it emphasises the extent to which discussions about appointments could be informed by the state of affairs at individual universities at least as much as by the merits of individual scholars. Fritsch was a full Professor of Obstetrics, the leader of the Breslau obstetrical clinic and Althoff's unofficial representative at the medical faculty in Breslau. He was also the administrative director of this faculty. This accumulation of tasks during a troublesome time for the Breslau medical faculty continuously threatened to overburden him as illustrated by his complaints to Althoff: 'I can basically give up on this year. If you have to argue every day about shirts, washing machines, meat deliveries, bickering by officials, etc., then where is there room for scholarship? […] But I am not going to spend one word on it, because I hope that I will not be staying in Breslau for very much longer'.[31] If we are to believe Fritsch's report of the state of affairs in Breslau his desire to leave was very understandable indeed.

The most urgent problem was the lack of patients in the university clinics. This was the legacy of an earlier time, when Anton Biermer still managed both the medical clinic and the polyclinic. His rude treatment of patients discouraged them to visit these clinics. Biermer, however, was content to work with the patients admitted to the *Allerheiligen* hospital instead.[32] In the final years of his tenure, Biermer fell ill and his clinical responsibilities were taken over by Otto Soltmann, who replaced him at the medical clinic, and Friedrich Müller, who took his place at the polyclinic.[33] During this period, the two clinics grew apart. Soltmann, a man of independent means, hardly put any effort into managing the medical clinic; he enjoyed a copious life style without bothering too much about teaching, research and managerial tasks.[34] Müller, on the other hand, proved to be an effective director and inadvertently lured patients away from Soltmann's to his own clinic.[35] In

[31] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 2 March 1891, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[32] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 22 June 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[33] [Rector und Senat of the University of Breslau], *Chronik der Königlichen Universität zu Breslau für das Jahr vom 1. April 1890 bis zum 31. März*, Breslau, 1891. 44.
[34] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 9 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112
[35] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 1 May 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.

1892, after Müller had been appointed in Marburg, a successor of Biermer was finally appointed. From this moment on Alfred Kast would manage both clinics. To provide patients for Kast, Fritsch made an agreement with the Breslau municipal authorities to transfer some of the poorer patients in the municipal facilities to the university clinics: 'Without this, we embarrass ourselves terribly with the beautiful medical clinic — without patients. We are not saving any money, because every patient is now hospitalised for free, so that we at least have *something*'.[36]

Another problem was a lack of students. Fritsch anxiously compared the number of students in his obstetrical clinic with the numbers at other German universities. The only clinic with a lower attendance was located in Giessen, where only 35 students showed up. Breslau's 50 students compared poorly to the 88 attendants in Kiel, the 140 in Halle and the 150 who showed up at the Würzburg clinic.[37] Fritsch argued that the declining number of students was due to the teaching and examination methods by the anatomist Carl Hasse. He called him 'a good, consistent and honest man,' who is 'full of diligence and conscientiousness'. His teaching, however, mostly dealt with animal rather than human anatomy and he was an unnecessarily harsh examiner. The students even summarised his major shortcomings in a song:

Bummellied	Strolling song
[…]	[…]
Schon 14 Tage vor Beginn	Already 14 days before the opening
Begann er sein College,	He started his lecture series
Da schimpfte er, als ich mich einst	There he ranted when I
Verspätet auf dem Wege.	Was once delayed on my way.
Von Fröschen du Batrachiern war	Almost always the only things discussed
Fast immer nur die Rede.	were frogs and batrachians.
Am Ende kam er etwas dann	In the end he would then come
Zum Menschen – ziemlich späte	To people – rather late.
[…]	[…]
Nie nannte er uns Herr und Sie	He never called us gentlemen
Nur Er und Ihr und Leute,	Only he and you and people
Im Mittelalter ging sowas,	That was fine in the Middle Ages

[36] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 22 June 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112. Fritsch's emphasis.
[37] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 25 December 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.

Doch warlich nicht mehr heute.	But really no longer today
Da müsst‘ ich doch ein Esel sein	I would really be a jackass
Ein Kerl als wie ein Rinde	A guy like a cow
Wenn ich nicht schleunig fahren sollt‘	If I would not immediately go
Hinweg mit gutem Winde[38]	Away with a good wind

The song unambiguously pointed out how Hasse’s teaching and manners hurt the Breslau student population. Many of Breslau students decided to take their exams elsewhere. Especially Leipzig was a popular destination; many of those who could afford it, attended lectures there, rather than in Breslau. This left the Breslau faculty with fewer and poorer students: ‘*There is no doubt that the attendance here will decline quickly*. The sons of *respectable* families already say: we cannot expose ourselves to Hasse’s treatment and go away. After that, only the rubbish stays with us!’[39]

Fritsch’s recommendations were based on the poor state of affairs at the medical faculty in Breslau rather than on any individual’s scholarly merit. A first example is his proposal that no replacement for Friedrich Müller should be appointed. This could only lead to an unhealthy competition for patients with Kast, who was already struggling to attract enough patients to keep both clinics running.[40] Since this was an easy request to accommodate, no successor of Müller was appointed indeed. Fritsch’s recommendations for his own succession provide another example of considerations primarily based on the challenging Breslau environment. He recommended the hiring of Otto Küstner because he was ‘a prosperous, almost rich man’ and explained that ‘an independent man is necessary here. If you appoint a praxis-hungry professor from a small university, nothing will change, which is so disastrous, especially for Breslau’.[41] The challenges of leading an obstetrical clinic in Breslau were such that they demanded the full-time attendance of its director. A director who would feel the financial need to also hold private practice — something not uncommon among the staff of medical faculties — would not be able to deal with these demands. A further advantage of appointing a wealthy man would be that he would be likely to agree to start his work before he would actually get paid and that he would also be likely to waive his right to receive a travel and moving reimbursement. Less than half a year later Althoff would announce that he had indeed appointed Küstner.[42]

[38] Note captioned ‘von Fritsch erhalten. A 27/11 93. Zu Hasse,’ GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[39] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 25 December 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112. Fritsch’s emphases.
[40] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 22 June 1892, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[41] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 10 May 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[42] Friedrich Althoff to Heinrich Fritsch, 4 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112

Fritsch's correspondence with Althoff reveals at least two things. In the first place, it shows that Althoff not only was kept well-informed about the scholarly accomplishments and character of a large number of scholars, but that he was also kept up to date on the state of affairs at universities, faculties and other constituent parts of the academic system. Secondly, it illustrates how he allowed discussions and decisions about appointments to be informed on these states of affairs as much as by evaluations of the merits of individual scholars. Even if there may have been scholars with all the required qualities to succeed Müller, the vulnerable state of the Breslau clinics convinced him to decide against such an appointment. And even if other scholars might have been as qualified or even more qualified than Küstner to succeed Fritsch, the appeal for a financially independent director of the ever-vulnerable obstetrical clinic was answered, as well.

A Saxon paediatrician

The above example of Althoff's correspondence with Fritsch shows an obvious willingness to follow the latter's advice. The decision to follow this advice was made easier by the fact that other confidants in Althoff's network supported it as well; Hermann Kuhnt and Berhnhard Schultze confirmed Fritsch's praise for Küstner.[43] It was not uncommon, however, for Althoff to receive contradictory evaluations. This was the case when he was looking for a successor for the Berlin paediatrician Eduard Henoch. One of the principal candidates was Otto Heubner, who we have encountered earlier as Behring's collaborator in testing early versions of his diphtheria serum.[44] A number of scholars had praised Heubner's work in Leipzig, but Eduard Külz — a 'medical authority' once described as one of Althoff's 'spies' or 'lackeys' — was one of the people who doubted Heubner's eligibility.[45]

When Althoff initially asked Fritsch to comment on Henoch's succession, Heubner was not even mentioned. Fritsch only dedicated a few short sentences to suitable candidates and used most of his letter to argue that Soltmann was unfit for the position.[46] Fritsch not only referred to Soltmann's presumed unwillingness to abandon his copious life style, he also pictured him as an antisemitic hypocrite. On Althoff's question whether Soltmann might be Jewish, he answered: 'Soltmann is not Jewish, whether his father was Jewish, I do not know. However that may be, [Soltmann] looks very Jewish. This makes his anti-Semitism all the more ridiculous. He owns a house in the most

[43] For example, see Hermann Kuhnt to Friedrich Althoff, 10 July 1893 and Bernhard Schultze to Friedrich Althoff, 11 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[44] See Chapter 1, 46–48.
[45] Brocke, 'Friedrich Althoff,' 283.
[46] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 9 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.

expensive neighbourhood of Breslau. Until today, he leaves two floors empty for over 1000 Thaler, because he does not want Jews in the house'.

Hugo Falkenheim, clinician and *Privatdozent* of paediatrics in Königsberg commented more extensively on Henoch's succession. He stated that Heubner was an 'outstandingly diligent and solid acknowledged scholar whose works […] brought significant expansion of our knowledge'.[47] Heubner would be a prudent choice because he was 'the most generally distinguished of the German paediatricians; a man who qualifies himself to be Henoch's successor through his eminent expertise, his warm interest for paediatrics and through his qualities as a teacher and a person'. Ludolf Krehl also praised Heubner in a long letter. He emphasised the quality and popularity of his lectures as well as his excellent management of a polyclinic and a paediatric clinic.[48] He also praised his character by sharing his appreciation of the fact that Heubner was 'full of zest for life and not embittered' even though he had been passed over for promotion in Leipzig so often that he would have been justified in feeling slighted by the university administrators.

Külz also underlined these career setbacks. In his eyes, they served as a red flag: 'I would like to strongly emphasise the fact that [the Leipzig medical faculty] has passed him over for the occupancy of the polyclinical professorship. Some people may say that his appointment did not have a chance in Dresden, but of course that cannot be the true and only reason'.[49] Külz's suspicion was that these setbacks must have been the result of Heubner's typically Saxon personality: 'His really too pronounced Saxon dialect may be the reason why his lectures, which are not bad, have always made me feel somewhat funny. […] I cannot advise in favour of the transplantation of this typical Saxon to Berlin'. Külz thought Ludolf Krehl's otherwise approving depiction of Heubner supported his view. This is not completely unreasonable, since Krehl wrote that 'Heubner is a very lively typically Saxon figure; he speaks a strong Saxon dialect which sometimes comes across comically. […] His lectures are harmed by [his] Saxon dialect; his way of talking is clumsy […]'.[50] Külz was not the only confidant of Althoff to be critical of the possible appointment of Heubner; the Berlin medical faculty, and especially the famous pathologist Rudolf Virchow, shared his doubts.[51] Külz therefore had good reason to believe that his advice would be followed: 'Notwithstanding all the appreciation

[47] Hugo Falkenheim to Friedrich Althoff, received at 14 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[48] Ludolf Krehl to Friedrich Althoff, 21 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[49] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 13 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112. The mentioning of Dresden refers to the Saxon government that had its seat there.
[50] Ludolf Krehl to Friedrich Althoff, 21 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[51] Hesse, Volker, 'Leben und Werk Otto Heubners: Eine Würdigung des ersten Lehrstuhlinhabers der Kinderheilkunde in Deutschland anlässlich seines 90. Todestages,' *Monatschrift Kinderheilkunde*, 12, 2016, 1116–1123. 1116.

of some of his works, Heubner is a chatterbox (*Faselhans*). His comical personality seems ridiculous to his audience. It would be a great mistake to appoint him'.[52]

For Althoff, the decision was far from easy. Some of his correspondents wholeheartedly recommended Heubner as the foremost German paediatrician. Others argued that Heubner's typical Saxon disposition made him unfit for an appointment in the Prussian capital. Most of the other candidates, however, seemed to have weaknesses, as well. Fritsch had recommended Adolf Baginsky, Oswald Kohts and Carl von Noorden.[53] Still, his praise of Baginksy was ambiguous at best: 'Baginsky is a Jew who forces himself to the foreground, but he certainly is not stupid'. Appointing Baginsky became even more unfeasible after the queen mother informed the ministry that she would prefer the main Berlin paediatrician — who might one day be asked to treat her children or grandchildren — to be a Christian.[54] Fritsch did not elaborate on his preference for Kohts and while nobody had strong objections against him, no confidant showed much enthusiasm either. Külz argued that Kohts would have been a better candidate if he would have shown more diligence and that he could have put more effort into deepening his knowledge.[55] Falkenhein did not fully dismiss his candidacy but explicitly stated that both Heubner and Baginsky were better qualified.[56] Van Noorden's disadvantage was that he was not actually a paediatrician, which also applied to Falkenheim's favourite, Oswald Vierordt. Theodor Escherich was also mentioned a couple of times, but Falkenheim listed him among the people that should not be considered. Külz was even more explicit in his rejection. He advised against his appointment because he considered him to be 'an overachiever' (*Streber*) who 'still has to mature'.[57]

There was no way in which Althoff could follow up on the recommendations of all his confidants. On one side of the isle there were people like Falkenheim and Krehl who were convinced that Heubner was a self-evident choice. On the other side there were people like Virchow and Külz who advised strongly against him. The position of the Berlin medical faculty is not quite clear. Some sources mention that its members followed Virchow's lead and kept Heubner off their shortlist.[58] Others state that both Henoch and the faculty supported Heubner's candidacy.[59] Heubner's supporters could make a good case because hardly any other scholar suggested by his

[52] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 3 December 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[53] Heinrich Fritsch to Friedrich Althoff, 9 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[54] Pawliczek, 'Kontinuität des informellen Konsens,' 86. This may also explain Althoff's interest in the question whether Soltmann was Jewish or not.
[55] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 13 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[56] Hugo Falkenheim to Friedrich Althoff, received at 14 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[57] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 3 December 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[58] For example, see Hesse, 'Leben und Werk Otto Heubners,' 1116; Tomasevic, Klaudia, 'Die medizinische Versorgung von Kindern Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel von Würzburg,' (diss. Bayerischen Julius-Maximilians-Universität zu Würzburg, 2002). 28.
[59] Pawliczek, 'Kontinuität des informellen Konsens', 87.

opponents could count on much enthusiasm either. The conclusion that Külz drew from his case against Heubner was exemplary. He argued that the only other viable option would be to appoint Kohts, but he showed very little enthusiasm for him: 'There are favourable and unfavourable assesmments of Kohts. Without further ado, I am more inclined to trust the unfavourable judgements. In regard to the decision, it should not be neglected that, if you don't take the reliable and experienced Henoch into account, all the representatives of the discipline are inferior without exception'.[60]

After every candidate had been criticised by some of Althoff's correspondents, he asked another confidant, the administrative director of the Charité hospital Bernhard Spinola, to meet with Heubner. Spinola's opinion was unambiguous: 'Last Thursday, Professor Heubner was with me for quite a long time, I really liked him and he seems to be willing to accept the position. I have promised him the best possible consideration of his wishes on the side of the Charité'.[61] Early next year Heubner was appointed as the head of the paediatric clinic of the Charité and one year later he also received his full professorship.

The example of the discussion about Heubner's appointment shows at least two things. First, it shows the limits of the influence a scholar could exert through letters of recommendation. If the evaluations by different confidants turned out univocal, Althoff would often follow their advice. Strong disagreements among his confidants, however, forced him to disregard some recommendations and trust either his own judgement or that of his closest confidants. The second thing illustrated by the extensive correspondence about Henoch's succession is that there was no general agreement about the requirements for holding one of the most prestigious positions in German academia — a Berlin professorship. The fact that even Külz praises Heubner for the publication of significant works and the effective management of his paediatric hospital suggests that these basic requirements were generally acknowledged.[62] There was no agreement, however, on the importance of an upper-class and metropolitan demeanour. Krehl extensively described the Saxon mannerisms of Heubner without believing that these would make him less eligible for a professorship in Berlin. Külz, however, was convinced that his mannerisms were incommensurable with the dignity attached to an *Ordinariat* at Germany's most prestigious university.

The first section of the chapter already mentions that Althoff was often at odds with the conservative forces at the universities. This was most visible in his insistence on appointing Jewish and Catholic professors. The Heubner case suggests that he also opposed a different kind of social

[60] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 3 December 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[61] Bernhard Spinola to Friedrich Althoff, 26 December 1893. GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.
[62] Eduard Külz to Friedrich Althoff, 13 November 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 112.

conservatism by making decisions on the assumption that scholarly and clinical accomplishments were more important than a funny accent and a somewhat provincial demeanour. The fact that he was also able to find both supporters and opponents on this issue further testifies to the lack of consensus about the exact requirements of representability for a successful scholar.

Althoff's full force

The Heubner case showed the limits of the influence that could be gained from an extensive correspondence with Althoff; if recommendations contradicted each other, he had to make the final decision himself. In some cases, however, Althoff even decided to ignore unanimous recommendations. These decisions may have created his reputation as the 'Bismarck of the university system'. One of the appointments that evoked incomprehension and disappointment was that of Behring at the Marburg Chair of Hygiene. The widely shared doubts about Behring's suitability further add to our understanding of the expectations of a professor at a Prussian university, while they also illustrate Althoff's preference for unorthodox academics with recognisable scholarly accomplishments over scholars whose background and abilities reflected a more traditional template of Prussian professorship.

After the success of his diphtheria serum Behring had grown increasingly dissatisfied with his subordinate position at Koch's institute. For the winter of 1894 Althoff was able to find him a temporary professorial position in Halle, but this was not a permanent solution.[63] By the end of 1894 Behring's relationship with Koch had further deteriorated and he argued that it was unlikely that he would be able to fruitfully continue his work at the Institute for Infectious Diseases.[64] He had set his mind on a full Professorship of Hygiene at a Prussian university and put increasing pressure on Althoff by listing the other attractive options available to him; he was asked to become the leader of a soon to-be-established serum institute in Budapest, he could be appointed as the director of research at the *Höchster Farbwerke*, the facility that produced his diphtheria serum, and he had also been invited to continue his research in Petersburg.[65] He preferred, however, to be appointed in Marburg — the Prussian university closest to Höchst.[66] Althoff was convinced that the successful Behring should be preserved for German academia, but, because it proved to be difficult to find him a chair on short notice, he could only give one advice: 'If you really do not

[63] Linton, Derek S., *Emil von Behring*, 102, 192.
[64] Emil Behring to Friedrich Althoff, 24 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 325.
[65] Emil Behring to Friedrich Althoff, 2 January 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 325.
[66] Emil Behring to Friedrich Althoff, 8 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 325.

want to want to wait, I would advise you to decide for Höchst, because there you will still be approachable for us'.[67]

Behind the scenes Althoff looked for an appropriate position for Behring. He did not, however, look exclusively at hygienic professorships, but also explored the possibility to create a special 'serum professorship' for him.[68] His confidant at the medical faculty in Bonn, the pharmacologist Carl Binz, expressed his willingness to advocate this solution at his university.[69] At the same time Althoff also tried to secure Behring's desired professorial chair in Marburg. One circumstance that seemed to work in Behring's favour was that this chair had finally become available. In the winter of 1894, the Marburg hygienist Carl Fraenkel agreed to take over the Chair of Hygiene in Halle, the following year. Though the availability of the Marburg chair was good news for Behring, the fact that Fraenkel moved to Halle also showed his vulnerability at the academic job market. Behring had just spent a semester teaching in Halle, but his job performance had not convinced anyone in Halle to hire him instead. And, indeed, the reports about Behring's teaching activities in Halle were far from glowing.

This may have surprised Althoff because earlier evaluations of Behring's teaching had been rather positive. Since he was appointed as a military doctor and because he had never written a *Habilitation* his early teaching experience was limited to teaching courses to other military doctors. Hermann Schaper, the medical director of the *Charité*, testified that '[Behring] took great pains with his course, so that the chief staff doctors and the staff doctors have always attended it with the greatest interest'.[70] Another referent remembered the bacteriological courses that Behring had taught together with Bernhard Nocht. The latter would give the lectures after which both men would supervise the practical component of the course. He recalled that 'Behring was very detailed, exact and clear in his instruction' and he 'found that he had a great skill to explain something to the students, some of whom were completely inexperienced'.[71] Heinrich Bonhoff, a colleague at the Institute for Infectious Diseases, was even more complimentary: '[His] lecture was steady, calm and strictly factual, easy to understand for everyone, with exact consideration of the understanding of the audience […] From this and other lectures of Behring I have obtained the conviction that [he] has outstanding teaching skills'.[72] At the same time, however, the first rumours of Behring's unfitness started circulating. Eduard Hitzig, who had earlier recommended Behring for his Halle

[67] Friedrich Althoff to Emil Behring, 30 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[68] Friedrich Althoff to Emil Behring, 25 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. H, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[69] Carl Binz to Friedrich Althoff, 29 January 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[70] Hermann Schaper to Friedrich Althoff, 8 August 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[71] Testimony of an unknown former student of Behring, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[72] Heinrich Bonhoff to Friedrich Althoff, 25 August 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.

position, wrote to Althoff that he had heard from two different sources that Behring was 'somewhat meshuga'.[73]

The rumours of Behring being somewhat meshuga would soon be accompanied by attacks on his teaching. His Halle colleague Josef von Mering was very critical: 'Professor Behring is an outstanding bacteriologist, of whom it seems to be very doubtful, whether he is knowledgeable about the other fields of hygiene. As a teacher, [Behring] can only claim modest success, which might partly be attributed to the fact that he has not lectured before, because he has not been habilitated and partly to the fact that he does not yet master the subject completely'.[74] Von Mering argued that it would be better if Bering's teaching would be limited to the supervision of practical courses. His observations were corroborated by the pharmacologist Erich Harnack who stated that he believed that Behring 'will only be a successful teacher for those who specifically work according to his intentions under his leadership'.[75] Of course, the tidings of Behring's disappointing teaching accomplishments also reached Marburg, where they were interpreted as 'extraordinarily unfavourable'.[76] And these unfavourable evaluations were not the only argument against Behring's appointment.

Behring's other vulnerability was his polemic disposition. Even if the usefulness of his blood serum was widely recognized, the reasons and conditions of its efficacy were widely discussed. One major critic of Behring's analysis of his serum's efficacy was Rudolf Virchow. In itself, Virchow's disagreement was not a reason to worry; in October 1894, he informed Althoff that he was glad to be able to use Behring's highly effective serum in the children's hospital, the *Kaiser- und Kaiserin-Friedrich-Kinderkrankenhaus*.[77] When a Berlin newspaper reported that Virchow had claimed that the first successful experiments with favourable results had been carried out by one of his students, however, Behring defended his priority claim forcefully in an article in *Die Zukunft*.[78] In defence of his claim, he bluntly argued that his blood serum could never have been developed under Virchow's supervision.[79] He called Virchow a 'medical doctrinaire' who had to be opposed. He characterised his ideas about the origin and cure of disease as 'heresies' and argued that the 'dogmatism' of his 'belief system' had led to an 'inquisition'. Even if Behring's criticism on issues like the locality of disease in the body and the specificity of cures fell within the accepted norms of scholarly debate and his argumentation about the incommensurability of Virchow's theories of disease and the

[73] Eduard Hitzig to Friedrich Althoff, 10 August 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[74] Josef von Mering to Friedrich Althoff, 10 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[75] Erich Harnack to Friedrich Althoff, 13 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[76] Carl Fraenkel to Friedrich Althoff, 18 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[77] Rudolf Virchow to Friedrich Althoff, 17 October 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[78] Linton, Derek S., *Emil von Behring*, 177.
[79] Behring, Emil, 'Das neue Diphtheriemittel,' *Die Zukunft*, neunter Band, 1894, 97–109 and 249–264.

development of the blood serum may have been convincing to many, his name calling did not win him any sympathy. Behring also implicitly admitted to Althoff that he might have given the impression that his article in *Die Zukunft* was motivated by resentment.[80] This is how the medical faculty in Marburg must have interpreted it as well, since Fraenkel argued that it was this specific publication that had damaged the willingness of his colleagues to consider him for a professorship.[81]

The list of recommendations of the Marburg faculty therefore consisted of Albrecht Kossel and the former Koch associates Erwin von Esmarch and Moritz Eduard Cramer.[82] Althoff had instructed Fraenkel to make sure that Behring would also be included, but this was unfeasible: 'To get Behring on the list was simply impossible; except for me, nobody stood up for him'.[83] Since Althoff was still considering to create a special serum professorship for Behring, Fraenkel did not push the case and concurred with the faculty's preferences.[84] One month later, however, Althoff's confidant and Professor of Physiology in Marburg, Eduard Külz, died. Kossel took over Külz's position and the Marburg chair was available again.[85] Emphasising the overtures from Budapest and Petersburg, Behring did not waste any time to once more explicitly point out that he had set his mind on the Marburg professorship.[86] Althoff gave Fraenkel the same instruction as the month before, to make sure that Behring would end up on the faculty's list of preferred candidates. Once again, Fraenkel could not deliver: 'The candidacy of [Behring] seemed pointless to me […]. A sudden […] resort to Behring was really hardly possible for me, because I could not put forward any argument for it at all'.[87] The new list was the same as the old one, except that Kossel had been replaced by Walther Kruse.[88] The negotiations had reached a stalemate.

Althoff used his personal relationship with the minister to slow down the decision-making process until Behring had returned from his long vacation in France.[89] When he returned, the ministry decided to ignore the preferences from Marburg and to appoint Behring instead. The bad news reached the faculty in April. The decision was justified, as follows: '[...] your suggestions could not be considered mainly because it was particularly important to retain a distinguished man like Professor Behring in the service of a Prussian university and there was no other option available at

[80] Emil Behring to Friedrich Althoff, 6 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 325.
[81] Carl Fraenkel to Friedrich Althoff, 18 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[82] Carl Fraenkel to Friedrich Althoff, 25 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[83] Carl Fraenkel to Friedrich Althoff, 18 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[84] Friedrich Althoff to Emil Behring, 30 December 1894, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[85] Friedrich Althoff to Emil Behring, 31 January 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[86] Emil Behring to Friedrich Althoff, 8 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 325.
[87] Carl Fraenkel to Friedrich Althoff, 9 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[88] Friedrich Althoff to Emil Behring, 25 February 1895, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 326.
[89] Ibid.

the time'.[90] The medical faculty had lost its battle against the professorial appointment of a man they considered to be unfit and Althoff had been able to keep the inventor of the diphtheria blood serum in Prussia. And though it soon became clear that the faculty's distrust of Behring's teaching prowess was justified, this problem was soon resolved; Behring convinced Althoff to appoint his Berlin associate Erich Wernicke to take over most of his teaching duties.[91]

The case of Behring allows for a better understanding of the conclusions drawn from Fritsch's efforts in Breslau and the rocky road to Heubner's appointment in Berlin. While Fritsch's case shows that the interest of the institution could trump the interest of the individual scholar, Behring's case provides an example of the interest of the individual scholar being more significant than institutional concerns. This raises the question what the letters of recommendation collected at the Prussian ministry of education actually deal with. Do they recommend the best course to take to promote the interests of Prussian academic institutions or do they give advice about the professorial fitness of individual scholars? Though some letters emphasise the one side and others mostly focus on the other side, most recommendations look for a middle ground. Those that deal primarily with institutional interests try to serve these by recommending suitable individual scholars. Those that mostly focus on the merit of individual scholars, also touch on the question whether these merits suit the institution in question.

Secondly, the Behring case shows how institutional and individual interests could clash. All parties agreed that he was a brilliant researcher who therefore deserved a professorial appointment, preferably a special blood serum professorship with limited teaching responsibilities. All parties also agreed that Behring's wish to hold a Chair of Hygiene at a Prussian university was problematic, because he was not the right person to fulfil the teaching obligations that were part of that job. When Behring refused to settle for a special serum professorship, a stalemate was reached that could only be broken by the ministry. In cases like this it was up to Althoff to decide on a case by case basis whether institutional or individual considerations would be decisive and Behring's brilliance as a researcher as well as his pressure on Althoff proved to be crucial.

[90] Der Königliche Kurator der Universität Marburg to die Medizinische Fakultät Marburg, 11 April 1895, BNd: EvB/L271/5.
[91] Less than a year after arriving in Marburg Behring already informed Wernicke that he was working on getting him to Marburg to take over his teaching responsibilities: Emil Behring to Erich Wernicke, 29 January 1896, Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter Stabi), Nl. 156, Erich Wernicke. In April 1896 Wernicke would arrive in Marburg: Emil Behring to Erich Wernicke, 2 April 1896, Stabi, Nl. 156.

Philosophy and morality

Some qualities were expected of prospective professors in all disciplines taught at Prussian universities. It was, for example, important to have carried out independent research and to have at least some basic teaching skills. Other qualities however, were only relevant to individual disciplines. As the worries of Fritsch and the discussions about Heubner's transfer to Berlin demonstrate, it was important for a professor at the medical faculty to be able to manage a hospital department and to maintain a good relationship with patients. Such management and communication skills were not expected from orientalists and experimental psychologists. But Wundt and his peers were judged by discipline specific criteria as well. Because early experimental psychology developed within the philosophical faculty, psychologists were evaluated on criteria that were considered to be especially relevant to philosophers. More than other scholars — except maybe theologians — philosophers were expected to be exemplary both in their teaching and the pursuit of the of their lives.

A comparison of two disciplinary overviews among Althoff's papers exemplifies the importance of such moral and religious demands. One is an overview of German psychiatrists and neurologists written by the Berlin *Privatdozent* Ernst Siemerling in 1889. The other is an overview of German philosophers by the Halle philosopher Hans Vaihinger in 1893. Siemerling mentions the religious affiliations of the twenty-six scholars on his list, but does not draw any conclusions from this information. His most striking observations concern the often deplorable character traits of his peers. Otto Binswanger, for example, is described as follows: 'Thinks very highly of himself; talks a lot, his statements are not very trustworthy, he is very secretive and always thinks of his own interest. Not a candid character'. Eduard Hitzig was harshly judged as well: 'Has a very brusque, unsociable character, an egoist and autocrat through and through'. The Breslau psychiatrist Carl Wernicke had 'made himself unpopular because of his brusque behaviour' and was said to be of 'dubious character'.[92] In addition, he listed everyone's main publications, sometimes with short comments, such as 'nothing new', 'not very important', 'Good work with new points of view', or simply 'good'.

Religion is more central to Vaihinger's overview of German philosophers. This document suggests that what is important about religion is not one's affiliation, but rather how religion influences one's outlook on life. He distinguished four main religious attitudes among his peers, namely those that 'have a positive religious interest,' 'support religious liberalism', 'are radical in religious

[92] Overview of psychiatrists and neurologists by Ernst Siemerling, 1 March 1889, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 92.

questions, all the way up to hostility against religion' and those who are 'religiously indifferent'.[93] After these distinctions were made, he categorised the more than 100 philosophers under evaluation according to schools of thought. These schools of thought were then connected to the most common attitude towards religion associated with them. The two main categories neatly fit Vaihinger's background as a Kant scholar: apriorism (*Apriorismus*) and empiricism (*Empirismus*). He described the adherents of the different aprioristic schools of thought, such as Kantianism and Hegelianism, as 'having a positive religious interest' even if some individuals are described as liberal or radical. Empiricists are described as liberal, radical, or indifferent. Wundt, who is categorised as an adherent of 'critical empiricism' is assumed to be either liberal or indifferent. Richard Avenarius, the Zürich editor of the *Vierteljahrsschrift* and Wundt associate, is described as belonging to the school of 'positivist empiricism' and religiously radical.

Avenarius' perceived radicalism was probably the reason why he never obtained a position at a Prussian university. His problem was not that his Prussian peers were not aware of his existence. In 1884 he was one of the candidates shortlisted by the university of Kiel to succeed Bruno Erdmann, who had moved to Breslau. Althoff collected detailed information about all the shortlisted candidates. In addition to Avenarius these were the Halle *Extraordinarius* Gustav Glogau, the Bonn *Privatdozent* Theodor Lipps, and Hans Vaihinger, who was at that moment *Extraordinarius* in Strasbourg.[94] The ensuing correspondence shows that Avenarius' supposed lack of piety was not the only argument used against him. At least two of Althoff's correspondents emphasised another criticism as well. The Jena Professor Otto Liebmann advised against his appointment because, although he was already 40 years old, Avenarius had 'only published two slim volumes as books'.[95] The Strasbourg philosopher Wilhelm Windelband was less negative about a possible appointment of Avenarius, but emphasised the same shortcoming: 'Because the journal requires a large amount of work, he has, alas, not accomplished anything for years, but I consider him to be very able and industrious; something will come out of it eventually'.[96] The morally and religiously charged reproaches, however, were probably more damaging.

The importance of a positive attitude towards religion becomes apparent when we look at some of the remarks that indirectly referred to Avenarius. After casually arguing against Avenarius' candidacy the Marburg philosopher Julius Bergmann emphasised the importance of religion in his

[93] Übersicht über die philosophischen Universitätsdocente Deutschlands (mit Einschluss Österreichs u. d. Schweiz) nach ihren Richtungen (nebst einigen Notizen über deren Hauptwerke, Geburtsjahr, Heimat, Konfession u.s.w.) by Hans Vaihinger, October 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[94] Bruno Erdmann to Friedrich Althoff, 19 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[95] Otto Liebmann to Friedrich Althoff, 23 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[96] Wilhelm Windelband to Friedrich Althoff, 24 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.

rejection of the candidacy of Theobald Ziegler for another position. He argued that Ziegler was a follower of David Friedrich Strauss. Strauss's investigations into the historical Jesus were seen by many peoople as damaging to the Christian faith when they were published in the 1830s.[97] Half a century later, Bergmann still argued that 'the representation of this school of thought at a university by a full professor must pose a great danger to the students'.[98] Like Bergmann, the conservative curator of the university of Halle, Wilhelm Schrader, did not explicitly mention Avenarius. He did, however, point out that his rival, Glogau, held 'ethical-religious (*sittlich-religöse*) views' and he approvingly added that these views informed his day-to-day life as demonstrated by the fact that he had seen him attending a church service.[99]

Avenarius himself was convinced that there was a prejudice against philosophers of what he called the Wundtian school of thought.[100] Althoff seemed to be open to criticisms grounded in such prejudice. Therefore, the only wholeheartedly enthusiastic recommendation of Avenarius was presented as an argument against Althoff's worries about Avenarius moral uprightness. A letter by the Berlin philosopher Friedrich Paulsen shows that Avenarius faced an uphill struggle: 'It seems to me that you fear or at least suspect from Avenarius just about any indiscretions or provocations that are capable of disturbing the peace in public education'.[101] Paulsen tried to convince Althoff of Avenarius' moral uprightness: 'I don't doubt […] that [Professor Avenarius] is too honest a man not to express his thoughts in the way that is most appropriate to him. On the other hand, I am convinced that whatever he says will be said with the earnestness and objectivity (*Sachlichkeit*) that should be demanded from a lecture dealing with the final and highest things. I think he is as incapable of defamation as of hypocrisy'. Others, however, were less kind. Even if Windelband was rather positive — in his eyes, only Glogau was a better candidate — he subtly underlined that he himself represented a very different intellectual tradition.[102] Otto Liebmann simply stated that Avenarius represented 'a very extreme school of thought'.[103] Bergmann argued that he had started to read Avenarius' work but that he had never finished it because he immediately realised that Avenarius advocated a one-sided empiricism that he considered to be a regrettable reduction of Kant's thought at best.

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[97] For example, see Linstrum, Erik, 'Strauss's Life of Jesus: Publication and the Politics of the German Public Sphere,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71(4), 2010, 593–616. 605–606.
[98] Julius Bergmann to Friedrich Althoff, 25 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[99] Wilhelm Schrader to Friedrich Althoff, 1 February 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[100] Richard Avenarius to Wilhelm Wundt, 2 February 1883, UAL, Nl. Wilhelm Wundt. (accessed at http://home.uni-leipzig.de/wundtbriefe/home.htm) The extent to which it is useful to speak of Avenarius as being part of a Wundtian school of thought is debatable. The close relationship between the two man, however, is clear: see Chapter 2, 64–65 and: Russo Kraus, 'Back to the origins of the repudiation of Wundt,' 30–32.
[101] Friedrich Paulsen to Friedrich Althoff, 22 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[102] Wilhelm Windelband to Friedrich Althoff, 24 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[103] Otto Liebmann to Friedrich Althoff, 23 January 1884, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.

The ethical and religious objections against Avenarius were not overturned by Paulsen's later recommendations. Even Avenarius' supporters were unable to advocate his cause without distancing themselves from his thought. His opponents did not have to go out of their way to point at his assumed shortcomings; a short reference to religion, morality, or the supposed extremeness of his thought combined with a reference to his small scholarly output was enough. Glogau would eventually be appointed in Kiel, Vaihinger would take over his position in Halle, and Avenarius would stay in Zürich for the remainder of his career. More than a decade later, in August 1896, he was put at the top of the list of candidates for a Chair of Philosophy in Freiburg.[104] Finally a move back to Germany seemed to be a realistic possibility. But on the 18th of the same month, shortly after he had received the promising news, Avenarius passed away in Zürich.[105]

Schools of thought

Another background against which appointment decisions were taken was the difference between the schools of thought represented by the candidates. Often, the choice for a specific candidate was also that for a specific approach to research and teaching. When Robert Koch left his position as Chair of Hygiene in Berlin for the Institute for Infectious Diseases, he was succeeded by Max Rubner. It was clear to everyone involved that this entailed a change from an emphasis on bacteriology to a focus on physiology.[106] In Orientalism, the generation coming of age by the end of the 19th century advocated to 'open the doors to a wider, deeper and more powerful Orient' as a response to what they considered to be the narrowly positivist philology of the older generation.[107] This translated into a growing interest in contemporary Oriental societies, cultural practices, living languages and a willingness to advance grand-scale hypotheses.

Philosophy was especially susceptible to divisions between competing schools of thought (*Richtungen*). We have already seen how Avenarius and his views were criticised for being radically anti-religious, but his 'positivist empiricism' was only one of the nine principal schools of thought recognised in Vaihinger's overview. He listed four principal schools of aprioristic philosophies grounded in the thought of four influential German philosophers: Hegel, Herbart, Lotze and Kant. He also recognised four schools of empiricism: critical empiricism, psychological empiricism,

[104] Hugo Münsterberg to Wilhelm Wundt, 12 August 1896, UAL, Nl. Wilhelm Wundt. (accessed at http://home.uni-leipzig.de/wundtbriefe/home.htm)
[105] Hugo Münsterberg to Wilhelm Wundt, 21 August 1896, UAL, Nl. Wilhelm Wundt. (accessed at http://home.uni-leipzig.de/wundtbriefe/home.htm)
[106] Rössner, Stephan, 'Max Rubner (1854–1932),' *Obesity Reviews*, 14, 2013, 432–433. 432.
[107] Marchand, Suzanne L., *German Orientalism*, 212–216.

idealistic empiricism and positivist empiricism. In addition he recognised a category of 'ultramontane Catholic philosophers' and classified a number of younger scholars whose views had not yet fully crystalised as philosophers and whose school of thought could therefore not yet be determined.[108]

Of course, not everyone would have agreed with all of Vaihinger's categorisations. After all, there are many different ways to distinguish philosophers from each other. Vaihinger's overview does, however, nicely illustrate the huge differences that German philosophers perceived among themselves. Because of such perceptions, philosophers were often hired not because they were assumed to somehow be better at their job than others, but rather because their school of thought suited the sensibilities of other faculty members. The discussions about the Chair of Philosophy in Berlin, in 1894, illustrate the importance of such preferences. Even if the faculty agreed that they were looking for someone with both experimental and psychological credentials, the eventual choice for Carl Stumpf was largely based on the ways in which his work differed from both Wundt's and Georg Elias Müller's.

Stumpf's distance from Wundt was widely recognised in the early 1890s. In the first years of the decade they had been involved in a controversy that had started as a debate on Weber's law, but which quickly turned into an exchange of personal reproaches. The starting point of this discussion was the dissertation of Wundt's student Carl Lorenz, which was published in the *Philosophische Studien* in 1890.[109] Stumpf analysed Lorenz's findings in a long and critical paper, after which Wundt wrote a long reply to defend the work carried out in his laboratory.[110] Even if he claimed to write '*sine ira et studio*', he explicitly commented on Stumpf's personality and closed his polemic with the observation that Stumpf would benefit from his harsh words because he would 'learn to value, not only as the best but also as the most useful virtue for a scientific researcher, this: to be just towards others, to be strict towards himself'.[111] In his replies, Stumpf would become as personal and hostile as Wundt; he accused him of a 'mixture of untrue assertions, of confusions, of mutilations of the

[108] See footnote 92.
[109] Lorenz, Carl, 'Untersuchungen über die Auffassung von Tondistanzen,' *Philosophische Studien*, 6, 1890, 26–103. Carl Lorenz should not be confused with Gustav Lorenz, worked on his dissertation in Wundt's laboratory half a decade before Carl Lorenz and who was mentioned in Chapter 1, 53 and who worked on similar issues.
[110] Stumpf, Carl, 'C. Lorenz: Untersuchungen über die Auffassung von Tondistanzen,' *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, 1, 1890, 26–103; Wundt, Wilhelm, 'Ueber Vergleichungen von Tondistanzen,' *Philosophische Studien*, 6, 1891, 605–640.
[111] Wundt, 'Ueber Vergleichungen von Tondistanzen,' 640; the English translation has been taken from: Boring, Edwin G., 'The Psychology of Controversy,' *The Psychological Review*, 36(2), 1929, 97–121. 109.

course of my thought, of obscure imputations and negligences, of infirm evasions, of fallacies of every kind, and of frequent assurances of the incapacity and ignorance of his adversary'.[112]

The confrontation with Wundt probably made Stumpf a more attractive candidate in the capital. Though the rumours that Helmholtz had fired Wundt in Heidelberg because of his lacking mathematical prowess have been challenged, contemporary sources suggest that Wundt was not highly regarded in Berlin, Helmholtz's new home city.[113] The Halle university librarian Otto Hartwig reminded Althoff of the controversy and added that 'because the greatest men in Berlin, Helmholtz in particular, have fallen out with Wundt, his former pupil from Heidelberg, Stumpf is already for that reason better liked by them'.[114]

The polemic between Stumpf and Wundt not only shows that scholars could be tempted to make unpleasant personal comments, it also illustrates that different schools of thought existed among scholars whose interests and research methods were closely related. Lorenz and Stumpf had both explored the ability to judge the middle tone between two tones sounded in series.[115] Lorenz's analysis suggested that listeners would pick out the arithmetic mean instead of a harmonious musical interval. Stumpf, however, argued that a well-trained listener would choose the geometric or musical mean as the middle tone instead. The most likely explanation for these different findings was that Lorenz and Wundt relied on a large dataset obtained from musically untrained subjects, while Stumpf based his findings on the aesthetically refined perceptive skills of a smaller number of trained music listeners.[116] This implies that Stumpf's psychology explicitly allowed for an appreciation of aesthetic judgement. In the eyes of some of his peers this appreciation made Stumpf a more attractive colleague than a supporter of what they considered to be Wundt's positivist reductionism. Stumpf also emphasised his aesthetic interests in a letter to the Berlin philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey: 'In regard to the lectures, I will try to read aesthetics alongside psychology and for both I hope to find a growing audience that is not motivated by worries about examinations'.[117] Althoff's most active correspondent about the occupation of the Berlin chair was the Breslau

[112] Stumpf, Carl, 'Mein Schlußwort gegen Wundt,' *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, 1891, 438–443. 438–440. the English translation has been taken from: Boring, Edwin G., 'The Psychology of Controversy,' 110.
[113] The story about Wundt's dismissal is most famously brought up in: Hall, G. Stanley, *Founders of modern psychology*, Appleton and Company, Ney York, 1912. 311. Wundt himself denies this course of events in his memoires: Wundt, Wilhelm, *Erlebtes und Erkanntes*, 154.
[114] Otto Hartwig to Friedrich Althoff, 27 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[115] Hui, Alexandra E., 'The bias of "music-infected consciousness": the aesthetics of listening in the laboratory and on the city streets of fin-de-siècle Berlin and Vienna,' *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 48(3), 2012, 236–250. 241. My description of the differences between Lorenz and Stumpf is based on this article.
[116] In Chapter 1, 56, I also referred to the subjects in Wundt's laboratory as well-trained. Being trained in introspection, however, is not the same as being trained in interpreting sound within the framework of musical theory.
[117] Carl Stumpf to Wilhelm Dilthey, 5 October 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.

Professor Theodor Lipps. He recommended Stumpf wholeheartedly for the Berlin chair: 'Above all, it appears important to me that, thanks to Stumpf, justice will also be done to aesthetics'.[118]

It was clear that most of Althoff's confidants agreed that the appointee to the Berlin chair should not be a Wundtian, but because the Berlin faculty was set on appointing a philosopher who had proven himself to be an apt experimental psychologist the choices were limited. The *Extraordinarius* and founder of the Berlin psychological institute Hermann Ebbinghaus was not considered because he was seen as too limited in his experimental orientation and because he had a rocky relationship with the influential Dilthey.[119] It soon became clear that there were only two serious contenders: Stumpf and the Göttingen philosopher and experimentalist Georg Elias Müller. Though his Göttingen colleague Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf described Müller as one of those who were called 'inconvenient subordinate' (*unbequem Untergebene*) in the military — who the historian Treitschke called 'academic porcupine' (*akademisch Stachelschwein*) — Müller was widely recognised as one of the foremost experimental philosophers of his time.[120] Wilamowitz also added that since he had been lifted out of poverty, overcome prolonged illness, finished his book and finally married, Müller had become increasingly sociable.

On most accounts Stumpf and Müller seemed to be equally qualified. The character of both men was harshly evaluated by at least some of their peers. Otto Hartwig stated that Stumpf was 'a very arrogant gentleman and therefore rather irritable and morose'.[121] Friedrich Schollmeyer, Professor of Law in Halle, was not very enthusiastic either: 'Personally, I have the impression of a very tense (*nervös*) human being and that has been confirmed to me by people who have had him as examiner'.[122] Both Stumpf's and Müller's teaching skills received modest praise at best. Hartwig mentioned that Stumpf's lectures attracted large numbers of students, but that his teaching was far from outstanding. The librarian and legal scholar Hans Paalzow observed that his lectures were 'carefully prepared' and 'rich in ideas' but also noticed that most attendants of his first lecture on logic did not return for the second one.[123] The Göttingen mathematician Felix Klein remarked that Müller's lectures were well-attended, original and clear but, at the same time, emphasised that he was apparently unable to convince students to write their dissertation with him.[124] All the above

[118] Theodor Lipps to Friedrich Althoff, 31 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[119] Sprung, Lothar, 'The Berlin Psychological Tradition: Between Experiment and Quasi-Experimental Design, 1850–1990,' in: Woodward, William R. and Robert S. Cohen (eds.), *World Views and Scientific Discipline Formation: Science Studies in the German Democratic Republic*, Springer Science+Business Media, Dordrecht, 1991, 107–116. 108–109.
[120] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf to Friedrich Althoff, 2 September 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[121] Otto Hartwig to Friedrich Althoff, 27 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[122] Friedrich Schollmeyer to Friedrich Althoff, 28 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[123] Hans Paalzow to Friedrich Althoff, 31 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[124] Felix Klein to Friedrich Althoff, 30 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.

correspondents, however, lavished praise on both men's accomplishments as independent thinkers and skilled researchers.

Because Stumpf and Müller scored equally well on the significance of research output, personal character and teaching skills, other criteria became decisive. One letter by Wilhelm Schrader suggests that a consideration of their respective schools of thought would not be helpful; both belonged to 'that side of Lotze's school that follows the so-called exact psychological investigations […] without forsaking ideality'.[125] Other advisers, however, described Müller not so much as a philosopher but rather as a physiologist with a limited interest in philosophy. Klein explained that Müller's 'true goal is the creation of a *psychophysics* that corresponds with all our knowledge of today'.[126] Lipps likewise argued that 'Müller's actual literary activities […] throughout many years concerned *physiology*. […] It is indeed to be feared […] that physiology will eventually completely engross him. In any case, for Müller, *philosophy* is not at the *centre* of his interest, at this moment'.[127] Wilamowitz then added: 'he places himself in the natural sciences, and I believe that he trains the students who affiliate themselves especially with him somewhat one-sidedly'.[128]

Althoff's confidants repeatedly underlined that Stumpf was less disposed to limit himself to physiology. Lipps explained that Stumpf's ambition was to reach 'a comprehensive intellectually and ethically satisfying perception of the world and of life'.[129] Max Dessoir saw Stumpf as a philosopher with a 'brilliant general intuition' who uses 'essentially logical tools to 'approach the questions of psychic life (*Seelenleben*)'.[130] Dilthey, finally, emphasised Stumpf's attempts to 'harmonise the spirit of the natural sciences with the highest interest of humankind' and added that 'in this deeper relationship with religion and ethics he is unique among the scientific (*naturwissenschaftliche*) philosophers'.[131] Even if Schrader's letter suggested that Stumpf and Müller represented the same school of thought, this seems to have been only superficially true. A closer look at their teaching, research and publications showed that Müller's interest in experimental psychology was part of an overarching interest in psychophysics and physiology while Stumpf's use of methods from the natural sciences was intimately connected to aesthetic, religious and ethical concerns. Since most of the influential Prussian philosophers — not least of all Dilthey —

[125] Wilhelm Schrader to Friedrich Althoff, 28 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[126] Felix Klein to Friedrich Althoff, 30 July 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118. Klein's emphasis.
[127] Theodor Lipps to Friedrich Althoff, 31 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118. Lipps's emphases.
[128] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf to Friedrich Althoff, 2 September 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[129] Theodor Lipps to Friedrich Althoff, 31 August 1893, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118. 134–141.
[130] Max Dessoir to Friedrich Althoff, no date, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118.
[131] Wilhelm Dilthey to Friedrich Althoff, no date, GStA PK, VI. HA, Nl Althoff, No. 118. 154–155.

sympathised more with Stumpf's school of thought than with Müller's, the former was eventually appointed.

The individual, the institution and the state

The preceding case studies illustrate certain characteristics of the Althoff system as well as some interesting features of the recommendation he received. As far as the Althoff system is concerned, the above cases show that Althoff could base his decisions on an extensive and intimate knowledge about Germany's most successful and promising scholars. The reports of the Seminar for Oriental Languages show that he even kept files about such things as alleged plagiarism, simmering feuds and accusations of student-day aberrations.

Althoff kept himself informed about scholars in the whole German speaking world. He did not encounter difficulties in gathering information about Avenarius in Zürich and Heubner in Leipzig. When he received unanimous advice, Althoff was often willing to follow it, even if the Behring case shows that, in exceptional cases, he would push his own candidate. Such use of force was rare, however, because his confidants would argue in favour of his views at faculty meetings, all over Prussia. For example, Fritsch represented him at the Breslau medical faculty; Fraenkel did this at the Marburg medical faculty; Dilthey was his most trusted representative at the Berlin faculty of philosophy. Having representatives in faculty councils was especially important when there was disagreement among the council members. The many letters of recommendation sent to Althoff paint a colourful picture of the many shapes such discussions could take. The pieces of correspondence discussed in this chapter show three main sources of disagreement.

In the first place there was no general agreement on what qualities made an individual electable to a professorial chair. In Heubner's case all advisors agreed that he was a preeminent paediatrician, both as a researcher and as the manager of his clinic. At the same time, there were doubts about his teaching skills; even if what he said was appropriate, some considered the way in which he said it to be disqualifying. His Saxon accent and his supposedly typical Saxon demeanour would make it hard for his students to take him seriously and hamper his ability to transfer his knowledge. Behring's invention of the diphtheria blood serum was also widely praised and the idea to create a special blood serum professorship for him was well-received. At the same time his educational prowess and the breadth of his knowledge were widely questioned. Therefore, the idea to give him his desired hygienic professorship, which would require him to teach on a wide range of subjects, met with strong opposition. The discussions about the appointments of Heubner and Behring

show an unwillingness among academics to rank each according to one set of criteria. Nobody called Heubner's competitor Kohts an all-round better candidate. Kohts' supporters rather first praised Heubner's accomplishments, then noted that his way of presenting himself made him — alas — unfit for a Berlin professorship and only then suggested that Kohts might be a viable option. Behring was not represented as inferior to any of his competitors for a Chair of Hygiene in Marburg, either. The main argument was rather that his merits were not decisive for the decision about his appointment. All in all, critical evaluation could be focused on the many different qualities of a scholar.

This consideration brings us to the second source of disagreement. The correspondence characterised as consisting of 'letters of recommendation' in this chapter is different from what we designate as such in the 21st century. Modern-day letters of recommendation are usually written at the request of individuals and mostly emphasise the accomplishments and character traits that make them suitable candidates for a job. The letters of recommendation discussed in this chapter, however, were not requested by the applicants but by the man who made the hiring decisions. Therefore, they were rarely a reflection of the merit of one candidate, but rather an evaluation of both a number of candidates and the specific needs of the institution that hoped to appoint one. Fritsch's letters to Althoff focus on the state of affairs at the Breslau medical faculty rather than on the professional accomplishments of any single candidate. The decision to hire Küstner was largely based on the fact that his wealth would allow him to accept a professorship at a university where he would be required to direct his attention to a troubled clinic rather than to a more profitable private practice. Those Althoff confidants who argued that teaching was a more decisive criterion for a professorial appointment than research and publications were also concerned with the institution rather than with the individual. Both Heubner and Behring were praised for their accomplishments by men who advised against their appointment; the reason to oppose hiring them was informed by institutional considerations about the preferable balance between teaching and research. We can therefore conclude that letters of recommendation provided an opportunity to show loyalty to both individuals scholars and institutions of learning.

A final source of disagreement was the existence of different schools of thought in many fields. In hygiene you could distinguish between bacteriological and environmental schools of thought. In orientalism there was a difference between proponents of ancient philology and advocates of research into contemporary culture and living languages. In philosophy the distinctions between different schools were especially well-defined. As Vaihinger's overview suggests, the divide between what he called apriorists and empiricists was very deep. The examples of Stumpf, Wundt and Müller illustrate how a philosophical outlook fully informed by the natural sciences could harm

a candidate. Stumpf was a good candidate in the light of the supposed neglect of aesthetics in Wundt's experimental methodology and the overemphasis on physiology in Müller's work. People representing schools of thought that were considered to be religiously radical could be denied a professorship not only on grounds of personal beliefs of the faculty members but also because their influence might pose a threat to the moral state of the student population. This is illustrated by the example of Avenarius' lack of success in finding an appointment in Prussia. All in all, belonging to the same school of thought was a very common reason for providing loyal support to a colleague by sending a glowing recommendation to the ministerial authorities.

These observations show that in most cases letters of recommendation were not primarily about individual candidates, but considered both the specific needs of the hiring institutions and a range of different qualities of the scholars under consideration. Most scholars were not presented as overall good, but rather as suitable or unsuitable for a specific vacancy at a specific institution. Potential points of interest for these positions included teaching skills (e.g. Behring), financial situation (e.g. Küstner), social profile (e.g. Heubner), school of thought (e.g. Stumpf) and religious affiliation (e.g. Avenarius). Different criteria could be added to different disciplines; a medical professor was often required to also be a good clinician, and a philosopher would improve his chances to be appointed if his potential future colleagues would have some affinity with his school of thought. The one quality discussed surprisingly rarely was that of the candidates' research and scholarly publications. Apparently, such considerations were only of secondary importance, although Althoff's support of Behring shows that he definitely took innovative research into account.