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Divining and Knowing: Karl Sudhoff's Historical Method

CLAUDIA STEIN

SUMMARY: This article investigates the historical method of Karl Sudhoff (1853–1938), Germany's first professor of medical history. It argues that in order to understand his ideas more fully, we need to step outside the historiography of medical history and assess his methodology in relation to the norms and ideals of German academic history writing in general. The article demonstrates that the philology-based "critical method" of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) was central to Sudhoff's methodological thinking. It investigates the underlying philosophical and epistemological assumptions of Ranke's method, which tend to be less appreciated than his overt empiricism and explores how Sudhoff applied these to the new professionalizing subdiscipline of the history of medicine. The article argues that Sudhoff's concerns with the methodology of history, which involved a particular conception of the relationship between the human sciences and the medical sciences, offers compelling addresses to our times.

KEYWORDS: Karl Sudhoff, history of medicine, Leopold von Ranke, empiricism, historicism, intuition, natural vs. human sciences, affect

When, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1928, Germany's most prominent medical historian Karl Sudhoff (1853–1938) looked back on his long career, he felt only satisfaction. Comparing himself to other historians in their autumnal years, despairing of their many unfinished projects, he revealed the secret of his contentment: "[M]y star, my energy, *my method* saved me from feeling helpless."¹ The achievements he looked back on were indeed remarkable. A practicing physician for most of his life, he published more than four hundred articles as well as many

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1. Karl Sudhoff, "Aus meiner Arbeit. Eine Rückschau," *Arch. Gesch. Med.* 21 (1929): 333–87, quotation on 366, emphasis added.

monographs, edited volumes, and editions of original manuscripts.² He also saw one of his prime responsibilities the application of academic expertise. Here, too, he excelled, notably through the exhibitions he organized—most famously the historical and ethnological section of the *Internationale Hygiene-Ausstellung* in Dresden in 1911, which attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors.³

What made Sudhoff so successful was that his love of Clio was never only an intellectual encounter; he was keenly aware of the politics involved in the academic practice and public distribution of history. He was a gifted strategist, and his relentless lobbying for establishing the history of medicine as an independent discipline at German universities was ultimately crowned in 1905 when, aged fifty-two, he became Germany's first professor for medical history.⁴ His Institut für die Geschichte der Medizin und Naturwissenschaften (renamed the Karl-Sudhoff Institut in 1938) became a hub for scholars from around the world. Some of the finest medical historians were trained there, among them Henry Sigerist (1891–1957), who became Sudhoff's successor in 1925.⁵

Despite his achievements, however, Sudhoff was never a role model for all aspiring historians of medicine and science (particularly after 1945); indeed, to the present he remains a controversial figure in the history of medicine. This fate has much to do with the fact that the same political savviness and appetite for power that served his discipline building also led him to join the Nazi Party in 1933. It was a move that disconcerted many of his students and fellow academics, and it continues to haunt those who have written on him since.⁶ Indeed, only recently have Sudhoff's

2. Grethe Herbrand-Hochmuth, "Systematisches Verzeichnis der Arbeiten Karl Sudhoffs," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 27 (1934): 131–86; Grethe Herbrand-Hochmuth and Rudolf Zaunick, "Bibliographie. Karl Sudhoff. Nachtrag für die Jahre 1933–1938," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 31 (1938): 343–44; Grethe Herbrand-Hochmuth, "Nachtrag für die Jahre 1898–1933," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 32 (1939): 279–84.

3. More than 5.2 million visitors saw the Dresden exhibition the summer of 1911. I analyze Sudhoff's historical and ethnological section in a chapter of my upcoming monograph, jointly written with Roger Cooter, on the spectacle of hygiene in Germany and Britain, 1880–1930. For the catalogue of Sudhoff's exhibition, see *Internationale Hygiene-Ausstellung, Dresden 1911: Historische Abteilung mit ethnographischer Unterabteilung*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Verlag der Internationalen Hygiene Ausstellung, 1911).

4. Sudhoff became "Extraordinarius" in 1905 and "Ordinarius" in 1918.

5. On Henry Sigerist, see, for example, *Making Medical History: The Life and Times of Henry E. Sigerist*, ed. Theodore Brown and Elizabeth Fee (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

6. Even Henry Sigerist, who was forced to leave Leipzig for Baltimore in 1932, never publicly commented on Sudhoff's political choice. See Henry Sigerist, "Karl Sudhoff, 1853–1938," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 7 (1939): 801–4; Sigerist, "Erinnerungen an Karl Sudhoff,"

political views and entanglement with Nazi politics and ideology come to be seriously investigated.⁷ This is not the place to debate whether it has been discomfort with Sudhoff's late politics that has led historians to a somewhat narrow engagement with his personality and work. However, it is striking that German historians of medicine have tended to emphasize his administrative achievements at the expense of looking in detail at his methodology.⁸ This oversight is odd given that Sudhoff regarded his methodology as central to his success in German academia.⁹ In some ways it is odder still for today given that the methodological and epistemological issues that preoccupied him resonate strongly with those that some historians have come to identify as crucial to the continued practice of academic history writing.¹⁰

Sudhoffs Archiv 37 (1953): 97–103. However, in his diaries he was more explicit. See Henry Sigerist, *Autobiographische Schriften*, ed. Nora Sigerist Beeson, trans. Alice Meyer (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme, 1970), 137–38.

7. Thomas Rütten, "Karl Sudhoff. 'Patriarch' der deutschen Medizingeschichte. Zur Identitätspräsentation einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin in der Biographik ihres Begründers," in *Médecins érudits de Coray à Sigerist: actes du colloque de Saint-Julien-en-Beaujolais*, ed. Danielle Gourevitch (Paris: de Boccard, 1995), 154–71; Rütten, "Karl Sudhoff and 'the Fall' of German Medical History," in *Locating Medical History: The Stories and Their Meaning*, ed. Frank Huisman and John Harley Warner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 95–114; see also Michael Hubenstorf, "Eine 'Wiener Schule' der Medizingeschichte und die vergessene deutschsprachige Medizingeschichte," in *Medizingeschichte und Gesellschaftskritik: Festschrift für Georg Baader*, ed. Michael Hubenstorf et al. (Husum: Matthiesen, 1997), 246–89. For the discipline of medical history in Germany during the Nazi period, see Werner Friedrich Kümmel, "Geschichte, Staat und Ethik: Deutsche Medizinhistoriker 1933–1945 im Dienste 'nationalpolitischer Erziehung,'" in *Medizingeschichte und Medizinethik: Kontroversen und Begründungsansätze 1900–1950*, ed. Andreas Frewer and Josef N. Neumann (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001), 167–203; for the fate of the discipline after 1945, see Volker Roelcke, "Die Entwicklung der Medizingeschichte seit 1945," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Ethik der Naturwissenschaften, Technik und Medizin* 2 (1994): 193–216.

8. For recent examples of such histories, see *Die Institutionalisierung der Medizinhistoriographie: Entwicklungslinien vom 19. ins 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Andreas Frewer and Volker Roelcke (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001).

9. Only a few historians of medicine considered his method worthwhile to investigate. See, for example, Georg Harig, "Sudhoffs Sicht der antiken Medizin," *Sudhoffs Archiv* 76 (1992): 97–105; also Gundolf Keil, "Sudhoff and Medical History," *Scientiarum Historia* 29 (2003): 67–90; also Keil, "Sudhoffs Sicht vom deutschen medizinischen Mittelalter," *Nachr. bl. Dt. Ges. Gesch. Med. Naturwiss. Techn.* 31 (1981): 94–129. Sudhoff's approach is briefly discussed in Heinz-Peter Schmiedebach, "Bildung in a Scientific Age: Julius Pagel, Max Neuburger, and the Cultural History of Medicine," in Huisman and Warner, *Locating Medical History* (n. 7), 74–93; see 75, 80, 86, 89.

10. I am referring here to current discussions in Anglo-American academia around the current rise of neo-empiricist tendencies in history writing. See, for example, Joan W. Scott, "History-Writing as Critique," in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007): 19–38; Sander Gilman, "Representing Health and Illness: Thoughts for the Twenty-First Century," *Med. Hist.* 55 (2011): 295–300.

This article explores Sudhoff's conception of the history of medicine from the vantage of his publications around the time that he received his professorship at Leipzig—at the time, that is, that Sudhoff declared (with not untypical immodesty) that the history of medicine had finally achieved “full academic citizenship” (*akademisches Bürgerrecht*).¹¹ I argue that in order to understand Sudhoff's ideas more fully, we need to step outside the historiography of medical history and assess his methodology in relation to the norms and ideals of academic history writing at his time. It is well known that when he began to write the history of medicine, the majority of Germany's professional historians enthusiastically followed the empiricist and philology-based “critical method” of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), the man celebrated then (and still today) as the “father” of modern history writing.¹² Sudhoff shared this enthusiasm, so much so that he took Ranke's “critical method” virtually for granted. In so doing he aimed to establish his own discipline on the basis of philological rigor and archive-grounded empirical expertise.¹³ Yet, I maintain, there is more

11. Karl Sudhoff, “Theodor Puschmann und die Aufgaben der Geschichte der Medizin,” *Muench. med. Wochenschr.* 53 (1906): 1669–73, quotation on 1672. Sudhoff was most explicit about his method in works that were published in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These programmatic writings served as a defense of and advertisement for the new discipline (institutionalized in 1905). According to his contemporary Walter Pagel, the lack of methodological reflections after that period can be explained by the fact that Sudhoff considered them no longer necessary because the history of medicine had become an acknowledged academic discipline. See Werner Friedrich Kümmel, “Vom Nutzen eines ‘nicht notwendigen Faches.’ Karl Sudhoff, Paul Diepgen und Henry E. Sigerist vor der Frage: ‘Wozu Medizingeschichte,’” in *Geschichte und Ethik in der Medizin. Von den Schwierigkeiten einer Kooperation*, ed. Richard Toellner and Urban Wiesing (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1997), 5–16; for Pagel's view, 10. Sudhoff republished some of these programmatic and methodological writings in his *Skizzen* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1921) but stripped them of any political content. Some of the articles in *Skizzen* were translated into English in 1926. See Karl Sudhoff, *Essays in the History of Medicine*, ed. Fielding H. Garrison (New York: Medical Life Press, 1926).

12. The scholarship on Ranke is legion. For works in English, see, for example, Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Georg G. Iggers, “The Theoretical Foundations of German Historicism II: Leopold von Ranke,” in Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 63–89. For the English translation of some of Ranke's works, see Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers (London: Routledge, 2011). For the late-nineteenth-century neo-Rankean movement in Germany, see Wolfgang Mommsen, “Ranke and the Neo-Rankean School in Imperial Germany,” in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, ed. Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 124–40. For a humorous analysis of his method, see Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

13. For the great importance of the philological method in Sudhoff's history writing, see, for example, Karl Sudhoff, “Aufgaben, Methoden und Hilfsmittel einer medizinischen

to both Ranke's "critical method" and Sudhoff's application of it than this suggests. Inherent to Ranke's method were philosophical and epistemological assumptions that tend to be less appreciated than Ranke's overt empiricism, especially among Anglo-American scholars for whom "empiricism" has its own historically contingent peculiarities.¹⁴ It is with these underlying assumptions and Sudhoff's use of them that this article is concerned.

Sudhoff believed unquestioningly that all knowledge production, including that in the natural sciences, derived its meaningfulness and relevance from its relation to the past. Like most Germans of his day he also believed that history was a guide to the conduct and organization of contemporary and future society. Also in common with most of his compatriots, he held that an academic "science" (*Wissenschaft*) could deal with all sorts of knowledge (be it around religion [theology], economics, biology, or history), provided that it was systematically produced. (Unlike in English, the German *Wissenschaft* does not refer exclusively to knowledge produced in the natural sciences.)¹⁵ Moreover, a science was *only* a science, Sudhoff thought, if it was aware of its own historicity, or understood its accomplishments in light of its development in the past.¹⁶ By the time of Sudhoff's appointment in Leipzig, however, it was precisely this idea of history as the key to all the sciences that had come seriously unstuck among academics. In the wake of the achievements in the new and increasingly specialized natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*), faith

Archäologie," *Muench. med. Wochenschr.* 54 (1907): 2109. His colleagues considered him the "inventor" of the philological method in the history of medicine. See, for example, Henry E. Sigerist, "A Tribute to Max Neuburger on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday, December 8, 1943," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 14 (1943): 417–21, 420. Harig, too, emphasized Sudhoff's reliance on Ranke. See Harig, "Sudhoffs Sicht" (n. 9), 100–101. Gundolf Keil considers Sudhoff a philologist with particular expertise in the German Middle Ages. While Keil argues that Sudhoff's approach was "conditioned by the goals of literary scholarship," he neglects the important role that critical philology played in the discipline of history at that time. Keil, "Sudhoff and Medical History" (n. 9), 70.

14. For Ranke's enormous influence on nineteenth-century American historians and their misunderstanding of his method and theory, see Georg G. Iggers, "The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought," *Hist. Theory* 2 (1962): 17–40; Dorothy Ross, "On the Misunderstanding of Ranke and the Origins of the Historical Profession in America," in Iggers and Powell, *Leopold von Ranke* (n. 12), 154–69. She points out some exceptions.

15. The German term *Wissenschaft* therefore comes closest to the original meaning of the Latin term *scientia*. For more detail, see Lorraine Daston, "Die Kultur der wissenschaftlichen Objektivität," in *Naturwissenschaft, Geisteswissenschaft, Kulturwissenschaft. Einheit—Gegensatz—Komplementarität*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000), 9–39, 11–12.

16. Karl Sudhoff, "Die Pflege der Geschichte auf der Düsseldorfer Naturforscherversammlung," in Sudhoff, *Skizzen* (n. 11), 218–30, 218.

in empiricist inductive methodology came to be conceived as superior in light of its perceived utility (a view that was reinforced and richly rewarded by the state). As a result, the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*)¹⁷ felt directly challenged and needed to prove the practical worth of their own methodologies.

Sudhoff never begrudged the success of the new natural sciences, nor did he take exception to the separation of *Naturwissenschaften* from *Geisteswissenschaften*. However, in common with many of his contemporaries, he believed that the former's purpose in explaining the "laws of nature" should not be conflated with the latter's effort to understand "human nature."¹⁸ Each scientific domain required its own distinct and separate methods. What Sudhoff opposed was the regard and value of the one method at the expense of the other, that is, the dominance of the empiricist methodology of *Naturwissenschaften* at the cost of the methods of *Geisteswissenschaften*. Due to their different purposes (the one seeking to *explain* "nature," the other to *understand* "human nature") separate methodologies needed to be followed. Since medicine was an art conducted by human on humans, the methodological basis for a professional history of medicine, Sudhoff thought, ought to be distinct from those of the natural sciences. Archival data gathering and critical philological assessments were, he believed, the crucial basis for understanding these medical practices in ever-changing human societies and civilizations. Moreover, the application of Ranke's method could have *practical* bearing on contemporary sociomedical problems, such as the comprehension of venereal disease and public hygiene. By these means *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* were not to be placed on a course of collision, nor should the one be reduced simply to the handmaiden of the other. Rather, Sudhoff thought, both should remain on an equal footing in the production of useful knowledge for society.

Which Method for the History of Medicine?

Sudhoff held strong opinions on what he considered medical history *not* to be: neither an antiquarian pursuit, nor an idle and quixotic philo-

17. For the difficulties of translating the term *Geisteswissenschaften* into English, see Roger Smith, *Being Human: Historical Knowledge and the Creation of Human Nature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 123–25. Following him, I translate *Geisteswissenschaften* as "human sciences."

18. For the historical development of this distinction, see Herbert Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie nach Hegel. Die Probleme des Historismus* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1974), 89–136.

sophical enterprise.¹⁹ The former, he argued, was the stuff to fill an “old curiosity shop,” while the latter produced only a “catalogue of exploded theories.” Moreover, under no circumstances was the history of medicine to be “a ready means for glorifying the present state of affairs and for belittling the men of the past.” However powerful these narratives were, he fulminated, they had absolutely no place in a professionally written history of medicine.

But if the crude empiricism of antiquarians was as distasteful as the lofty reasoning of philosophers, what method did Sudhoff want for medical history? “As defined by Leopold von Ranke,” he explained, “I have always considered the task of the historian to identify and to represent, ‘how it essentially was.’ . . . I saw my task in the objective study of sources, simply inductive.”²⁰ Yet, in other writings Sudhoff revealed that Ranke never was his *sole* inspiration. His thinking was as much shaped by the celebrated “inventors” of Germany’s modern medical sciences, such as the physiologist Johannes Peter Müller (1801–58), the neurologist and psychiatrist Wilhelm Griesinger (1817–86), and the physiologist and psychiatrist Carl Reinhold August Wunderlich (1815–77).²¹ Their inductive experimental method (subsumed at the time under the umbrella term “investigation of facts” [*Tatsachenforschung*]) also inspired Sudhoff’s historical practice, which he baptized as “historical investigation of facts” (*historische Tatsachenforschung*).²² Such was the basis for his “true” history of medicine. “In many respects,” he explained, “true history is just the opposite of what many believe it to be. True history means serious scientific labour based upon the inductive establishment of facts by strictly methodological and critical tests, prompted by self-discipline and conscientious veracity. It resembles modern science in its mechanistic-dynamic and biological tendency, and always asks: ‘How reliable are our findings? What is the incontestable basis of exact knowledge? What needs to be revised by the most modern and advanced methods of investigation?’”²³

19. For the following quotations, see Sudhoff, “What Is History of Medicine?,” in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 63–73, quotations on 63.

20. Sudhoff, “Aus meiner Arbeit” (n. 1), 364. I agree with Georg Iggers that *eigentlich* should be translated as “essentially” and not as “really” or “actually” as it is too often done. “Essentially” comes closest to Ranke’s own idealistic understanding of the German term *eigentlich*. For the consequences of the mistranslation in Anglo-American scholarship, see the literature quoted in note 14.

21. For Sudhoff’s admiration for these scientists and their methods, see his “Zur Förderung wissenschaftlicher Arbeiten auf dem Gebiete der Geschichte der Medizin,” *Muenchner med. Wochenschr.* 51 (1904): 1350–53, 1351–52; also Sudhoff, “Johannes Müller zu Ehren,” in Sudhoff, *Skizzen* (n. 11), 247–53.

22. Sudhoff, “Förderung” (n. 21), 1351–52.

23. Sudhoff, “What Is History?” (n. 19), 63–64.

How then are we to imagine the daily historical practice of Sudhoff's "inductive establishment of facts by strictly methodological and critical tests"? How can we picture the act of collecting facts that he was so keen to compare to "serious scientific labouring" in the laboratory, and which he hoped would one day provide "the incontestable basis of exact knowledge"? What did he understand by a historian's "self-discipline and conscientious veracity"? And, how would all this contribute to a presentation of the past "as it essentially was"?

The "Facts" of Medical History

While Sudhoff, the physician, closely followed developments in the medical sciences and was inspired by their successes, as a practicing historian he built on the legacy of Ranke.²⁴ For his historical enterprise it was helpful that Ranke's "critical method" had—at first sight at least—much in common with the empirical and inductive methodology of the natural sciences. Famously Ranke argued that any historical exploration into human activity ought to begin with the historian's total dedication to primary "facts," or to the historical "particulars."²⁵ The "strict presentation of the facts," he maintained, "no matter how conditional and unattractive they might be, is undoubtedly the supreme law."²⁶ He emphasized though that not every discovered historical detail in the archive or library deserved the badge of a "true historical fact." Only if an archival find withstood the most rigorous philological testing could it be elevated to this sanctified realm. Behind this stood Ranke's attack on prevalent forms of contemporary history writing, especially idealist philosophical history, the most famous proponent of which was of course the philosopher Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).²⁷ Philosophical history of Hegel's sort, Ranke contended, reduced the unique qualities of historical action to abstraction, generalizations, and idealization. A philosophical historian selected only those historical findings that supported and fitted a preconceived idealistic construction of the past, whereas a "true historian" proceeded the other way round. Unlike the philosopher, the historian needed to take each

24. On this I agree with Harig, "Sudhoffs Sicht" (n. 9), 101–2.

25. Ranke had introduced his famous method in his first major publication published in 1824, *Die Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514. Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*, in Leopold von Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 33/34 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1885).

26. Ranke, *Theory* (n. 12), xvii.

27. For Ranke's views on philosophical history see Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg Iggers and Konrad von Moltke (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), xli–xlii.

single expression of human life seriously; the historian should establish an understanding of the past that was first and foremost based on empirical collection and careful verification of all traces of human activity.

There was, however, a further level to Ranke's allegedly philosophy-free empirical "critical method." In many ways the method was shaped by the same idealism that nurtured Hegel's philosophical history. Ranke in fact shared with Hegel an unquestioned belief in the extraordinary epistemological power of the past. Indeed, the conviction that history was the key to the understanding of all phenomena in human life permeated nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German culture as a whole, and shaped most academic discourses. Historical consciousness was held to be central to *all* human knowledge production. In academic history, this mode of thinking, retrospectively labeled "historism,"²⁸ came to reject grand metaphysical theories in favor of the identification of the individual and specific human activity in each historical period. Thus historians inspired by historism came to reject teleological interpretations of historical change, although they continued to regard historical knowledge as an evaluative guide to both past and present. The nineteenth-century historian and colleague of Ranke Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–84), for example, famously proclaimed that "[h]istory is the way in which humanity becomes and is conscious of itself. The epochs of history are . . . the stages of its self-knowledge, its knowledge of the world, its knowledge of God. . . . History is humanity's awareness of itself, its self-consciousness."²⁹

Historism also stipulated a fundamental and essential philosophical difference in the appearances of the natural and the human world. While

28. I have chosen to translate the German term *Historismus* as "historism" (and not as "historicism"). I agree with Georg G. Iggers who argues that the latter term has acquired a variety of meanings in Anglo-American historiography, particularly since the 1990s (e.g., New Historicism), that the nineteenth-century German term *Historismus* did not possess. See Georg G. Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *J. Hist. Ideas* 56 (1995): 129–52; for the terms see also Georg Iggers, *German Conception* (n. 12), 287–90. For a general discussion of *Historismus*, see Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992); Annette Wittkau, *Historismus. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs und Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); *Krise des Historismus—Krise der Wirklichkeit. Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur 1880–1932*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

29. For Droysen's influential views, see Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany 1831–1933*, trans. Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), esp. 109–22, Droysen's quotation on 34; see also Uwe Barlmeier, *Geschichtliche Wirklichkeit als Problem: Untersuchungen zu geschichtstheoretischen Begründungen historischen Wissens bei Johann Gustav Droysen, Georg Simmel und Max Weber* (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 1997).

nature was considered a place of repetitive appearances that followed strict laws, human nature was perceived as fluid and ever changing—intrinsically bound to the ebbs and flows of human history.³⁰ Its characteristics revealed themselves differently in each historical period due to the specific context of local culture and tradition. Hence, from analysis of the sensible remains of human activity in the past—the “facts” in the archive—the historian’s task was to “understand” (*verstehen*) both the overall specificity of human nature at a particular moment in time, *and* how these specificities fitted and gave meaning to the overall history of human mankind.³¹

It was these ideas that Sudhoff had in mind when he formulated the history of medicine. “Facts” were the goal in the first instance, and the sheer volume of them that Sudhoff unearthed and authenticated was indeed impressive, even by today’s information-retrieval standards. He often spent his holidays in libraries and archives all over Europe to “discover” new materials to be copied, transcribed, or purchased, to add to the ever-growing collection housed at his Leipzig institute. Yet, while the accumulated Leipzig collection demonstrates that he was in line with Ranke’s more general empirical aims, he also wandered extensively in the range of source materials that he considered worthwhile.³² Here he differed significantly from the majority of Ranke’s followers who turned only to written textual evidence (primarily political and diplomatic). For Sudhoff not just these, but all sorts of material objects, technical instruments, photographs, and other kinds of visual representations of medical practice were deemed necessary for the “factual” investigation of medical history.³³ Such objects, he believed, were—like texts—direct expressions of the past rationalities of human life; they were material manifestation

30. For the following, see Iggers, *German Conception* (n. 12), 29.

31. Ranke did not invent the “Verstehen” approach, which was inherent to German idealistic thinking in philology, philosophy, theology, and jurisprudence and was already present in eighteenth-century works. It found its classical formulation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the writings of neo-Kantian philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey. See *Erzählen, Erklären, Verstehen. Beiträge zur Wissenschaftstheorie und Methodologie der Historischen Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Andreas Frings and Johannes Marx (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008).

32. For the collection at the Leipzig institute, see Sabine Fahrenbach, “The Medical History Collection of the Karl-Sudhoff-Institute for the History of Medicine and Natural Science,” in *Alligators and Astrolabes: Treasures of the University Collections in Europe*, ed. Thomas Bremer and Patrice Wegener (Halle: Druckwerk, 2001), 39–42.

33. For his views on the visual arts, see Karl Sudhoff, “Medicine and Art,” in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 305–9. In Sudhoff’s monograph *Geschichte der Medizin im Überblick*, 3 ed. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1928)—coauthored with the medical historian Theodor Meyer-Steinig—he urged readers not to see images as mere illustrations of written text but to analyze them in their own rights with the help of the art historical method. Sudhoff’s understanding of visual representations still awaits further historical investigation. So far, only Sander Gilman has drawn attention to this interesting aspect of Sudhoff’s work. See Sander Gilman, *Health and Illness: Images of Difference* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 24–30.

of medical ideas and practice in a given society at a particular moment in time.³⁴ Like the majority of Germany historians who followed Ranke, he believed that it was possible to investigate these “facts” from a neutral, observing position, that is, without any preconceived conceptual agenda or emotional investment. The historian, according to this idealization, was an empty vessel to be filled up by the evidence of the past.³⁵ This was conceived as the first step in the process of gaining conscious and rational evaluation of the material collected.

In this wider compass of what constituted a worthwhile “fact,” Sudhoff was in alignment with a tradition best represented at the time by his fellow medical historians Julius Pagel (1851–1912) and Max Neuburger (1853–1938). In this, known as the cultural history of medicine (*medizinischen Kulturgeschichte*), the orientation was to the importance of artifacts and social and philosophical phenomena, rather than exclusively to medical texts (and hence philological methods).³⁶ This is not the place to elaborate on this tradition and the wider debate it generated among historians on what the methods of “cultural history” were supposed to be. Suffice it to say, debate was intense around the turn of the century when one of Sudhoff’s colleagues at the University of Leipzig, the historian Karl Lamprecht (1856–1915), initiated what became known as the “battle of methods” (*Methodenstreit*).³⁷ Lamprecht stressed the importance of “the social” and “the economic” over the (Rankean) “political” in history writing. More noteworthy for the present purposes, however, is that Lamprecht drew on the natural sciences to support his thesis that history proceeded accord-

34. See Karl Sudhoff, *Tradition und Naturbeobachtung in den Illustrationen medizinischer Handschriften und Frühdrucke vornehmlich des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1907), 1–2.

35. Sudhoff’s enthusiasm for photography in the process of collecting facts stemmed from this belief. He considered photography a “self-triggering photo-chemical process,” which did not require any personal input of the historian. See Sudhoff, “Photographie oder Zeichnung?,” *Wochenschr. klass. Philol.* 28 (1911): col. 279; see also Karl Sudhoff, “Richtungen und Strebungen in der medizinischen Historik. Ein Wort zur Einführung, Verständigung und Abwehr,” *Arch. Gesch. Med.* 1 (1907): 1–11, 9.

36. This tradition goes back to the eighteenth century. For Pagel’s and Neuburger’s understanding of a cultural history of medicine, see Schmiedebach, “*Bildung*” (n. 9), 83–84. Sudhoff considered the philological method as fundamental to the practice of a cultural history of medicine. But he stressed that a fuller and more historically accurate picture of medical practice in the past could be drawn *only* if textual analysis was accompanied by detailed archaeological and art historical research. See Sudhoff, “*Förderung*” (n. 21), 1351; see also Karl Sudhoff, “Ways and Means of Research in the History of Medicine,” in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 113–20; also Sudhoff, “Aims, Means and Methods in Medical Archaeology,” in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 157–58.

37. Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856–1915)* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1993), 175–212; see also Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Karl Lamprecht. Kulturgeschichtsschreibung zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

ing to patterned scientific laws. For Sudhoff this was anathema. While, with his background in medicine and his admiration for the new scientific method he was sympathetic to Lamprecht's use of a scientific vocabulary to describe history as developing in "evolutionary," "morphologically," and "genetic" terms³⁸—occasionally employing the rhetoric himself³⁹—he remained adamant that the history of mankind should not be reduced to the laws of nature. Like the majority of his colleagues in history departments, he strongly disapproved of Lamprecht's contention that there was a parallel development between human civilization and that of nonhuman biological evolution. Thus in Sudhoff's interpretation of "cultural history" all that mattered was the adoption of Lamprecht's call for the introduction of new source material into historical practice as well as the cooperation with other disciplines and their methodological tool kits in the human sciences (i.e., archaeology and art history).⁴⁰

Measuring the Past by Its Own Standards

Sudhoff's belief that the collection of historical "facts"—albeit significantly broadened beyond Ranke—was a neutral act led him to adopt another Rankean rule: that each historical period ought to be evaluated according to its own standards. He acknowledged that medical historians might be inspired by the scientific achievements of their own times—for example, the successes of the new laboratory medical sciences.⁴¹ However, such glorification of the present, Sudhoff warned, could too easily lure historians into an uncritical favoring of modern scientific practices and hence to a retrospective measuring of past scientific standards against those of the present. Thus, they would "belittle" the people of the past, which was, he opined, an unacceptable and ahistorical stand for any historian.⁴² What Sudhoff feared even more was that historians might be convinced that the methods and technologies of the modern medical sciences were capable of providing definitive answers to historical questions related to health and disease in the past.⁴³ For one who advocated a clear distinction in

38. For Lamprecht's understanding of these terms see Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht* (n. 37), 177–79.

39. See, for example, Sudhoff, "Förderung" (n. 21), 1352.

40. For an overview of the sources he considered worthwhile in Sudhoff, "Richtungen" (n. 35), 8–11.

41. "Consciously or unconsciously," Sudhoff wrote, "all modern historians carry the modern scientific trend of thought into their conception and evaluation of the past, often to better comprehension of remote periods." See Karl Sudhoff, "The Origin of Syphilis," in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 259–72, quotation on 259.

42. See Sudhoff, "What Is History?" (n. 19), 63.

43. See, for example, Karl Sudhoff, "Tendencies and Aspirations in Medical History," in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 59–60.

purpose between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*, this mixing of methods had to be avoided at all costs.

It was this line of thinking that fueled a debate with the Berlin dermatologist and cultural historian Iwan Bloch (1872–1922) in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ The controversy unfolded over the question of the historical and geographical origins of venereal syphilis, which Bloch had investigated in his two-volume publication *Der Ursprung der Syphilis* (1901–11).⁴⁵ Bloch presented a “New World thesis,” according to which venereal syphilis was first introduced to Europe in 1493, the year Columbus returned from the newly discovered Americas. It was Columbus’s crew, Bloch maintained, that brought the disease to Europe. Taking up recent scientific theories on the causation of epidemics and the notion of “virgin soil,” Bloch argued that syphilis ravaged the European population immediately post-Columbus, and thereafter gave way to a milder form of the disease. His aim was to demonstrate that the opposing view—the so-called “classical syphilis thesis” that syphilis had always been around—was one of the “greatest errors which ever spread in the whole history of medicine.”⁴⁶ Bloch was a master of several modern and classical languages, and he used an impressive range of historical sources to prove his thesis, but his most conclusive “proof” came from the laboratory of the new science of paleopathology. His work therefore celebrated not just the successes of the new natural sciences, but also the instrumental utility of their methodology and technologies for solving historical questions.

Bloch’s enthusiasm for Germany’s new biomedical sciences is as telling a sign of its times as today’s use of DNA sampling in the retrospective analysis of disease.⁴⁷ It was hot on the heels of the “discovery” of the pathogen of anthrax, cholera, and tuberculosis, and above all the specific

44. At the time Bloch was widely known for his many cultural studies on sexuality, e.g., *The Sexual Life of Our Time in Its Relations to Modern Civilization* (German original, 1906; repr., London: Reberman, 1909). Together with Magnus Hirschfeld and Albert Eulenburg, Bloch established a new field of medical research, which he coined sexology (*Sexualwissenschaft*). For his understanding of the aims of sexology, see Iwan Bloch, “Aufgaben und Ziele der Sexualwissenschaft,” *Zeitschr. f. Sexualwissenschaft*. 1 (1914–15): 2–11. On Bloch, see Bernhard Egger, “Iwan Bloch und die Konstituierung der Sexualwissenschaft als eigene Disziplin” (med. diss., University of Düsseldorf, 1988).

45. Iwan Bloch, *Der Ursprung der Syphilis: Eine medizinische und kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, vol. 1: *Ursprung der Syphilis* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1901); vol. 2: *Kritik der Lehre von der Altertumssyphilis* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1911). For the controversy, see also Claudia Stein, *Negotiating the French Pox in Early Modern Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 8–11.

46. Bloch, *Ursprung* (n. 45), 1:1, vi, xi; see also his conclusion in *Ursprung*, 2:756.

47. For the pitfalls of retrospective diagnosis in the history of venereal disease, see Stein, *Negotiating* (n. 45), 8–12.

cause (the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*) for venereal syphilis isolated by German scientists in 1905. As new diagnostic procedures were developed, promising "magic bullets" for each and every infectious disease,⁴⁸ the biological and medical sciences were hailed as the future of the newly united German Empire. This was reflected in the fact that the largest proportions of the Prussian state funding now went into the coffers of the new natural sciences.⁴⁹ But it was not only the content over these achievements that made Bloch's *Der Ursprung der Syphilis* a best seller among the educated German public. At the dawn of the twentieth century, venereal disease was also perceived as a social problem to be solved by the medical sciences. Syphilis (or the "lust plague" [*Lustseuche*], as it was referred to in the wider public), and its perceived threat to the individual, the family, and the German "race" as a whole, was a central concern in social policy for the German Empire.⁵⁰ A virtual "syphilis hysteria" raged with acrimonious debates over the social causes, dissemination, and possible measures to combat "sexual vice." Thus, Bloch's *Der Ursprung der Syphilis*, packed as it was with historical facts and inspired by the latest scientific "breakthroughs" in venerology, struck the sensibilities of German readers.

Sudhoff sufficiently understood the significance of this public issue to put his other work on hold in order to refute Bloch's "fiction" of the New World origin of syphilis.⁵¹ He rushed to the archives to collect and authenticate the "classical syphilis thesis," unveiling in the course of it hitherto unknown source material.⁵² His sources, he argued, demonstrated that venereal syphilis had been present as a disease *sui generis* since antiquity, although it had lingered in a secret life unidentified by the medical

48. For belief in "magic bullets" in the United States, see Allan M. Brandt's classic study, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

49. For this development, see Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Naturwissenschaft und Geschichtswissenschaft. Momente einer Problemgeschichte," in Oexle, *Naturwissenschaft* (n. 15), 101–51; Lode Vereeck, *Das deutsche Wissenschaftswunder. Eine ökonomische Analyse des Systems Althoff (1882–1907)* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001).

50. For the following, see Lutz Sauerteig, *Krankheit, Sexualität, Gesellschaft: Geschlechtskrankheiten und Gesundheitspolitik in Deutschland im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1999).

51. Sudhoff's personal copy of Bloch's monograph, which is held at the *Staatsbibliothek* in Munich, is heavily annotated and reflects his close reading of and often furious disagreement with Bloch's arguments.

52. Sudhoff reveals this in Sudhoff, *Aus der Frühgeschichte der Syphilis. Handschriften- und Inkunabelstudien, epidemiologische Untersuchung und kritische Gänge* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1912), ix. In 1913, Sudhoff presented his findings at the international medical congress in London. For his keynote address, see Sudhoff, "Origin of Syphilis" (n. 41), 259–72.

community.⁵³ That medical theory and practice until the mid-fifteenth century often confused syphilis with scabies and other cutaneous affections was not proof of the nonexistence of syphilis, he argued. Quite the opposite: the very fact that mercury inunctions (still the main therapy for syphilis in Sudhoff's time) had been used effectively against certain "mysterious" skin eruptions since antiquity clearly demonstrated the silent presence of venereal syphilis.⁵⁴ Syphilis appeared to be new in the fifteenth century only because it coincided with, but was not causally linked to, the discovery of the New World. Thereafter physicians began more carefully to observe and record the results of their treatments and to share their observations. It was then, claimed Sudhoff, that the medical profession came to realize that certain skin conditions belonged to the same disease (venereal syphilis), and hence separated this entity from others. In Sudhoff's view it was through the positive results of the mercury cure that the understanding of the disease entity "venereal syphilis" began to take shape in the medical mind: "I say . . . syphilis appeared simultaneously with its methods of cure and indeed with the particular method which . . . is today still considered the safest, and is still in vogue, with slight modifications, after four centuries."⁵⁵

Sudhoff's refutation of Bloch's thesis hinged on his methodological basis for the practice of medical history, which was in turn related to other political and professional concerns. Fresh in Sudhoff's mind at the time were the fierce debates that had preceded his appointment at Leipzig in 1905, central to which had been the "usefulness" (*Nützlichkeit*) of the history of medicine as an independent science for the teaching of medicine.⁵⁶ The representatives of the mushrooming new medical specialties, convinced of the superiority of the empirical scientific method, had shown little support for Sudhoff.⁵⁷ In fact, they openly favored methodologies that supported a more Bloch-like, natural-sciences-inspired practice of history. A philological-driven history of medicine, they maintained, had

53. For the following, see Sudhoff, "Origin of Syphilis" (n. 41), 259–71, quotation on 259.

54. *Ibid.*, 260. For new treatments developed after the discovery of the syphilis agent *Treponema pallidum*, see Sauerteig, *Krankheit* (n. 50).

55. Sudhoff, "Origin of Syphilis" (n. 41), 270.

56. For these debates see Kümmel, "Nutzen" (n. 11).

57. In 1904, the Leipzig pediatrician Max Seifert and Moritz Roth, professor for pathological anatomy in Basle, publicly criticized the community of medical historians. Both strongly questioned medical history's relevance for the education of physicians. Max Seifert, "Aufgabe und Stellung der Geschichte im medizinischen Unterricht," *Muench. Med. Wochenschr.* 51 (1904): 1159–61; Moritz Roth, "Geschichte der Medizin und Hippokrates," *Muench. Med. Wochenschr.* 51 (1904): 1396–98. For Sudhoff's position in this debate, see Sudhoff, "Förderung" (n. 21), 1350–53.

no appeal to anyone beyond the community of medical historians themselves; indeed, their "scientific" work had a "narcotic effect" on everybody else outside the field, the specialists gleefully argued.⁵⁸ Hence the public debate with Bloch, which centered on how medical history should be practiced, and which was followed by an interested nonacademic audience, provided Sudhoff with the opportunity to display and publicly demonstrate the aims of his newly established academic discipline and the virtues of its central method, critical philology.⁵⁹

Sudhoff accused Bloch and his supporters of acting in a partial and prejudiced manner. Their blind faith in the superiority of the natural and medical sciences prevented them from letting the past speak for itself.⁶⁰ Instead, they historically justified the latest fashionable epidemiological "truth," namely that inspired by the discovery of the syphilis agent in 1905. In order to prove the epidemiological hypothesis that spirochaetal epidemics on virgin soils ravaged virulently, Bloch had twisted "the facts themselves to suit current beliefs."⁶¹ In so doing, he violated what Sudhoff believed must be the first and foremost task of the historian, "to render belated justice, to set forgotten and misunderstood facts in their true light and to put them in the place of honour they deserve, even if, in some instances, the historian has to do this at the expense of the exaggerated conceit and extravagant boasting of the modern world."⁶²

This passage merits closer inspection since, superficially at least, it runs counter to what has been stated above. Didn't Sudhoff call for an impartial and objective investigation of the past? Didn't he consider emotional and conceptual distance to one's own immediate present *the* essential virtues of an academic historian? Cherishing such virtues, how can a historian "render justice to forgotten facts"? How can the historian be impartial and simultaneously act as the ultimate judge of a historical truth? Does not Sudhoff's presumptuous claim that the historian was a judge of the past wholly contradict his conviction that the historian's task was the objective study of facts? This contradiction—at least from today's point of view—was one that Sudhoff shared with many turn-of-the-century German historians. Their writings are riddled with moral claims and personal opinions, which often seem the very opposite of "objective" and "impartial." According to *the* expert on German historiography, Georg G. Iggers, this mix of

58. See Schmiedebach, "Bildung" (n. 9), 78–79, quotation on 79.

59. For his views on the necessary independence of individual sciences and the problems that faced "applied sciences," see Sudhoff, "Richtungen" (n. 35), 6–7.

60. For the following, see Sudhoff, "Origin of Syphilis" (n. 41), 259.

61. *Ibid.*, 259.

62. Sudhoff, "Ways and Means" (n. 36), 113–20, 120.

“objective” empirically collected data and its “subjective” interpretation is puzzling indeed.⁶³ It is only understandable, he contends, if we accept that the boundary between “subjective” and “objective” claims were not yet clearly set out in post-Rankean German historiography. Thus those German historians who followed Ranke (i.e., the majority of them by the late nineteenth century), Iggers concluded, were suffering from “translogical” inconsistency that would only be resolved with the further development of their historical method.⁶⁴

In fact, however, what Iggers sees as illogical and contradictory has more to do with our own commonplace conceptions of “objectivity” than with Whiggishly perceived “translogical” confusion. For Sudhoff, at least, “objectivity” had a different meaning than it has for us. It was not about capturing “the nature” of the object studied in a way that does not depend on any features of the particular subject who studies it, as some philosophers of science have been wont to argue.⁶⁵ For them, “objectivity” and “impartiality” are regarded as interchangeable, with “impartiality” a characteristic feature of “objectivity.” Both terms, moreover, are treated as transhistorical, or within unchanging epistemological norms and values of academic research and personal conduct. Furthermore, they are held to be universally *shared* by scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. It is precisely these assumptions, however, that have come into question through recent investigations into historical epistemology. As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have demonstrated, it was only gradually during the second half of the nineteenth century that “objectivity” took on today’s meaning.⁶⁶ Even when the term came into wider use, moreover, not everyone understood it in the same way: while German researchers in the new natural sciences enthusiastically described their doings (and their scientific persona) as “objective” (by which they wished to stress a disembodied approach to the production of knowledge), scholars in the human sciences did not.⁶⁷ For a while at least, German

63. For the following, see Iggers’s introduction in Ranke, *Theory and Practice* (n. 27), liii–lv.

64. For the quotation, see *ibid.*, lv.

65. Stephen Gaukroger, for one, has insisted that “an objective account” was one that was regarded as “impartial” and that, ideally, could “be accepted by any subject because it does not draw on any assumptions, prejudices, or values of particular subjects.” See Stephen Gaukroger, “History of Objectivity,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10785–89, quotations on 10785.

66. For the historical development of the concept of *objectivity*, see Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).

67. For the following, see Lorraine Daston, “Objektivität unter den Historikern,” *Dahlemer Archivgespräche* 7 (2001): 7–30.

historians continued to prefer “impartiality” over “objectivity,” referring to an epistemological tradition that stretched back to the Enlightenment, when the concept of “impartiality” became central to historical thinking. In contrast to “objectivity” in the modern disembodied sense (implying that the historian takes on a neutral, dispassionate position vis-à-vis the past), impartiality required embodiment. For enlightened historians, historical knowledge did not exhaust itself in the passive empirical collection of data. Rather, it was created through the active intuition of the object, a process that required reason, imagination, and moral sense *in addition* to the empirical senses.⁶⁸ Thus, historians were not to withdraw from personal opinion and assume what we would call a “value-free” position; rather, they were expected actively to choose historical examples that would shape the educated reader’s character and judgment. Within this tradition of “pragmatic” history writing (in the history of medicine, dating from Halle physician Kurt Polikarp Sprengel [1766–1833])—the aim was above all moral education.⁶⁹ “Impartial” simply meant abstaining from lining up with one side or other of the historical parties being reported on.⁷⁰

When toward the end of the nineteenth century German historians began to replace the term “impartiality” with “objectivity,” the latter still retained some of the connotations of the former. To use objectivity in the manner of the natural sciences was deemed by most of them to be distorting and insufficient. After all, their job involved more than the mere detection of laws or the unveiling of mechanical cause–effect relationships. Thus when Henry Buckle’s *Civilization of England* (1858–61) was published in German (1860–61) and suggested just this, it found few friends among them.⁷¹ Those who did fancy Buckle’s “Newtonian”

68. Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 45–49, 110; for the history of medicine in the German Enlightenment, see Thomas Broman, *The Transformation of German Academic Medicine, 1750–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 137–39.

69. For a definition of “pragmatic history,” see Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Philosophiegeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 56. In the history of medicine, the pragmatic approach was introduced by Kurt Polikarp Sprengel (1766–1833), professor of medicine at the University of Halle, who wrote a five-volume history of medicine titled *Versuch einer pragmatischen Geschichte der Arzneikunde* (1792–99) (“Essay toward a Pragmatic History of Medicine”). Sprengel believed the aim of a “pragmatic” history of medicine was to teach physicians a useful moral lesson, a lesson that tied the medical practice of his own time to that of all previous ages. On Sprengel and pragmatic history, see Broman, *Transformation of German Academic Medicine* (n. 68), 139; also Hans-Uwe Lammel, *Klio und Hippokrates. Eine Liaison littéraire des 18. Jahrhunderts und die Folgen für die Wissenschaftskultur bis 1850 in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 2005), 27–39, 178–96.

70. Daston, “Objektivität unter den Historikern” (n. 67), 11.

71. For more details on how Buckle was received among German historians, see Eckhardt Fuchs, *Henry Thomas Buckle. Geschichtsschreibung und Positivismus in England und Deutschland* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1994).

approach (such as Lamprecht) faced furious criticism from their peers. What stood at the core of “objectivity” for German historians was not the Buckle-like unveiling of laws of historical change, but rather the techniques of Ranke’s philological “critical method”—the collection and assessment of source material.⁷²

Sudhoff was among those who measured the “objectivity” of his own work against the standards of Ranke’s critical method. For him, as for other historians, objectivity in the human sciences served different epistemological aims and purposes than objectivity in the natural sciences. As noted above, the conviction that the human sciences and natural sciences produced different sorts of knowledge was a central feature of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German historicism. While considerable disagreement existed over the question of what the respective aims of the natural sciences and human sciences were, Sudhoff, for his part, was inspired by the views of the neo-Kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915).⁷³ In a prominent address in Strasbourg in 1894 on the purpose of history and the natural sciences and their relation to each other, Windelband characterized the natural sciences as “nomothetic” (Greek *nomos*: law, rule + *tithemi*: to put down, or to deposit) and history as “idiographic” (Greek *idios*: own, self + *grapho*: to write) forms of knowledge.⁷⁴ While the nomothetic natural sciences produced knowledge of causal activity according to natural law, Windelband explained, idiographic historical knowledge resulted from the *understanding* (*verstehen*) of individual events. Consequently, history writing required research methods that differed from those of the natural sciences; they needed to be appropriate for the *understanding* of individual entities in their concrete particularity—people, their thinking and practices, works of art and technology, and so on. Windelband (assuming the constancy of human morals and values over time) stipulated that history writing aimed at revealing life as it was experienced. He urged history and other departments of the human sciences to enter into a humanistic dialogue with the natural sciences rather than to uncritically appropriate their methodologies or refuse conversations altogether. Both history and the natural sciences, he

72. Daston, “Objektivität unter den Historikern” (n. 67), 17. See also Peter Hanns Reill, “Aufklärung und Historismus: Bruch oder Kontinuität?,” in *Historismus in den Kulturwissenschaften: Geschichtskonzepte, historische Einschätzungen, Grundlagenprobleme*, ed. Otto Gerhard Oexle and Jörn Rüsen (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), 45–68.

73. On Windelband’s philosophy, which was further developed by his student Heinrich Rickard, see Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie* (n. 18), 137–59.

74. For this, see Wilhelm Windelband, *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft*, 3rd ed. (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1904); for Sudhoff’s use of these two terms, see, for example, Sudhoff, “Theodor Puschmann” (n. 11), 1672; and Karl Sudhoff, “Aims and Value of Medical History in the Self-Development and Professional Life of the Physician,” in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 46–47.

stressed, were independent sciences (*Wissenschaften*) with distinct methodological apparatus and epistemological aims. They were, he maintained, of equal status and importance for the successful pursuit of the overall academic enterprise, and for the advancement of human society at large.

Sudhoff wholeheartedly subscribed to Windelband's idea of the discipline of history as an independent science with its own methods and objective standards. It reinforced his wish for a mutually respectful dialogue with the different branches of the scientific community and, hence, the avoidance of the cultural anxiety stemming from notions of epistemological inequality between different forms of knowledge production. In what was, in effect, a "science war" debate, Sudhoff saw the need to insist on Windelband's distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, as well as on their necessary cooperation for the greater benefit of Germany society. Only if the medical sciences and history considered each other *equal* partners could *useful* knowledge be produced, knowledge that would contribute effectively to the solution of urgent social and medical problems.⁷⁵ Venereal disease, as we have already seen, was one such problem facing German society that exercised Sudhoff, and his exchange with Bloch was a deliberate attempt to reemphasize and publicly advertise Windelband's viewpoint.

Sudhoff's belief in the distinct but equal importance of knowledge produced by history and by the natural sciences and his specific understanding of historical "objectivity" help to explain why he considered it possible for historians to pursue their work objectively and yet at the same time be judges of historical truth. While today these two ideals strike us as contradictory, in Sudhoff's mind they were not. Opinion and judgment were to the professional fore in the business of drawing out moral lessons. Like many of his contemporaries, Sudhoff was convinced that historical knowledge was pragmatic in the sense that it provided guidance for the conduct of modern society. The important task and value of his own discipline, he thought, was to provide clear ethical instruction for medical students and practicing physicians.⁷⁶ Only history could teach them to become responsible and caring healers as well as dutiful servants of the German national state.⁷⁷ Such "support training" was, Sudhoff felt,

75. See, for example, Karl Sudhoff and Georg Sticker, eds., *Zur historischen Biologie der Krankheitserreger: Materialien, Studien und Abhandlungen*, Heft 1 (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1910), 6; see also Karl Sudhoff, "Was ist die Geschichte der Medizin," in Sudhoff, *Skizzen* (n. 11), 19, 21.

76. For a discussion of different notions of "usefulness" among historians of medicine, see Schmiedebach, "Bildung" (n. 9), 78–83; also Werner Friedrich Kimmel, "Dem Arzt nötig oder nützlich? Legitimierungsstrategien der Medizingeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts," in Frewer and Roelcke, *Medizinshistoriographie* (n. 8), 75–89.

77. Sudhoff, "Theodor Puschmann" (n. 11), 1669–73; Sudhoff, "Aims and Value" (n. 74), 47–48.

particularly important at a time when the education of young physicians increasingly concentrated on “positivist knowledge” from the laboratory.⁷⁸ Gone were the times in which the academic curriculum introduced the aspiring physician to other important fields of human knowledge production and experience, such as history, philosophy, and art. The latter, he maintained, were indispensable areas of education (*Bildung*) for young doctors to master. Thus the urgent task of the historian of medicine was to remind students that classical medicine drew precisely on these sorts of knowledge—indeed, it had been the *Allmutter* of all existing natural sciences.⁷⁹ Knowledge of the past therefore provided the key to unlocking the abundance of isolated facts in modern biomedicine; it alone offered a contextual framework that made facts meaningful in the greater scheme of the history of mankind. Moreover, medical history ultimately revealed the connectedness of all the sciences (*Wissenschaften*) in Greek antiquity, the cradle of all Western civilization. To be reminded of this, Sudhoff claimed, would help build up a never-ending treasure of idealism, something that young physicians desperately needed in order to face the threats from scientific specialization and the mounting challenges to their independence and livelihoods from the growing number of illegitimate practitioners, on one hand, and institutionalized pressure by the state and insurance companies, on the other.⁸⁰ “I am of the firm opinion,” he summarized in his 1906 inaugural speech, “that not only medical science but also the practicing physician himself needs history, indeed, he needs it now more than ever.”⁸¹

Understanding the Past: The Role of Intuition

Thus far I have considered certain features of Sudhoff’s historical method and outlook to which the empirical collection and authentication of archival “facts” were key activities. I have shown that he believed historical knowledge to have immediate relevance to the present, offering moral

78. Sudhoff, “Theodor Puschmann” (n. 11), 1672–73. Sudhoff is not the only medical historian to complain about this. For the views of others, see Schmiedebach, “*Bildung*” (n. 9); Kümmel, “Dem Arzt” (n. 76).

79. See Sudhoff, “Förderung” (n. 21), 1352; for the importance of idealism in the practice of medicine, see Sudhoff, “Theodor Puschmann” (n. 11), 1672–73; also Sudhoff, “Aims and Value” (n. 74), 48–49.

80. On this, see Sudhoff, “Wert und Aufgaben der Medizingeschichte im Studium und Berufsleben des Arztes,” in Sudhoff, *Skizzen* (n. 11), 1–9. For some background here, see, for example, Cornelia Regin, *Selbsthilfe und Gesundheitspolitik: Die Naturheilbewegung im Kaiserreich (1889–1914)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995).

81. Sudhoff, “Theodor Puschmann” (n. 11), 1671.

and ethical guidance. But how was the historian to link the past with the present, considering that Sudhoff also propagated the view that historians ought to judge each historical period *sui generis*? The connection, he thought, was made on the basis of the historian's understanding (*Verstehen*) of the past (as opposed to the natural scientist's *explanation* [*Erklärung*] of nature). The historian's understanding, Sudhoff argued, was achieved through "intuitive contemplation" (*intuitives Schauen*), which he also described as a feeling of "intense, almost demanding love."⁸² This "feeling" went beyond any empirical activity and was simultaneously a physical (or embodied) *and* a metaphysical experience. It allowed the historian to make sense of that which held together the collected and critically assessed "facts" of each historical period by revealing their meaningfulness in the wider temporal scheme of the history of mankind. Sudhoff elaborated in some detail on exactly how this vital moment of intuitive contemplation connecting present with past was to be understood. In his autobiographical essay of 1929, he explained how he himself dealt with

past events with a sort of intense, almost demanding love until they became alive under my hands and in front of my inner eye, thus revealing their individual being. However, [it was not my habit] actively to mould them in such ways so that they would provide analogies to events in other times and locations, and to impress onto them a pattern of greater or lesser familiarity. Under the intense strain of all my senses I used to look out—without deliberate intentionality—for the specific characteristics of individual life that things revealed to me. . . . What I was able to record frequently, due to my affectionate dealings with the expressions of life in the past, was a personal final experience in form of an *intuitive* grasping of new connections flashing up in front of me, often over the extension of space and time. This was neither the result of my intellectual work, nor the emotional response resulting from an involvement with the hidden world of past appearances. Moreover, it had strictly nothing to do with the subsequent synthesizing act of composition and exposition. It was something that preceded the intellectual synthesis: [it was] an in-between *moment of intuition*, which was suddenly there, emerging in front of me, a very personal talent, a gift, nevertheless [achieved] without any deliberate effort, a real experience of spiritual contemplation [that] goes beyond the good nose for history [and] which appreciates the value of each single appearance.⁸³

Thus the moment of intuition entailed a kind of mystical union of the historian and the past.⁸⁴ It was the eureka moment when the past sud-

82. For quotations, see Sudhoff, "Aus meiner Arbeit" (n. 1), 366.

83. *Ibid.*, 367–68, emphasis added.

84. For an explanation of the origin of the idea of intuition, see Reill, "Historicism" (n. 68), 100.

denly became alive, or when the historian's inner eye conferred "how it essentially was." Here, thought Sudhoff, was the historian's reward for all the hard slog in dusty archives and libraries.

Sudhoff was not original in so believing; he was again echoing another of Ranke's famous dogmas, that of understanding the past through intuitive contemplation. For Ranke, it was through this that the historian became one with the past, or made "himself the pure organ of the object [that is, the past]."⁸⁵ Intuitive contemplation of individual facts, Ranke thought, opened the way to recognizing the course the world had taken.⁸⁶ Intuition, imagined as an empathetic act, enabled the historian to penetrate the outer "shell" of facts, or their mere appearance, in order to arrive at their inner incomparable and individual essence. Facts gathered on any subject would bring the historian closer "to divine" (*ahnen*) their causal nexus. As the German historian Friedrich Meineke (1862–1954) summarized this process, it was the "inner fusion of divining and knowing" that followed the collection of empirical data and strict philological analysis.⁸⁷ Such "fusionist" thinking was based on the idea that every expression of human life was a part of a meaningful whole, a spiritual unity that linked the past with the present. Behind it stood the belief that the essence of human nature was constant; morals and values were understood as ahistorical standards, guidelines, and measures of and for human behavior. Historical understanding thus aimed at understanding the unifying human spirit (*Geist*)⁸⁸ that spanned centuries, although it revealed itself in each historical period in idiosyncratic ways. It was this idealistic belief in the spiritual unity of all human expressions and activity that also ultimately fueled Sudhoff's "cultural turn"—his enthusiasm not only for texts but also for the collection and use of medical artifacts and visual imagery.⁸⁹ For him, each material and visual object in its individual form breathed this human spirit; each was representative of the unique way this spirit had materialized in different areas of human life in a particular historical period. It also hinted at the spiritual unity that linked these individual epochs to each other in the history of human civilization.

85. Leopold von Ranke, "On the Relation of and Distinction between History and Politics," in Ranke, *Theory and Practice* (n. 12), 75–82, quotation on xxx.

86. For the following, see Ranke, *Theory and Practice* (n. 27), xlii–xliii.

87. Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, 2 vols. (Munich/Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1936), 2:637; for the English translation, see Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London: Routledge, 1972).

88. For the meaning of the German term *Geist* and the problem of translating it into English, see Smith, *Being Human* (n. 17), 124–26.

89. Sudhoff, "Aims, Means and Methods" (n. 36), 158.

Sudhoff believed that the idiosyncratic spirit of a particular period could be understood most fully through the actions and thoughts produced and uttered by outstanding individuals. One such towering individual in his view was the sixteenth-century medical practitioner Paracelsus (1493–1541).⁹⁰ The controversial Swiss itinerant medical practitioner not only captured most completely the spirit of medical practice in the Middle Ages,⁹¹ Sudhoff thought, but also pointed to future developments in medicine. Paracelsus's sharp and relentless criticism of sixteenth-century bookish medicine and his lionization of practice over theory (to the ire of the established medical hierarchy) were interpreted by Sudhoff as struggles between the old spirit and the new, where "the new" was more rational and scientific minded.⁹² No other personality in German medical history, he thought, was greater than Paracelsus for his "universality of thought and practical achievements or in the originality and geniality of his world encompassing genius."⁹³ In order to capture the "facts" of Paracelsus's thinking and actions—the necessary preliminary task before being able to grasp the spirit of medicine at his time and also sense his significance in the overall history of medicine—Sudhoff gathered together and edited Paracelsus's surviving medical works into no fewer than fourteen hefty volumes.⁹⁴

It is not clear if Sudhoff understood *Geist* as something directly related to God, or whether he would have been inclined to compare the historian's work to an act of worship, marveling at God's creation (as Ranke did).⁹⁵ But for certain he was sympathetic to the idea of a common link of humanity throughout history—the idea of a universal bond that linked the spirit of what it is "to be human" in the present with that of the past.

90. For Sudhoff's publications on Paracelsus, see the sources in note 2.

91. For the great importance of the Middle Ages in the formation of German national identity at the time, see Valentin Groebner, *Das Mittelalter hört nicht auf. Über historisches Erzählen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2008), 63–90; also Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Alexander Fest, 2000); and Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Das Mittelalter und das Unbehagen der Moderne. Mittelalterbeschwörungen in der Weimarer Republik und danach," in *Geschichte im Zeitalter des Historismus*, ed. Oexle (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 137–62.

92. For this approach, see Sudhoff, "Aus meiner Arbeit" (n. 1), 344–46.

93. For the quotation, see his keynote address to the Historical Convention in Rome in 1903, reprinted in Karl Sudhoff, "The Literary Remains of Paracelsus," in Sudhoff, *Essays* (n. 11), 275–85, quotation on 275.

94. Karl Sudhoff, ed., *Paracelsus: Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 1–14 (Munich: Rudolf Oldenbourg, 1929–33).

95. For the religious element in Ranke's history writing and how it relates to other conceptions of history at his time, see Otto Gerhard Oexle, "Krise des Historismus—Krise der Wirklichkeit. Eine Problemgeschichte der Moderne," in Oexle, *Krise* (n. 28), 52–59.

It was for the historian to discover these essential links; it was the historian's own humanness, as Sudhoff once explained, that needed to soak (*durchtränken*) the empirical facts so that they would reveal their invisible essences and point to the spirit of the period under investigation and how this fitted into the overall history of what it meant to be human.⁹⁶

Conclusion

In many ways Sudhoff speaks to our times. But it is hardly in a way that some of today's neo-empiricist historians might wish. As Joan Scott has observed, the latter seek emphatically to reembrace "facts" in order to debunk once and for all the "impositions" of postmodern critical theory upon history writing.⁹⁷ Sander Gilman has similarly reflected on how the new yearning for the "real" and the "objective" has begun to sap the "representation approach" to history writing that for the past thirty years or so has shaped and inspired history writing (wittingly or unwittingly).⁹⁸ As he points out, it is through enthusiasm for developments in the neurosciences, in particular, that historians and others in the human sciences have come to decide both on *what* they are to study and *how* to study it.⁹⁹ Newly designated fields such as neuropolitics, neurogeography, and neuroaesthetics, and not least neurohistory, have emerged in which practitioners not only emphasize the central importance of the epistemology and method of the natural sciences, but also call for a complete renewal of disciplines and disciplinarity based on such rationales.¹⁰⁰ *Geisteswissenschaften*, we might almost say, are being strangled by the *Naturwissenschaften*.¹⁰¹ More so than in Sudhoff's time, the

96. Sudhoff, "Förderung" (n. 21), 1352.

97. Scott, "History-Writing" (n. 10), 17. For further critique, see also Roger Cooter and Claudia Stein, "The New Poverty of Theory: Material Turns in a Latourian World," in Roger Cooter with Claudia Stein, *Medicine, Biomedicine and the Politics of History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press [forthcoming]).

98. On our "unwitting" acceptance of postmodern ways of thinking, see Paul Forman, "(Re)cognizing Postmodernity: Helps for Historians—of Science Especially," *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 33 (2010): 157–75.

99. Gilman, "Representing Health and Illness" (n. 10), 295–96.

100. The Harvard-based historian Daniel Lord Smail, who has recently inaugurated neurohistory by arguing for the integration of history and the brain sciences, including the sciences of emotion, is one case in point. See Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

101. In the United Kingdom this "strangling" is most obvious. Universities will receive limited state funding for the arts, humanities, and social sciences in the future because they apparently have no public utility. The available funding will go to the natural sciences and technology studies. There are lots of publications on this issue. A good overview of the U.K.

call to "reach beyond" the natural sciences/human sciences divide has come to be embraced wholeheartedly.¹⁰²

Following historicists and neo-Kantian ideals, Sudhoff insisted that the historical investigation of human life required different methods than those deployed in the natural sciences for the investigation of nature's laws. There was more to human life and its history, he believed, than the empirical collection and authentication of archival facts. Thus, to revisit Sudhoff's concerns with objectivity, the ethics of history writing, and his insistence on the methodological distinction between *Natur-* and *Geisteswissenschaften* is to awake the present in the past. It is also to be reminded that past and present debates on these issues are made *in* concrete historical situations, not in abstract realms of philosophy. As we well know from the "science wars" of the 1980s and 1990s, methodological debate between the human and natural sciences is never conducted in a sociopolitical vacuum.¹⁰³

What we make the methodologies of the natural sciences and the human sciences to be and how we imagine their mutual relationship are matters of sociocultural change and negotiation. What needs to be remembered though is that behind the overt "wars" loom larger metaphysical questions that hinge on the question of what it means to be human. In this respect, too, Sudhoff's views are interesting for our times.

situation is James Vernon's "The End of the Public University in England," http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/globalhighered/the_end_of_the_public_university_in_england (accessed March 15, 2012). However, the humanities as academic disciplines are under threat worldwide. See the recent "defense" by the Chicago philosopher Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

102. This move to overcome the traditional methodological boundaries between the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences that have existed since the late nineteenth century can be observed best in the fast-growing field of the history of emotions. Many scholars in this area increasingly base their own work on research in psychology and the neurosciences on affect. The geographer Nigel Thrift has even "invented" a new theoretical approach, entitled "Non-Representational Theory," which aims at breaking down the boundaries. See Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007). For an "unmasking" of the many underlying scientific assumptions involved in such allegedly "transdisciplinary" moves, see Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Crit. Inquiry* 37 (2011): 434–72; also Constantina Papoulias and Felicity Callard's "Biology's Gift: Interrogating the Turn to Affect," *Body Soc.* 16, no. 1 (2010): 29–56.

103. For the history of the "science wars" and the methodological and theoretical issues at stake, see *The Science Wars: Debating Scientific Knowledge and Technology*, ed. Keith Parsons (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2003); Ziauddin Sardar, *Thomas Kuhn and the Science Wars* (Duxford: Icon, 2000); Nick Jardine and Marina Frasca-Spada, "Splendours and Miseries of the Science Wars," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 28 (1997): 219–35; *The One Culture? A Conversation about Science*, ed. Jay A. Labinger and Harry Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

He believed that the core of being human was to be found in history and claimed that the natural sciences were not outside of it. He envisioned history writing as an empirical, interpretative, *and* embodied practice (through intuition) that provided the possibility of cooperation between the historically grown natural sciences and human sciences. Thus instead of continuing to see Sudhoff as something of an embarrassment for the history of medicine on the basis of his political choices, we might better value his concerns with methodology and the philosophy of history as a compelling address to our times.

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