serving a Jewish identity for an otherwise rather secularized and acculturated constituency.

PETER PULZER
ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD

Rudolf Virchow: Mediziner — Anthropologe — Politiker. By Constantin Goschler. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag. 2002. Pp. 556. EUR 39.90. ISBN 3–412–09102–2.

Intellectual trends have made historical biography increasingly problematic. After historical social science devalued the agency of an individual subject in comparison to determining social structures, postmodernism deconstructed the individual as unitary personality, leaving the biographer with, literally and figuratively, no subject. Yet public interest in biography remains considerable and the genre has enjoyed a revival in recent years. What has emerged, though, is no longer the linear, unified life story of a distinct individual. Both Lothar Gall's biography of Bismarck and Ian Kershaw's of Hitler, to take two prominent examples, involved the authors measuring their subjects against social and political developments of their eras. As an example perhaps closer to the book under consideration here, Friedrich Lenger, in his recent biography of Werner Sombart, speculated on how different Sombart's place in history would have been had his life ended at a different date.

Constantin Goschler, in his biography of Rudolf Virchow, takes a different tack, using various aspects of his subject's life to explore questions about and controversies in nineteenth-century history. Virchow's academic career, for instance, becomes a way for the author to evaluate the causes of the expansion of German universities in the nineteenth century, and to examine the social and economic standing of the German professoriate. Goschler discusses Virchow's private life to explore the relationship between the private and the public in the nineteenth century, the role of property in the life of the *Bürgertum*, and the nature of gender relations among the educated middle class. Virchow's political career offers the possibility of considering the long-term political trajectory of 1848 democrats, the transition from notables' politics to mass politics, or the role of scientific and technocratic expertise in German politics.

Perhaps the single most concentrated set of questions the author poses concerns Virchow's intellectual development. It is not Virchow as scientist, his place in nineteenth-century biology and medical science, that is the primary focus of Goschler's interests; rather he concentrates on Virchow as scientific popularizer and as what we would today call a public intellectual. The author employs

Virchow's ideas to consider the relationship between an increasingly self-confident empirical and experimental natural science and the neohumanist ideal of *Bildung*, the changing concepts of progress, the application of biological metaphors to state and society, and the articulation and use of concepts of race in their relationship to ideas of citizenship and of the nation.

Goschler draws the questions he poses from a wide variety of secondary sources, showing an impressive grasp of historical scholarship in Europe and North America. With this approach, though, the idea of biography as the consecutive narration of an individual's life history largely disappears, reduced to the author's assertion that the revolution of 1848 and its failure marked a point of discontinuity in Virchow's understanding of the relationship between private and public and between scholarship and politics. Instead, the book offers a thematic consideration of different aspects of Virchow's life, each with its own distinct chronology and internal structure. Yet Goschler's method, while rejecting the narrative unity of an individual subject's life, ends up reintroducing this unity in two different ways.

First, the author's strategy of using an individual's life to explore a wide range of historical questions works very well because the subject of his investigations engaged in an astonishing range of activities. Physician, biologist, anthropologist, professor, journal editor, political activist, deputy in the Berlin City Council, the Prussian Landtag and the Reichstag, consultant and governmental advisor, public lecturer, textbook author, journalist and commentator, dutiful son, devoted husband and father — and all these activities producing extensive documentation which the author uses to good effect — it is precisely the unity of all these activities in one person's life that makes possible a biography posing so many questions about nineteenth-century history. Goschler does discuss this multiplicity of activities, although primarily in terms of exploring how Virchow found the time for all of them.

Perhaps more importantly, though, the unity of the subject's life in this work is replaced by the unity of the questions the author poses. The central point of the book is the contemporary questioning and deconstruction of the positivist, empiricist, and progress-oriented view of natural science, as can be seen in Goschler's frequent evocations of the French sociologist Bruno Latour. Here, the darker side, one might say, of Rudolf Virchow becomes apparent. His meteoric academic career appears less as a result of outstanding scientific research than of the manipulation of the process of disciplinary specialization. Virchow used his understanding of biology to justify a polarized gender order in which women were destined for home and family. Virchow's application of scientific knowledge to public policy, as in his advocacy of a central Berlin slaughterhouse to eliminate the dangers of trichinosis, hid the opposing social and economic interests involved in policy decisions. His apotheosis of empirical science and of

progress involved an intolerant rejection of pluralist understandings of politics and society, as can be seen in his promotion of the *Kulturkampf* or in his hostility to the emerging socialist labor movement.

Goschler does tend to reject the charge that Virchow's sponsorship of a racial-anthropological investigation of German schoolchildren in the 1870s fostered anti-Semitic racism. He explores in interesting detail the differences between Virchow's understanding of race and its relation to nationality and those of social Darwinist and fascist thinkers. In this respect, as in many others, the author presents Virchow's opinions on science, philosophy, politics, and society as shaped by events of the mid-nineteenth century and increasingly outdated by the century's end.

Goschler's *Rudolf Virchow* is an intriguing and challenging work. One may wonder about the validity of the critique of natural science that the author employs as a central framework for his investigations, and, at times, his conclusions on the Berlin slaughterhouse controversy, for instance, can seem a little strained. Nonetheless, the book is a testimony to the possibilities of writing an empirically well-documented biography following the problematization of historical subjects, their relationship to their social and political environment, and their linear life-course. Of course, the approach is so successful in this case in part because the author has studied an extraordinary individual and his remarkable life-course.

JONATHAN SPERBER
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

Berlin, Kabul, Moskau: Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer und Deutschlands Geopolitik. By Hans-Ulrich Seidt. Munich: Universitas. Pp. 510. EUR 24.80. ISBN 3–8004–1438–4.

Oskar Niedermayer had an unusual and varied career in the service of causes, all of which, sooner or later, were lost. Born into an educated middle-class Bavarian family — his knighthood came later — he was commissioned a lieutenant in the artillery in 1905. Soon he also began to study geology, geography, and Islamic languages at the University of Erlangen. The new discipline of geopolitics attracted him, but he retained an independent, critical view of its not infrequent tendency to convert geographic realities into political absolutes. Between 1912 and 1914 he was given leave to travel in Iran. This experience led to his appointment at the beginning of the First World War to an expedition to Afghanistan, sent out to foment insurrection against the British rule in India. Other than concluding a treaty of friendship with Afghanistan, the enterprise achieved little. Niedermayer then served with the Turkish forces until he was