

**THE QUESTION OF A
DIVISION OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY:
INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

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The Question of a Division of the Philosophical Faculty: Inaugural address by August Wilhelm Hofmann

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AUGUST WILHELM HOFMANN

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THE QUESTION OF A DIVISION OF THE
PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

ON ASSUMING THE RECTORSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN,

DELIVERED IN THE AULA OF THE UNIVERSITY.
On October 15, 1880,

BY

DR. AUGUST WILHELM HOFMANN,
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY.

SECOND EDITION.

WITH AN APPENDIX

CONTAINING

TWO OPINIONS ON THE ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GRADU-
ATES OF *REALSCHULEN*, PRESENTED TO HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE ROYAL MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, BY
THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY OF THE ROYAL
FREDERICK-WILLIAM UNIVERSITY, IN
THE YEARS 1869 AND 1880.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Inaugural Address of Professor Hofmann, the distinguished Professor of Chemistry in the University of Berlin, which is here translated, deals chiefly with a question which excites great interest and no little controversy in the German Universities, and will, it is hoped, interest all in this country who are devoted to the educational problems of the day. The question of dividing the great Philosophical Faculty, which has long been the pride of the German University, collecting and cherishing all the numerous Sciences which do not belong to Theology, Law, or Medicine, and of putting in its place one Faculty of Letters and one of Mathematics and the Physical and Natural Sciences, is a question which cuts deeply into the very fibre of modern education ; and the action of Germany in dealing with it cannot fail to be weighty and lasting in its effect on the education of the world. This Address, however, as Professor Hofmann remarks, owes its general interest mainly to its discussion of a question closely connected with the principal subject, — that of admitting students to the Universities without the literary training which a German *Gymnasium* affords, and especially without a knowledge of Greek. The history of this question in Germany, particularly the active part taken in it by the University of Berlin, may be new to many in this country who are interested in the future of classical studies.

A decree, issued at Berlin on December 7, 1870, by the Royal Minister of Public Instruction, Dr. von Mühler, granted to sub-

jects of Prussia who had completed the full course of study in a *Realschule* of the first rank the right of matriculation in the Philosophical Faculty of any Prussian University, for the purpose of studying Mathematics, the Physical and Natural Sciences, or Modern Foreign Languages. By this removal of restrictions which heretofore had practically barred the way to University studies for those who had not received their preparatory training at a *Gymnasium*, a new set of requisitions for admission was recognized, and a new element was introduced into the Universities. The Prussian *Realschule* of the first rank, as compared with the *Gymnasium*, entirely dispenses with Greek in its course of study, reduces the time devoted to Latin by very nearly one-half, introduces English, gives greater attention to German, doubles the time devoted to French, more than doubles that given to the Physical and Natural Sciences, and increases that allotted to Mathematics by nearly one-half.¹

The decree of 1870 had been preceded in 1869 by a note, addressed by the Minister of Public Instruction to the Faculties of the various Universities in Prussia, asking their opinion upon the question whether young men who had received their preparatory training in a *Realschule* should be admitted to the Universities, and, if they were admitted, under

¹ The following tables, extracted from Wiese's *Verordnungen und Gesetze für die höheren Schulen in Preussen*, second edit., 1875, pp. 38 and 44, will furnish the means for a more specific comparison, and show at the same time what is the *Realschule*, to the training of which the Berlin Faculty object. The German boy regularly has completed his ninth year when he enters the sixth and lowest class of the *Gymnasium* or *Realschule*. He leaves it regularly at eighteen. In the following tables, I. and II. and generally III. represent two years' study each; the others represent single years:—

what restrictions this should be done. The answers, taken as a whole, were distinctly opposed to the Minister's implied pro-

General Plan of Studies of the Prussian Gymnasium.

	VI.	V.	IV.	III.	II.	I.
Religion	3	3	2	2	2	2
German	2	2	2	2	2	3
Latin	10	10	10	10	10	8
Greek			6	6	6	6
French		3	2	2	2	2
History and Geography . .	2	2	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	4	3	3	3	4	4
Physics					1	2
Natural History	2	2		2		
Drawing	2	2	2			
Writing	3	3				
Total number of hours in each week	28	30	30	30	30	30

General Plan of Studies of the Prussian Realschule of the First Rank.

	VI.	V.	IV.	III.	II.	I.
Religion	3	3	2	2	2	2
German	4	4	3	3	3	3
Latin	8	6	6	5	4	3
French		5	5	4	4	4
English				4	3	3
Geography and History . .	3	3	4	4	3	3
Physical and Natural Science.	2	2	2	2	6	6
Mathematics	5	4	6	6	5	5
Writing	3	2	2			
Drawing	2	2	2	2	2	3
Total number of hours in each week	30	31	32	32	32	32

No account is taken in the above plans of the hours given to Singing and Gymnastics, or to Hebrew in the *Gymnasium*. The time so devoted falls either wholly or in part outside of the regular school hours.

posal. The decree was nevertheless issued, and went into immediate effect. The reply of the Philosophical Faculty at Berlin is given in the Appendix (pages 39-43 of this translation).

The interest in the experiment thus set on foot was not confined to Prussia. For the proposition that the study of the Classics is the best preparatory training for the higher studies of the University has been widely combated. This question has been for years the subject of lively discussion in our own country, where there have not been wanting doubters who have assailed the value of the Classics, and especially of Greek, as an educational instrument, sometimes with fierce impatience, sometimes with clever derision. It is, therefore, a fact of the highest interest and importance, that this experiment of admitting students to the University without Greek has been tried for ten years in the foremost University of Germany, and that we have a unanimous opinion of the Philosophical Faculty of that University upon the change, deliberately given at the end of this period. It is especially interesting to all friends of classical studies to find that the emphatic condemnation of the change which was expressed by the Faculty when it was proposed in 1869 is reaffirmed in still stronger terms by the Faculty of 1880. And what an array of names famous in all the various departments which Germany includes in her hospitable "Philosophische Facultät" — in the Physical and Natural Sciences, History, Philology, and Literature, as well as in Philosophy proper — is appended to these memorials! As the Rector reminds his readers, death had reaped a sad harvest between 1869 and 1880 among the distinguished men who

signed the first Opinion, and the Faculty had been largely recruited by the introduction of younger men. The names of Dove, Haupt, Magnus, von Raumer, Rose, and Trendelenburg have disappeared, and the Faculty appears much increased in numbers in 1880. But the views of the Faculty of 1869 still remain those of the Faculty of 1880.

This Opinion of 1880 (pages 47-56 of this translation), which a distinguished American scholar has forcibly called "the most powerful plea ever made in behalf of classical studies," was first made public in 1881, as an appendix to the second edition of Professor Hofmann's Address. In the Address itself, Dr. Hofmann presents, with great clearness and vigour, the claims of the *Gymnasium* as affording the best means of preparation for higher studies. It is deeply significant that a scholar of such authority, a scholar who has made his great achievements mainly in the field of the Physical Sciences, should announce his unhesitating belief "that all efforts to find a substitute for the Classical Languages, whether in Mathematics, in the Modern Languages, or in the Natural Sciences,¹ have been hitherto unsuccessful; that, after long and vain search, we must always come back finally to the result of centuries of experience, that the surest instrument that can be used in training the mind of youth is given us in the study of the languages, the literature, and the works of art of classical antiquity."

¹ Throughout this translation the word *Naturwissenschaften* has been rendered *Natural Sciences*. It is a term of broad application, covering what would be more accurately designated as the Physical and Natural Sciences.