

What Mrs. Schavan already knows

No one can quite imagine that Annette Schavan had ever been a child; she looks always as if she entered the world as a fully-grown adult, in beige outfit, with grey hair. But it is known that she must have studied at some time, and as the culmination of her academic career she earned herself the title of Doctor. This was for years a beautiful adornment on her business card, but otherwise useless, because Mrs. Schavan did not go into research, but instead became a politician. And her career was a blameless one. No scandals, no dirty washing, everything somehow remains unknown – and at any rate beige.

Behind this beige, almost at the end of her political career, a mean complaint has besmirched her otherwise beige outfit: She has been accused of plagiarism, especially in the case of her doctorate thesis entitled “Person and conscience—Studies on conditions, need and requirements of today’s consciences”. That was in 1980.

By 2012 Mrs. Schavan, following an assessment by her Alma Mater (Heinrich-Heine University, Düsseldorf), found herself in the same boat as Koch-Mehrin, Guttenberg and the other [plagiarists](#): even her beige cannot help her now.

Political manoeuvring however can help: First deny everything, as all the other plagiarists did, then she quickly gives up a few of her offices, such as the Vice-Presidency of the CDU, and then she says that she ought to have worked more carefully on her dissertation. This raises the question of how much the person was separated from the conscience, or whether the person can ever be connected with the conscience. Now everything is to be reviewed in peace and quiet.

Now the beige helps again: Beige slows down everything.

The result of the review however will be interesting: Did she or didn’t she? May she retain her title, because science is able to tolerate her transgressions; must she give up her title, because she knew what she was doing, but never told anyone, and concealment or omission is tantamount to lying?

Ultimately she will have to make this decision, and after a close examination of her conscience.

Because she is not guilty alone, but also her doctorate tutor, who should somehow know what originates from where, we award the “Bombshell of the Week” for Mrs. Schavan, and also for the tutors and supervisors of such works, who obviously do not know sufficiently what those in their charge are up to.

The Alliance for Democracy is now waiting for the next one in the Merkel Cabinet who could be accused of plagiarism. Clearly Mrs. Merkel has a good hand here – the first among equals!