



“... a life broken in two” Walter Pagel (1898–1983)—Famous pathologist and victim of Nazi Germany



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ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that Walter Pagel (1898–1983) is one of the most outstanding figures in the history of pathology. Not only his fundamental research on tuberculosis and various other fields of pathology but also his historicomedical publications set international standards and earned him numerous honors throughout the scientific world.

Far less known is the fact that Pagel, as a German Jew, was one of the victims of the “Third Reich”: He was dismissed from his job in Heidelberg, felt forced to emigrate in 1933 and fought for reparation after 1945. Accordingly, this article deals with Pagel’s role and fate as a politically persecuted and disenfranchised Jew. It focuses on the general circumstances of his dismissal and forced emigration, but also on Pagel’s treatment in post-war Germany. In addition, the influences of this biographical break on Pagel’s further research career are investigated.

The study is based on archival sources and on a re-analysis of the relevant research literature.

It points out that Pagel’s emigration took place under difficult circumstances and without clear job prospects. Enormous discipline and mental strength as well as successful networking with supporting mentors allowed Pagel to continue his career in his exile country of England despite poor health. The way in which Pagel was treated in post-war Germany, on the other hand, was less satisfactory: the University of Heidelberg did not offer him any prospect of employment and the “reparation procedure” (“Wiedergutmachungsverfahren”) resulted in only small pension payments. Instead, Pagel was awarded an honorary doctorate at his home university in 1966. Of the numerous “stumbling blocks” (n = 183) laid in Heidelberg, not one reminds us of Walter Pagel to date.

1. Introduction: Walter Pagel – known Scientist, unknown Nazi victim

Walter Traugott Ulrich Pagel (Fig. 1) [1], and (Fig. 2) [2], was born in Berlin on November 12, 1898 [3–12]. He was the youngest child of the renowned medical historian and university teacher Julius Leopold Pagel (1851–1912). Walter attended grammar school in Berlin and here he began his medical studies in 1916, which he completed with his doctorate in 1922. He came as a patient to the Tuberculosis Hospital (“Tuberkulosekrankenhaus”) Sommerfeld (Osthavelland), whose chief physician gave him the opportunity for his first experimental investigations into this disease. In this way, Pagel’s own illness led him to tuberculosis research, to which he was to devote a large part of his further professional life. From 1924 to 1926, Pagel was an assistant at the Tuberculosis Hospital Waldhaus in Berlin. In 1926, he followed his future mentor, Alexander Schmincke, to the Institute of Pathology at the University of Tübingen, where he worked as a prosector; afterwards

he returned to the Tuberkulosekrankenhaus in Sommerfeld – now as a prosector and senior physician. Before taking up another position with his patron Schmincke in autumn 1930 – this time in Heidelberg, where Schmincke had assumed a chair – Pagel worked for several months as a guest researcher at the Karl Sudhoff Institute for the History of Medicine in Leipzig. Here he prepared his habilitation thesis on the pathologist Rudolf Virchow. Thanks to this work, Pagel was able to habilitate under Schmincke in Heidelberg during the winter semester of 1930/31. The subjects which he was authorized to teach included the fields of general pathology, pathological anatomy and history of medicine. Pagel describes this period in his memoirs as very fruitful and pays particular tribute to Schmincke’s supporting role by saying [10]: “1930 was a year of change for me. Schmincke was called from Tübingen to Heidelberg in 1928 to take up a professorship. In the liberal atmosphere of the city and university, his great creative power found great satisfaction and a favorable field of work. He still wanted to give me access to an academic career and offered me an assistant position”

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Fig. 1. Walter Pagel and his wife Magda in 1932 [1] (Wellcome Library, London).

(Translation by D. Gross).

Pagel was to work as a private lecturer in Heidelberg from 1930 until his dismissal in 1933. Here he developed a series of important works on the pathology and radiology of tuberculosis, but also his first studies on Paracelsus and van Helmont.

Still in 1933, after Hitler seized power, Pagel emigrated to Paris with his wife and young son [2,6,13–16]. His wife was the lung specialist Dr. med. Magda Pagel, née Koll (1894–1980); they had married in 1920 [9–11,17]. They had a son, Bernhard Pagel (1930–2007), who would later become a famous astrophysicist [17]. Pagel was temporarily accommodated in Paris at the Calmette Laboratory of the Pasteur Institute. But the family traveled on to England in the same year. Here, Walter Pagel was initially involved in the construction of a research laboratory in the Papworth Village Settlement near Cambridge. At the same time, he used the proximity of Cambridge University for his research activities. Besides, he organized a Lecture Committee at Cambridge University with Joseph Needham. A selection of these lectures would appear as “Background to Modern Science” [18] and the work of the committee later led to a curriculum for the “History and Philosophy

of Science” at Cambridge University.

In 1939 Walter Pagel became a British citizen; in the same year he moved to London and was employed as an “Assistant Pathologist” (later: “Consultant Pathologist”) at the “Central Middlesex Hospital” in Harlesden. In 1956 he moved to the “Clare Hall Sanatorium” in London-Barnet, where he worked until 1967. After retiring, Pagel devoted more attention to the history of medicine and pathology. He died in Mill Hill on March 25, 1983 [5–7,9,12].

Walter Pagel remained a highly productive scientist until old age, publishing an enormous oeuvre despite consistently fragile health. Up to 1971, his publication list comprised 218 articles, 18 books and book contributions, and 208 reviews [19]. His book on “Pulmonary Tuberculosis: Pathology, Diagnosis, Management and Prevention” (1st Edition in 1939, [20], see Fig. 3) in particular became a classic and has been reissued over and over again. Winder/Burgess [16] provided a very biographical approach to explaining this publication success: “His standard work on Pulmonary tuberculosis (1939), written originally with G. G. Keyne and L. O’Shaughnessy, has gone into several editions. Indeed, he was acquainted with tuberculosis from personal experience,



Fig. 2. Walter Pagel in 1978 [2] (Wellcome Library, London).

and, as a result, a delicate state of health constantly dogged his life and restricted his movements considerably but never dampened his exuberant high spirits and sparkling wit nor ever prevented him from continuing with his monumental work.” According to Prüll, Pagel succeeded in raising the history of pathology to a new scientific level [21]. And the “Journal of the American Medical Association” (JAMA) even called Pagel “the world’s outstanding authority on medical history” [22].

Pagel’s received numerous worldwide honors [2,3,10,13,15]: He was made an Honorary Fellow of the “British Academy” and received the “Dexter Award” from the “American Chemical Society”. “The American Association of the History of Medicine” awarded him the “William H. Welch Medal” in 1976. The “History of Science Society” bestowed the “Sarton Medal” upon Pagel (1970), and the medical faculties of Basel (1961), Heidelberg (1966), and Leeds (1968) awarded him honorary doctorates. For his work on tuberculosis, he received the “Robert-Koch-Award” (1973). He also received honorary memberships from the “Royal Society of Medicine”, the “International Academy for the History of Medicine”, the German “Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte” (Society for History of Science) and the “International Paracelsus Society”, to name but a few. In 1979 he was awarded the “Paracelsus Ring”. Scientists around the world paid tribute to Pagel in a two-volume commemorative publication in his honor, edited by Allen Debus in 1972 [4].

Although no detailed biogography of Walter Pagel exists to this day, his scientific oeuvre is fairly well researched. In contrast, Pagel’s role as a German Jew, the associated deprivation of rights in the “Third Reich”, his forced emigration and the process of reparation after 1945, have only received little attention. Pagel’s role as a Nazi victim is (briefly) mentioned mainly in historical publications about the University of Heidelberg [8,23,24]. Even Pagel’s own statements on the National Socialist era in his memoirs received little attention [10]. It is precisely these aspects – the biographical break due to Pagel’s role as a victim in Nazi Germany and its subsequent implications – that are the focus of this essay.

2. Material and methods

The study is based on archival sources from the University Archive of Heidelberg (UAH) and Pagel’s autobiographical memoirs. In addition, the relevant international research literature on the life and work of Walter Pagel, the history of forced emigration of German scientists, the history of pathology, and the University of Heidelberg in Nazi and post-war Germany are systematically re-analyzed – each with a specific focus on the questions outlined above.

3. Results

The results on the role of Pagel as a victim of the “Third Reich” and on Pagel’s attitude and relationship to post-war Germany can be divided into three chronological aspects:

3.1. Forced emigration from Nazi Germany (1933f)

Prior to Hitler’s seizure of power, Pagel held lectures and exercises on both pathology and the history of pathology and medicine. Pagel lectured on “General Pathology”, combined with exercises in macro- and microscopic diagnostics, and, together with two other lecturers, he also offered courses on clinical pathology and sectional technique – a very comprehensive programme on the whole [8,25].

On April 20, 1933, Walter Pagel was deprived of his job because of his “non-Aryan” descent (Fig. 4) [26]. The “legal” basis for the dismissal was the “Law on the Restoration of the Civil Service” (“Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums”) [27] passed by the Nazis. Pagel’s supervisor and mentor Schmincke had obviously stood up for his Jewish senior physician and made a plea for him to be kept in his position, but his attempt turned out to be futile [8,28].

It became more and more apparent that the situation for Jews in Germany was hopeless. Pagel felt compelled to turn his back on his homeland – a situation that is commonly referred to as “forced emigration”. So Pagel left the city of Heidelberg in June 1933 with his wife and their three-year-old son Bernhard to emigrate to France [10].

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PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS

PATHOLOGY, DIAGNOSIS, MANAGEMENT
AND PREVENTION

BY

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Fig. 3. Pagel et al., "Pulmonary Tuberculosis: Pathology, Diagnosis, Management and Prevention" (Book Cover) [20].

Looking at the numerous obituaries, laudations and other biographical contributions to Walter Pagel, some similarities become apparent: In all these publications, Pagel's oeuvre is presented as outstanding. Furthermore, almost all biographers emphasize his consistently fragile health and bow to the pathologist's unbroken creative power [e.g. 4,13,29,30]. But remarkably, the political background to his emigration is omitted by most of Walter Pagel's biographers, although it was precisely the National Socialists who brought about this dramatic break in the pathologist's life which can truly be described as a "lifetime event". The description of the tragic facts usually comprises only one or two sentences. Often only the term "emigration" is mentioned, or the political events are hidden behind a euphemistic phrase. Among the few exceptions are Eckart [8] and Hunter [1]. The latter addresses the year as what it really was: "a clear indication of a life broken in two, with Pagel's career path set up and

then disrupted" [1]. However, Hunter otherwise focuses on Pagel's writings at the London Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine; her approach is not Pagel's biography and therefore not his role and experiences as a Nazi victim. Eckart also deals only marginally with Pagel; his focus is the history of Heidelberg University.

Some Pagel biographers merely mention the term "plague year 1933" ("Pestjahr 1933") instead of a contextualization of the political change. In doing so, they choose a formulation that Pagel once used for Hitler's fateful year in power, at the same time refraining from any further explanation or even embedding of Pagel's biography in the contemporary political context. As Buess puts it [31]: "But Pagel's research as a pathologist lies on this side of the 'plague year 1933'. He arrived via France in England, which finally became the Pagel family's second home" (*transl. DG*). Elsewhere, Buess [3] writes in a similarly veiled manner of the "plague year 1933" (as he calls it), which so

University of Heidelberg
Inner circle of the Senate

HEIDELBERG, April 20th 1933
Phone No. 4520-4525

Maintenance of security and order, and restoration of the civil service.

I. To Assistant Professor Dr. Pagel in Heidelberg.

The ministerial decree of April 6th and 13th 1933, respectively, stipulates that assistants of non-Aryan descent are to be dismissed and that the employment relationship of the aforementioned persons must be terminated and certified.

In the execution of this decree we dismiss you in your function as assistant to the Institute of Pathology and terminate the employment relationship established by the assistant position (§ 13 of the Regulations for Assistants of 12.8.1931).

We ask you to send us the attached certificate immediately.

II. Message for the Directorate of the Institute of Pathology in Heidelberg.

III. Message for the Medical Faculty, Heidelberg.

(Andreas)

To the
Faculty of Medicine
Heidelberg.

Fig. 4. Notification of Walter Pagel's dismissal from the civil service (April 20, 1933) [26].

tragically threw his little ship of life off the path of a triumphant academic career" (*transl. DG*). Davis expresses himself in the same way [14]. Wilhelm Doerr also confines himself to hints [29]: "In 1933 Pagel had to leave his homeland and Heidelberg, the Nazi regime celebrated its first 'triumphs'" (*transl. DG*). Debus [6] is similarly brief: "All of this was to end in 1933 when Hitler came to power. As a Jew Pagel was expelled from his position." Winder/Burgess is even shorter [16]: "In 1933, they emigrated, first to Paris and the Calmette Laboratory at the Pasteur Institute, and then to Cambridge." Even the scientific historian Müller-Jancke confines himself to a single sentence [15]: "Walter Pagel was forced to emigrate by the 'law for the restoration of the civil service' of April 7, 1933" (*transl. DG*).

But how does Pagel himself describe this time? Although his memoirs of 1982 were written in a rather sober tone and strongly emphasize his scientific oeuvre and his professional network, it becomes clear at some points how much this time must have burdened him. Thus he explains [10]: "In 1933 we found ourselves suddenly without employment and personally isolated and fearfully avoided; but there were also a few new friends, above all Prof. Hampe, historian of the German Middle Ages, and retired naval officer Doeringhaus in Handschuhsheim. Some were added, from whom we could not otherwise have expected a friendly word. The challenge now was to find ways to emigrate, to establish relations abroad and to dissolve the household. Wife and three-year-old child had to take advantage of the hospitality of relatives and friends" (*transl. DG*).

When reading Pagel's further remarks it becomes clear that he had

left for Paris without clear prospects for the future and that he suffered from depression in this insecure situation [10]: "I myself travelled to the beautiful Parisian spring and summer, increasingly depressed by the nothing I had to expect there or in the other countries with general unemployment and recession. Nevertheless, an astonishing number of things were organised and done to alleviate the plight of immigrants in particular, but much of what had been hoped for disappeared into a blue mist" (*transl. DG*).

Finally, he was offered a job in Paris, but without any real professional prospects in France and without being able to pursue his own scientific interests [10]: "Through the mediation of Werner Schäfer, bacteriologist and former assistant at the Morosche Kinderklinik in Heidelberg, I found a job thanks to the humanitarian attitude of the great Albert Calmette in Pasteur. I saw a lot there and was inspired. In the few months of my stay I did not manage to do my own intensive work; nevertheless Calmette had even been able to get me a small scholarship shortly before my departure – something permanent was out of the question in France" (*transl. DG*).

But where to go? Only at the end of the summer, Pagel reports, had three vague employment options come up [10]: The first was a possible professorship in pathology at the Experimental University in Nanjing. The second concerned a position in a research laboratory at Papworth Village Settlement – a tuberculosis village near Cambridge, England, where patients worked in dedicated factories for a limited number of hours. And the third was a possible two-year fellowship at the Pathological Institute of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York with pathologist

Paul Klemperer. Pagel's description suggests that the third option – the “American project” – would have appealed to him the most. But it was only ripe for discussion when Pagel had already started in Papworth; furthermore, one would have expected in New York “that after a maximum of two years of hospitality I should find a normal position somewhere else as a pathologist” (*transl. DG*) [10]. In this respect, Pagel remained with the “modest but more permanent employment” in Papworth [10]. Pagel's description of this “balancing process” and his wording demonstrate that he now placed economic aspects above scientific interests “at this highly vulnerable time of life”.

Pagel went to England in October 1933 and worked there for several years as a salaried pathologist at the research department in the tuberculosis village known as Papworth Village Settlement. He also sought contact with Cambridge as described above. Pagel's decision to move to England was final: In 1939 he became a British citizen and now published mainly in English. Pagel, however, as Eckardt puts it, “had by no means ‘naturally’ become a British citizen, but against the background of injustice and expulsion”. Pagel also wanted to “no longer publish in German, the English language had become more important to him as a means of expression” (*transl. DG*) [8].

Pagel had undoubtedly succeeded in joining an extensive network of mostly British colleagues like Joseph Needham and Sir Pendrill Varrier Jones [1] – scientists who were sympathetic to him and with whom he corresponded extensively. Accordingly, Pagel's papers at the Wellcome Institute include three boxes of correspondence with colleagues, from 1931 to 1983 [1]. But although Pagel had probably found a kind of “second home” in England, his fears obviously remained. Pagel's dream diary provides information about this. He had kept the diary in a Calendar of Medical History that was later given to the Wellcome Institute. Isobel Hunter studied his diary and she reports a dream of 1 February 1943 that is notably recorded as “Miss Metzger tells me that all Jews have been killed” [1].

3.2. Pagel's role in the denazification of Alexander Schmincke (1946)

As mentioned above, Alexander Schmincke had pleaded – albeit in vain – in 1933 for Pagel to remain in the service of the University of Heidelberg. Schmincke was also one of the university teachers who provided Pagel with a positive job reference, which was to make it easier for him to start a new career after forced emigration in 1933. This testimonial is also mentioned by Hunter as part of the Walter Pagel document collection at the Wellcome Institute in London [1].

In return, Pagel supported Schmincke after the war under the changed political conditions: Schmincke had asked the Senate of the University in 1945 for permission to retire, which was granted to him at the Senate meeting on August 28 [32]. However, on October 25, 1945, the president of Baden state government rejected the application for retirement and dismissed the pathologist without any remuneration on the same day by order of the military government [33,34]. The background to this decision was Schmincke's obvious political proximity to the Nazis: although he had not initially joined the NSDAP, he had become a supporting member of the SS, a member of the NSDÄB (National Socialist German Medical Association) in July 1933, and he had joined the SA Heidelberg in autumn 1933. In the SA, he attained the position of Obertruppführer (senior commander); here, he had mainly been involved in leading organized physical exercises. Schmincke then joined the NSDAP after the general ban on membership had been lifted on May 1, 1937. Remarkably, Schmincke himself did not mention his NSDAP membership in a questionnaire of the University of Heidelberg dated July 9, 1937 [35].

Accordingly, Schmincke had to undergo denazification in the American occupation zone after 1945. One of Schmincke's exonerating witnesses was Walter Pagel. He testified that Schmincke was friendly to Jews and maintained contacts with a number of Jewish friends, and he doubted Schmincke's ideological proximity to the National Socialists. In addition, he pointed out that Schmincke had attempted to keep him –

Walter Pagel – in service in 1933 by making a risky plea [36].

In September 1946, the Schmincke case came before a denazification tribunal (“Spruchkammer”) in Heidelberg. It ended with the classification of Schmincke into the group of “followers” (“Mitläufer”). The favourable judgement of the tribunal had the desired effect: on August 18, 1947 Schmincke was able to resume his position as director of the Heidelberg Institute of Pathology [37,38]. Pagel's sense of personal loyalty was obviously stronger than his need for “settlement” with the Nazi system and the people who had supported it by NS memberships and activities which can be regarded as politically opportune.

3.3. Walter Pagel and the question of reparation (“Wiedergutmachung”) (1952–1966)

Schmincke was not Pagel's only personal connection to Heidelberg. The latter also maintained contact with other colleagues such as the pathologist and chronicler Wilhelm Doerr [29]. It was also Doerr who represented Pagel's interests in the upcoming question of reparation [39]. At the beginning of the 1950s, Walter Pagel – like many university teachers disenfranchised in the “Third Reich” – applied for compensation. The legal background for doing so was a law (1951) which regulated reparation for Nazi injustice to members of the civil service (“Wiedergutmachungsgesetz”) [40]. It was intended to compensate for the material damage and interruptions to their career suffered by the dismissed members of the civil service – such as university professors – and to give them the presumed career position and legal status that they had failed to attain as a result of political repression. Such redress procedures were common practice at universities, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s [41].

In fact, the reparation proceedings of the state of Baden-Württemberg and the University of Heidelberg in the Pagel case were initiated in 1952. In the end, Pagel only received small pensions, which were to be paid retroactively starting from April 1, 1951 for his years of service in Heidelberg. It was assumed that Pagel would have been appointed extraordinary professor on April 1, 1940 if he had not been persecuted beforehand [39,42]. Obviously, the decision-makers did not think that Pagel would have made it to a full professorship by 1945.

In the post-war years Pagel actually brought along all technical qualifications for the appointment to a full professorship. But those responsible at the University of Heidelberg could or did not want to offer Pagel such a position. On the other hand, Pagel had been explicitly certified as suitable for holding a chair [43]. This somewhat inconsistent position was by no means limited to the dealings with Pagel or to the appointment policy of Heidelberg. Rather, plans by military governments to offer former university teachers new chairs or chairs that had become (temporarily) vacant due to denazification often generated considerable defensive positions within the faculties [41].

In fact, the existing Heidelberg Chair of Pathology was due to be refilled in 1961. In addition, a decision was made around 1960 to establish a full professorship for medical history (which was taken over by Heinrich Schipperges in 1961 [8]). Even though Pagel was already around 61 years old in 1960, an appointment to a chair would still have been conceivable at that time. Unlike today, there were several examples of late appointments. For example, the oral surgeon Wolfgang Rosenthal, who had also been deprived of his rights in the “Third Reich”, was appointed to a chair at Humboldt University in 1950 at the age of 68 (sic!) – and this was his first full professorship [44]. All in all, the decision-makers did not seem to be particularly interested in the individual and scientist Walter Pagel; this can also be seen from the fact that the restitution procedure for Pagel lasted from December 1952 to July 1960 (sic!) and thus only came to an end eight years after the application had been submitted [45,39] – i.e. just in the period in which the two aforementioned professorships were due to be filled.

After all, the University of Heidelberg made Pagel a purely non-material offer: the award of an honorary doctorate. According to Eckart, the honor was “dankbar akzeptiert” (“gratefully accepted”) by Pagel in

1965 [8] and the certificate was handed over by Pagel's friend Wilhelm Doerr on the occasion of the opening of the new Institute of Pathology in 1966. Doerr was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the time [46]. It turned out to be Pagel's last stay in Heidelberg [8].

4. Discussion

Although Pagel's biography was divided into two parts due to the "plague year", he succeeded in furthering his scientific career after 1933 and in advancing to become an internationally renowned scientist. In view of this, it is worth considering how Pagel's political exclusion and deprivation of rights in the "Third Reich" on the one hand and subsequent career in England on the other are connected. What were the interactions?

It was of existential importance to Pagel to gain a scientific foothold in exile and to recommend himself for further professional employment. In other words, he looked upon emigration as the only chance for himself and his young family and was thus determined to avail of it. A key to success was to establish a network of colleagues and friends who would support him as much as possible, and he succeeded in doing this. Moreover, Pagel was only 32 at the time of emigration – young enough to adapt to a new country and its language. In this he differed from many great Jewish scientists who had to emigrate at an advanced age – such as the Jewish Viennese professor of oral pathology, Bernhard Gottlieb, who left Austria at the age of 55. The immigration country remained foreign to him and he never regained his former professional strength [47].

It remains to be discussed why Pagel did not return to his home country after 1945. One reason is to be found in the fact that Pagel did not find sufficient prospects for a scientific job in post-war Germany. Moreover, the political and social climate was not such that remigration would have suggested itself [48]. This perception was shared by the overwhelming majority of the emigrated scientists, of whom only 4–5 percent decided to return [49]. In the young Federal Republic, in the period after the end of the 1940s, even academics who had come forward as Nazis henceforth succeeded in "cleansing themselves" within denazification procedures and were thus able to continue their careers [49,50]. In any case, only a few physicians, mainly concentration camp doctors, were indicted at the much-quoted Nuremberg medical trial [51,52]; most of the doctors involved escaped conviction; this even applied to most personal physicians and those close to leading Nazis [53].

Furthermore, the universities and the judiciary in post-war Germany often failed to treat adequately those scientists who had been excluded during the "Third Reich". This point was most evident in the redress procedures: From today's perspective, the course of the redress proceedings of the Nazi victims does not seem to be fair and appropriate to the situation: Firstly, the task of the expert was often assigned to the professor who represented the discipline at the university concerned. The evaluator thus gained enormous power [41] although he possibly had a conflict of interest since both parties – the assessor and the former victim – were pursuing a scientific career and success in the same discipline. They were, in a sense, competitors. Occasionally the evaluators were even former NSDAP members, as the case of Kimmelstiel shows: a Nazi victim who was reviewed by the former Nazi Carl Krauspe [54]. Secondly, the amount of compensation was to be determined on the basis of the presumed academic career in Germany (assuming a situation where the victim had not been forced to emigrate). Thus the injured party had to demonstrate how successful their career would have been without the deprivation of rights – a difficult or even impossible undertaking and ultimately a reversal of the burden of proof. This constellation often led to embarrassingly low compensation payments and thus to "renewed humiliation" [41] and further stigmatisation. The small pensions awarded to Pagel fit seamlessly into this picture.

Even the fact that Pagel was ultimately *grateful* for his honorary doctorate and obviously welcomed individual positive signals from his

German university colleagues was no unusual reaction: quite a few of the disenfranchised emigrated university teachers internalised the stigmatisation they had suffered. Accordingly, their expectations of the former home university were rather low and they tended to accept any expression of respect and honor from their German colleagues with gratitude or even relief.

The discussion will conclude with a look at the recent past and present: Is there a living culture of remembrance in Heidelberg and is Pagel part of this culture? The first question can actually be answered in the affirmative: In March 2008, the "Stumbling Blocks in Heidelberg" initiative was launched [55]. Since then many natives of Heidelberg have committed themselves to the laying of "stumbling blocks" that are looked upon as "monuments from below". The aim of the initiative is to recall individual names and biographies into collective memory and thus promote the culture of commemoration in Heidelberg. More than 180 stumbling blocks have been laid to date [56], including several blocks for doctors or university teachers such as the dermatologist Siegfried Bettmann (1869–1939), one of the figures of Heidelberg university who was forced to emigrate. The laying of "his" block was flanked by a press release from the University of Heidelberg [57]. By such means, emigrated scientists were and are remembered elsewhere as well [54]. But so far none of the blocks is dedicated to Walter Pagel.

5. Conclusion

While Pagel's scientific oeuvre is well researched, his role as a German Jew, his forced emigration and the implications of this have received little attention. Strikingly, the political background to Pagel's emigration is omitted or glossed over by most of his biographers. In fact, Pagel's path into exile was without clear job prospects and was accompanied by depression and despair. Both his memoirs and his unpublished written legacy show that his "life was broken in two" [1]: In his eyes, his career had been laboriously built up and then destroyed overnight in 1933. At a single blow, he had to place economic concerns above scientific interests. Pagel's personal notes also show that the Holocaust scenario pursued him in exile and that, years after his emigration, he still dreamt that all Jews had been killed overnight. But perseverance, mental strength, and supportive colleagues made it possible for Pagel to continue his career in his exile country of England despite poor health.

If Pagel expected full rehabilitation from post-war Germany, these hopes were only fulfilled in rudimentary fashion: the University of Heidelberg did not offer him adequate employment and the "reparation procedure" ("Wiedergutmachungsverfahren") requested by Pagel dragged on for several years, resulting in only small pension payments. Instead, the university made him a late non-material offer: the award of an honorary doctorate, which he accepted in 1965. In light of this, it is not surprising that Pagel did not remigrate, but remained in England until the end of his life.

Pagel does not play a noticeable role in the culture of remembrance of the city of Heidelberg today. Although more than 180 "stumbling blocks" have been laid in Heidelberg – including several for doctors and university teachers – not one of them reminds us of the famous pathologist and medical historian Walter Pagel.

Declarations of interest

None.

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