



The Jewish Pathologist Carl Julius Rothberger (1871–1945) and the gradual deprivation of his rights in the Third Reich^{*}



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ABSTRACT

The Jewish pathologist Carl Julius Rothberger (1871–1945) is undoubtedly one of the most important representatives of his field. His studies on atrial fibrillation, the bundle branch block and arrhythmia perpetua in particular secured him a place in medical history. Rothberger also gave the name to an agar used to prove the neutral red reduction of salmonella (Rothberger-Scheffler agar).

While Rothberger's name is well known in pathology, his biography and his experiences of stigmatization as a Jewish university lecturer have received little attention. The latter are therefore the focus of this paper. Three central research questions need to be answered: What effect did Rothberger's Jewish origins have on his personal life and on his career at the University of Vienna in the first third of the 20th century? What personal changes resulted from the "Anschluss" ("annexation") of Austria to the German Reich (1938) and the assumption of power by the National Socialists? And finally, what role does Rothberger play in the collective memory of the city of Vienna today – does a kind of public memory exist?

The current work is based on extensive primary sources from the Archives of the University of Vienna, the manuscript collection of the Archives of the Medical Faculty there and the Austrian State Archives. Some of these primary sources have been evaluated for the first time. They have been supplemented by contemporary newspaper articles and the relevant secondary literature.

Although Rothberger grew up in a largely assimilated upper middle-class family in which religious practice hardly played a role, he was exposed to considerable anti-Semitic and repressive actions, especially from the 1920s onwards. However, these repressions only become apparent at second glance. Stages of increasing rights deprivation included (1) Rothberger's frustratingly unsuccessful applications for the Chair of General and Experimental Pathology, which had been vacant since 1924, (2) his forced early retirement (1936/37), (3) an exclusion order against him along with temporary imprisonment after the "annexation" (1938), and (4) the final closure of the institute which he had helped develop and shape over decades (1942).

An active public debate on the victims of National Socialism has been taking place in Vienna and at its university since the turn of the millennium. In this context, Carl Julius Rothberger was officially commemorated at a ceremony in 2010 – a late attempt to rescue him and his work from collective oblivion.

1. Introduction

The current article looks at the life and career of Jewish experimental pathologist Carl Julius Rothberger (1871–1945) [1]. His name has a firm place not only in the history of pathology, but also in the general history of medicine. Seen retrospectively, Rothberger's research on pathological electrocardiograms and the pathophysiology of the circulatory system can be regarded as both groundbreaking and innovative. Above all his works on atrial fibrillation, arrhythmia perpetua

and the bundle branch block are still viewed as reference points in the field [2–4]. Rothberger furthermore gave his name to an agar he developed for proving the neutral red reduction of salmonella. The process was later modified by Scheffler (Rothberger-Scheffler agar) [5,6].

Carl Julius Rothberger (Fig. 1; [7]) appeared to face a rosy future on his birth in Vienna on October 14, 1871. His father Jacob Rothberger (1825–1899) had already achieved a considerable level of prosperity at that time. He had emigrated from the Hungarian city of Albertirsa to Vienna in the 1840s following an interim period as a journeyman in

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Fig. 1. Carl Julius Rothberger, portrait (1927, Photo Fayer-Wien 1927), Picture archive Austria, Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ÖNB, No. Pb 580.555-F 465) [7].

Paris [8]. Rothberger's mother Rosalie (1829–1914), whom Jacob Rothberger had married in 1855, was similarly from Hungary and like her husband of Jewish origin [9]. A large number of further Jews immigrated to Vienna in the following decades. The Austrian “*Staatsgrundgesetz*” (“Basic State Law”) of 1867 granted every inhabitant of Austria all civil and political rights, irrespective of creed. This legal development attracted Jews from Eastern Europe in particular [10]. The Jewish proportion of the Viennese population thus increased to such an extent that the Jewish community there became the largest German-speaking one and the third biggest in Europe in the years up to 1900 [11].

Jacob Rothberger opened a “clothes shop” in Vienna, where he produced and sold both made-to-measure and ready-to-wear clothing [12]. This was the beginning of a brilliant entrepreneurial career. Jacob Rothberger became a *k.u.k. Hoflieferant* (Purveyor to the Imperial and Royal Court) in 1867, a development which increased his social standing significantly and also proved effective in terms of advertising [13]. He now also attracted international attention, consequently becoming established as a purveyor to the English and French courts and also receiving awards for his work at the world exhibitions of 1862, 1867 and 1869 [13,14]. Through a mixture of innovation and business acumen, Jacob Rothberger had gone from being a poor Hungarian emigrant to a valued member of the Viennese upper middle class. The rise of the family was also evident in their private residential surroundings. They were soon in a position to move into the upmarket residence of Philipphof [15], which had been built in 1884/1885 in an exclusive location in the *I. Wiener Gemeindebezirk* (I. Viennese municipal district) in the direct vicinity of the *Palais Erzherzog Albrecht*

(Palace of Archduke Albrecht).

Like his brothers, Carl Julius Rothberger was given the opportunity to attend a *Gymnasium* (secondary school). Following his *Matura* (school leaving examination) he decided to take up studies in medicine at the University of Vienna, which he pursued from 1891 to 1897 [16]. His brothers Heinrich, Moritz and Alfred joined the family company as tailors or businessmen while Carl Julius embarked on a scientific career [17]. Education and economic independence were important elements of Jewish self-perception and the Rothberger family was no exception here [18]. The proportion of Jewish students at the University of Vienna in the period between 1897/1898 and the First World War was an astonishing 25% of the total number of students [19]. The proportion of Jewish students in Rothberger's subject of medicine was even higher, running to more than 45% in the 1890s [20].

Rothberger's completion of his medical studies with the doctoral degree of Dr. med. in July 1897 was followed by a phase of professional orientation, at times as a visiting physician, at times performing active work [21]. He started his professional career in the *Bakteriologisches Laboratorium* (Bacteriological Laboratory) of the *k.k. Militär-Sanitäts-Comité*, (Military Medical Committee of the Imperial and Royal Court), changing six months later to the *Bakteriologisches Laboratorium* at the *Pathologisch-Bakteriologisches Institut* (Institute of Pathology and Bacteriology) at *Krankenanstalt Rudolfstiftung* (Hospital of the Rudolf Foundation) [16]. Here he worked under Richard Paltauf, who was head of the department of pathology and whose scientific work focused predominantly on pathological histology. Paltauf's introduction of bacteriology and serology and his further development of these fields gave rise to the “blossoming of Viennese experimental medicine” [22] at that time. After a period as a visiting physician at the *Erste Medizinische Universitätsklinik* (First Medical University of Vienna), Rothberger changed to the *Institut für Allgemeine und Experimentelle Pathologie* (Institute for General and Experimental Pathology) at the University of Vienna in autumn of 1899, thereafter devoting himself to (experimental) pathological research [16].

Rothberger met Paltauf again at the aforementioned institute not long afterwards, as the latter had been appointed to the corresponding chair there and had consequently taken over direction of the institute [23]. Rothberger began his career at the institute as a demonstrator before being deployed from 1901 as an unpaid assistant in the areas of teaching and research [24]. In 1903, Paltauf managed to arrange a research position for Rothberger with Ivan Petrovich Pavlov in St. Petersburg [25–27]. Pavlov, a world-famous physiologist and subsequent Nobel Prize winner, was director of the Institute for Experimental Medicine there, which was supplied with particularly modern equipment [28]. Rothberger's period at the institute provided him with numerous ideas for his specialist area and in relation to architectural layout – the latter would find their way into the upcoming renewal and expansion of the institute in Vienna after his return [29,30]. In December 1904, Rothberger submitted an application – with Richard Paltauf's approval – to undertake his habilitation in the subject of “General and Experimental Pathology” and was given the position of *Privatdozent* (Docent) from 1905 [31].

A further step in his academic career was his appointment as an associate professor in April 1912 [16]. This success came as no surprise as Rothberger had published several widely acclaimed specialist publications in the preceding years [32–35].

Up to his habilitation he had carried out research primarily on bacteriological and pharmacological questions and in the area of animal experimentation [36]. After studying post-mortal changes in the heart as part of his habilitation thesis, his scientific activities focused on exploration of the cardiovascular system [37]. Erna Lesky even describes Rothberger's research as “*schulebildend*” [38], i.e. “exemplary”. Rothberger undertook pioneering work in research on cardiovascular pathology, thereby contributing to Vienna's development as a “world center of cardiology” [39], particularly in the 1920s. He succeeded in identifying and describing numerous instances of cardiac arrhythmia

with the aid of an electrocardiograph, frequently in co-operation with further scientists such as Heinrich Winterberg or Hans Eppinger. These cases included, for example, parasystole, the description of the right bundle branch block and atrial fibrillation [40]. He was furthermore the first person to discover an ECG curve attributed to myocardial infarction [29,41–43].

Rothberger's co-operation with hospital colleagues who came to him with questions arising from everyday hospital life or who provided him with opportunities to compare the results of his experiments with the symptoms of patients undergoing treatment proved to be particularly fruitful for his work [44]. Scientists from all over the world, among them many from the USA, became aware of his research work and came to Vienna to undertake research with him and to benefit from his expertise [45]. His writings and research reports were known for their lucid and easily understood style, a quality which increased their level of reception [45].

Rothberger's scientific career thus seemed to be moving steadily towards a university chair and he was, in addition, able to publish some more important research work before war broke out [45–47]. During the First World War he was deployed in a military hospital erected on the university campus and later awarded the Red Cross Medal of Honor Class 2 for his engagement [48]. After the war he devoted himself mostly to his duties at the institute again. Everything seemed to be running smoothly and towards one goal – up to the point when Rothberger's superior and mentor Richard Paltauf died (1924) and a new appointment had to be made to the university chair [49].

At this point at the latest Rothberger's career experienced its first significant break. A phase now began during which he experienced discrimination and detrimental treatment. Research on Rothberger to date has paid little attention to this or has even misinterpreted it. Thus, for example, the *“Handbuch österreichischer Autorinnen und Autoren”* (“Handbook of Austrian Authoresses and Authors”) euphemistically describes Rothberger's precarious employment circumstances in the 1930s as *“bis 1941 als Hon.Prof. mit d. Ltg. D. Inst. Betraut”* (“entrusted with the directorship of the institute as an honorary professor until 1941”). But the term *Honorarprofessor* actually implies the discontinuation of remuneration. The aforementioned description reveals nothing of the tragedy of this measure, and the entry furthermore fails to acknowledge that Rothberger had already been barred from the institute as far back as 1938 [50,51]. Rothberger's scientific achievements, by contrast, are appropriately classified and given recognition in the relevant reference works and chronicles [6,38,42,50–54].

A possible explanation for this obvious disparity in the historical perception of Rothberger lies in the fact that the multi-layered implications of his Jewish origins are not particularly conspicuous in a superficial reading of a brief biography. They only come to light through the study of archival sources. However, the evaluation of primary sources is a laborious methodological approach which is beyond the scope of biographical compilations and other collective biographies. An article by medical historian Helmut Wyklicky is something of an exception here: As early as four and a half decades ago, he looked more closely at Rothberger's case, consulting individual inventories at the University of Vienna for this purpose [29]. Monika Löscher, for her part, adopted the sources and interpretations cited by Wyklicky in her essay of 2010 [A complete list of references in 29, 55].

In light of this state of research, the current article views itself as a systematic archival examination and appraisal of Carl Julius Rothberger's concrete life circumstances, social environment and breaks in career, in particular from the 1920s onwards. The objective here is to answer the following research questions: How did Rothberger's Jewish origins affect his career and life in the metropolis of Vienna in the first third of the 20th century? What role did anti-Semitic and German-national tendencies and initiatives at the University of Vienna play and at what point did these become palpable? What were the concrete consequences for Rothberger of the Austrofascism of the 1930s and of the assumption of power by the

National Socialists after the “annexation” of Austria to the German Reich (1938)? And finally: How was Rothberger's fate treated in later Vienna – were there or are there efforts to “make amends” or to establish a culture of remembrance.

2. Material and methods

Extensive primary sources from Vienna, some of which have been evaluated for the first time, thus served as the main foundation for this study. Inventories of files in the archive of the University of Vienna were the first source of relevance here. Rothberger's senate file and personnel file in particular provided information on the course of his career. The university archive furthermore contains various deanship records from the Medical Faculty with correspondence relating to key positions of Rothberger's employment as well as business records and the minutes of meetings of the Medical Faculty.

Rothberger's professorial file for the years 1905–1936 in the Archive of the Republic (AdR) within the Austrian State Archives (ÖStA) was identified and examined as was a declaration of assets of 1938 in the General Administrative Archive (AVA).

Archival material from the archival collection of the Medical University of Vienna was also evaluated. This included documents concerning the new appointment to the university chair of the Institute for General and Experimental Pathology at the end of the 1920s and a list and evaluation of his scientific works by Rothberger himself.

Contemporary newspaper articles on Carl Julius Rothberger or his family formed a further significant source.

The aforementioned archival sources were supplemented by and compared with the as yet sparse secondary literature on Rothberger as well with relevant writings on anti-Semitism in Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century, on “Austrofascism”, and on the history of pathology.

3. Results

3.1. Anti-Semitism and German-national currents in Vienna in the first third of the 20th century

In order to contextualize Rothberger's personal experiences reliably in the period after his habilitation (1904/05), it is necessary to first outline the development of anti-Semitic and German-national tendencies in Vienna and at the University of Vienna in particular at that time.

Although the introduction of the Basic State Law of 1867 meant that Austria, as mentioned above, had committed itself to a liberal interpretation of law marked by religious tolerance, German-national currents and (from the 1880s onwards) German-national fraternities grew in importance in Vienna in particular [56–58; for Schoenerer's biography and his political opinion see 59,60]. Nationalist newspapers glorified the “German race” and stoked sentiment against Jews. The newspaper “Neue Wiener Tagesblatt,” where numerous Jews were employed, was stormed in March 1888, for example [61]. Even if the German-nationalists did not succeed in turning their movement into a mass party at this stage, they whipped up hatred and presented a hostile image of Jews as enemies [58]. In fact, the city of Vienna became a “stronghold of anti-Semitism” at the end of the 19th century at the latest [62].

A further increase in anti-Semitic attitudes then occurred after the end of the First World War: Numerous Jewish refugees from the eastern territories of the Habsburg Monarchy now came to Vienna [63]. The “Eastern Jews”, as they were known because of their outward appearance – they dressed in kaftans, had traditional head coverings and long beards and sidelocks – were clearly perceived as foreigners, as a different kind of people [63,64]. In the wake of the defeat in the war, the associated disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy and a severe shortage of food and accommodation, Jews thus became an object of projection for frustrations [63,64]. The Austrian Jews – by this time

90% of them lived in the city of Vienna – correspondingly found themselves confronted with clearly increasing anti-Semitism in the First Republic (1918–1933) and in the ensuing Austrofascism (1933–1938) [65]. The *Antisemitenbund* (Anti-Semite League), founded in 1919, attracted particular attention. It only barely concealed its calls for pogroms and urged the population not to shop in Jewish stores [66]. The League, moreover, drew up lists of Jews and their addresses [66]. For the first time since emancipation, significant criminal anti-Semitism occurred, with Jews being attacked and injured in the open street [67].

Violent acts against Jews also increased in Austria following the takeover of power by the NSDAP in Germany (1933). Although the NSDAP was officially banned at that time, Austria was infiltrated by numerous NSDAP supporters and illegal party followers [67]. Following the first “annexation attempt” by the National Socialists in July 1934 at the latest, the Austrofascist government confined itself to holding its ground against the NSDAP and to preserving Austria’s sovereignty. Anti-Semitism in society and in the press, on the other hand, was tolerated as long as it were not directed against the government [68].

Meanwhile, the University of Vienna had likewise become a stronghold of anti-Jewish sentiment. After the defeat in the war, the political climate at the university also became radicalized. Attacks on Jewish students, the storming of lecture halls or other university facilities and the verbal abuse of Jewish lecturers soon became everyday occurrences. As early as 1922, the German-national students’ association and professors received support from the university rector for their demand for restrictions on the admission of students of Jewish origin. The “*Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*” (“National Socialist German Students’ League”) [69] was then founded in 1926. Anti-Semitism was now displayed and practiced in increasingly overt manner [70]. The repeated attacks in the 1920s led to more and more Jewish students leaving the university, so that their proportion fell to 19% between 1920 and 1933 [71]. There was, moreover, an intensified wave of emigration on the part of Jewish university lecturers [72].

The popularity of the National Socialists among the students increased with the strengthening of the NSDAP in Germany and Austria. Above all supporters of the German-national movement turned to the NSDAP. The *Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* already managed to secure a majority of the votes in the 1931 elections to the *Studentenkammer* (“Students’ Chamber”) [73]. Terror against Jewish university members became more and more an established practice [74]. Things became so extreme at the Viennese Institute of Anatomy in May 1933 that Jewish students jumped straight out of windows for fear of the aggressors. Twenty-one students subsequently had to receive emergency medical treatment after sustaining broken bones or serious head injuries [75].

3.2. Life and Career of Carl Julius Rothberger before the “Annexation” of Austria

Just as the political climate at the University of Vienna deteriorated, so did the working conditions and future prospects of Carl Julius Rothberger. Yet he was by all appearances largely assimilated and there is no evidence that he was practicing his Jewish faith. He had, rather, married a Catholic, Leopoldine Wohlfahrt, in 1923 and had started a family with her [76,77]. Their daughter Bertha had been born in 1928 and, like her mother, had been baptized a Catholic [78]. The family continued to live together in an apartment in the Philliphof residence, where Rothberger had already spent the later part of his childhood [76]. For the outside world, however, Rothberger was still first and foremost a Jew – and was therefore a target for both National Socialist and anti-Jewish students. Support for him among the professorship was also crumbling. This became particularly clear following the early death of his long-standing superior Richard Paltauf (1924), which necessarily raised the question of a new appointment to the university chair. Rothberger was in his early 50s at that time. Not only was he at a prime age for a professorial appointment, he also had an excellent

international reputation. He was, moreover, far better suited than anyone else to continue Paltauf’s research on an equivalent level and to ensure scientific continuity. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent, that Rothberger did not have the necessary support within the faculty for an appointment. This was not necessarily justified with arguments against an in-house call – there were, in fact, only a small number of scientifically proven experimental pathologists and Vienna was a leading location thanks to Paltauf and Rothberger, so that in-house appointments were not uncommon. Interestingly enough, Rothberger’s Jewish background and the “racial” aspects associated with it were not at the forefront of the internal discussion at that time. An equally discriminatory albeit apolitical argument was invoked instead: Officially, Rothberger was not considered as a suitable successor to Paltauf because he was hard of hearing [79]. It is true that Rothberger had had otosclerosis in his early years and had had severely impaired hearing since that time [40]. But this disability had already existed twelve years previously and Rothberger had nevertheless been appointed to the position of associate professor without there being any resistance in this regard. When Rothberger’s daughter was interviewed as an historical witness, she described his limitation as follows: “While he was hard of hearing and had a hearing aid, he was able to lip read, and communication posed no problem. He never gave the impression of having an illness but said that when one sense fails, the others step in and become more highly developed” [80].

It was not only the reference to his hearing impairment which must have caused injury to Rothberger. What must have been similarly debilitating for him was the fact that that central professional prerequisites and criteria were being disregarded in the search for a “more suitable” candidate for the university chair. Thus Julius von Wagner-Jauregg, who had leanings towards racial hygiene and was an influential eugenic psychiatrist and later Nobel Prize winner [81], was a strong advocate for the appointment of Robert Doerr [49]. While Doerr had originally worked in experimental pathology, he had already become a full professor for hygiene and microbiology following a change in his professional focus, so that he quite obviously did not possess the specialist prerequisites required to succeed Paltauf [82]. The minister responsible also apparently recognized this when Doerr’s name was conveyed to him as a candidate for succession to the chair. In any case, he pointed out in a letter to the professorial council that “the proposed [candidates]” should “also be sufficiently qualified for the experimental side of the subject” [49]. Rothberger, by contrast, had published more than sixty papers up to 1923 which reflected very precisely the direction in experimental pathology for which the institute had become internationally known. They are listed in his personnel file (Fig. 2; [83]). As the appointment committee continued to ignore Rothberger without managing to find another suitable candidate, the chair remained unoccupied and was therefore to be administered in the interim by Rothberger on a provisional basis [49]. The “*Besetzungsvorschlag für die Lehrkanzel für Allgemeine und Experimentelle Pathologie vom 26. Mai 1929*” (“Appointment Proposal for the Chair of General and Experimental Pathology of 26 May 1929”) describes the difficulties concerning the negotiations for the appointment, which had at that been ongoing for five years. This document culminates in the observation that the medical progress of the previous years and the broad orientation of the institute had made it difficult to find a “suitable candidate” who combined all these requirements within one individual person [79].

The reference to the absence of a “suitable candidate” must have seemed like a mockery to Rothberger. At this point at the latest, even his slightest hopes for a turn for the better must have been dashed. The institute he had administered provisionally as well as was possible had already suffered the loss of consideration and financial support from the powers responsible. The funds available for research work and maintenance of the institute were soon barely sufficient to maintain its operation. The reduction in the funding of the Institute of Pathology was mainly due to the fact that the institution was only administered on a

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- 26) Z. Frage d. Fkg d. beiden Kammern etz. (m. Eppinger). Ebenda 24.
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Fig. 2. Rothbergers scientific work until 1923 (UAW PA 461: Personal file Prof. Dr. Julius Rothberger, scientific work, excerpt) [83].

provisional basis. In this way, Rothberger, who made every effort to keep the institute running, was systematically slowed down and his efforts to achieve high-quality research significantly impeded. In the following years, Rothberger had to find it all the more difficult to recommend himself as the official director of the institute. In order to be able to continue their work, staff had to pay fees for the use of the laboratory, for example, as well as bearing the costs themselves for food for animals they used in experiments [84]. The lack of funds made research work immensely difficult, especially as the necessary equipment could not be financed and the purchase of specialist literature had to be restricted [84]. It is all the more astounding that Rothberger was able to publish important works even in this phase [85–90].

When General and Experimental Pathology was then also abolished as an examination subject in 1935, the decimated institute was

threatened with final closure by the Ministry of Education [91]. Rothberger now protested in an article in the "Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift", in which he emphasized the importance of experimental research and the thorough and comprehensive training necessary for this [92]. The Federal Ministry for Education reacted with further repression, however. It informed the deanship that Rothberger would be permanently retired from October 1936 and that the full professorship for General and Experimental Pathology would be eliminated once and for all from the university's staffing plan [93]. Hence Rothberger was to be relieved of his duties in the near future – and thus several years before he would reach general retirement age, which was at that time seventy years [94]. He protested again but only succeeding in securing a minimal postponement of the date to the end of January 1937 [95]. It was finally "agreed" with Rothberger that he would continue with the

provisional directorship of the institute and give lectures in his specialist field until he reached the regular retirement age of seventy, but as an “honorary professor” – i.e. without the previous remuneration which secured his livelihood and without the rights of an associate professor [96].

Rothberger’s experiences of repression during this period were far from unique: Prescribed austerity measures led to a general dismantling of the teaching staff in Vienna in the 1930s, which already affected Jews in particular during this period – many years before the “annexation” to the German Reich [97].

3.3. The effect of the National Socialist Assumption of Power on Rothberger’s life (1938-1945)

The fact that even Rothberger’s unpaid “honorary professorship” would not last already became evident in the following year. Carl Julius Rothberger’s scientific work at the University of Vienna finally ended with the “annexation” of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938. He had to cease his work overnight and was no longer allowed to enter the institute. Apart from Rothberger, all assistants and visiting specialists were expelled from the institute as they were likewise regarded as Jews according to the criteria of the National Socialists [98]. Rothberger’s access to experimental research, to which he had devoted decades of his life, was now permanently closed to him. He was, moreover, forced to witness how the once brilliant institute, for the retention of which he had fought so vehemently, was eroded almost completely in terms of personnel and finances.

During this phase, 322 (42%) of a total of 763 professors, Docents and lecturers at the University of Vienna were removed from their positions by the National Socialist regime. Of these dismissals, 73% were on “racial” grounds and 27% on “political” grounds, as Huber notes [99]. However, the causes of disenfranchisement (racial or political) cannot always be precisely separated. In some cases, both criteria were met; but there are also cases of “Aryans” who maintained their marriage to a Jew despite increasing political pressure: they thus were neither of Jewish origin nor politically conspicuous, but nevertheless often suffered disadvantages.

However, Rothberger’s case was clear: He was oppressed due to his Jewish origin, was taken into “Schutzhaft” (“protective custody”) on 23 March 1938 and detained for several weeks [100]. David Scherf, a former colleague of Rothberger’s who was likewise expelled from the university in May 1938 and later emigrated to the USA, stated that the reason for Rothberger’s arrest was the period he had spent in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century [40]. According to Scherf, all those who had had relations with Russia were recorded on lists and arrested [40].

Rothberger returned to his family after his detainment. Circumstances here had also deteriorated: The family’s department store had been given over to “Aryanization” [101,102]. The family was not only forced to sell the store but was also obliged to forego most of the purchase price – which had already been set at a low level – and to pay high compulsory levies to the financial authorities [103]. As the remaining proceeds were moreover transferred into a blocked account, from which prescribed levies such as the “Reichsfluchtsteuer” (“Reich Flight Tax”) and the “Judenvermögensabgabe” (“Jewish Assets Duties”) were deducted, it was de facto a case of “expropriation without compensation” [104].

Other properties belonging to family members were also expropriated in this way. Several members of the Rothberger family then decided to flee. First some of Carl Julius Rothberger’s nephews left Austria and emigrated to Canada, then Rothberger’s sister-in-law Hilda, his brother Heinrich and wife Ella – members of the older generation – left their homeland [105,106]. Rothberger’s separation from his family members must have been difficult for him, as the family was a close-knit one.

Rothberger too had obviously received invitations from scientists

abroad [40]. However, he decided to sit tight. It is not possible to ascertain from the sources whether he did not venture a new start in a foreign country due to his age or whether he felt reasonably safe in Vienna due to his “mixed marriage” to an “Aryan” wife. Rothberger’s daughter Bertha Gutmann accounted for her father’s remaining in Vienna with his steadfast optimism and will to live, which he at least attempted to demonstrate to her, his school-going daughter: “He said that he thought he could survive the regime and the war” [81].

A “mixed marriage” did, in fact, provide a certain amount of protection from annihilation, but only as long as the “Aryan” partner was alive and adhered to the marriage. Leopoldine Rothberger actually attempted to improve her Jewish husband’s situation through personal action: Thus she turned to the university rector in a letter of June 1939 in order to try and obtain some relief for him – with explicit reference to her own “Aryan” ancestry and her husband’s international reputation. Rothberger’s letter was a desperate attempt to portray the family members’ self-perception and way of life as thoroughly “Aryan”. She thus wrote: “I myself am pure Aryan; our 11-year-old daughter is a German child according to law. According to the latest provisions, she can join the Hitler youth and is also permitted to perform *Arbeitsdienst* (Labor Service). Our whole way of life and household management is purely Aryan in character. My 76-year-old aunt, who was once a substitute mother to me, is supported by my husband. She is, of course, also a full Aryan, so that my husband is the only non-Aryan in our household” (Fig. 3; [107]).

Leopoldine Rothberger’s plea remained unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the couple was allowed to continue living in the Philippshof [108] whereas a large number of Jews who lived in “privileged mixed marriages” were forced out of their apartments [109].

Rothberger’s final wish to survive the regime and war was not fulfilled. It was the only concession from the National Socialists of all things – permission to remain in the Philippshof – which would prove to be fatal. After steady intensification of the Allied air raids on the city of Vienna, the city was hit on 12 March 1945 by the most severe air raid of the entire war. A bomb which fell on the striking and prestigious Philippshof (Fig. 4; [110]) claimed the highest number of casualties. The building burnt to the ground, burying an estimated almost 300 people under it [111]. Carl Julius Rothberger and his wife Leopoldine were among the victims [112]. Their daughter Bertha was the only one to survive, having found shelter in a school building [112].

3.4. Late attempts at redress: Rothberger’s role today in the collective memory of the city of Vienna

After the end of the Second World War, there was initially no closer examination in Vienna of the expulsion of Jewish university members and of the involvement of the University of Vienna in the Nazi regime – a situation that is also true of Austria and Germany as a whole. While a high proportion of the professors who were incriminated were able to continue their university careers after the completion of the denazification procedures [113], very few of the Jewish survivors who had emigrated returned to their homeland or to their former universities – so that they were often forgotten. It was not until the turn of the millennium that a clear turnaround in this respect became apparent: Since then, the University of Vienna has been commemorating the victims of National Socialism in numerous projects and on commemorative plaques as well as by way of monuments and various internet initiatives, thereby sending a clear signal in support of the examination and appraisal of the Nazi past.

In this context, the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna particularly highlighted and honored individual Nazi victims – this applies, for example, to the hepatopathologist Hans Popper: In his honor, the Vienna Medical Faculty established the “Hans Popper Lecture” in 2011, which has been held annually since then [113]. The oral pathologist Bernhard Gottlieb also received an outstanding honor: in memory of his work, the Bernhard Gottlieb Medal was created in

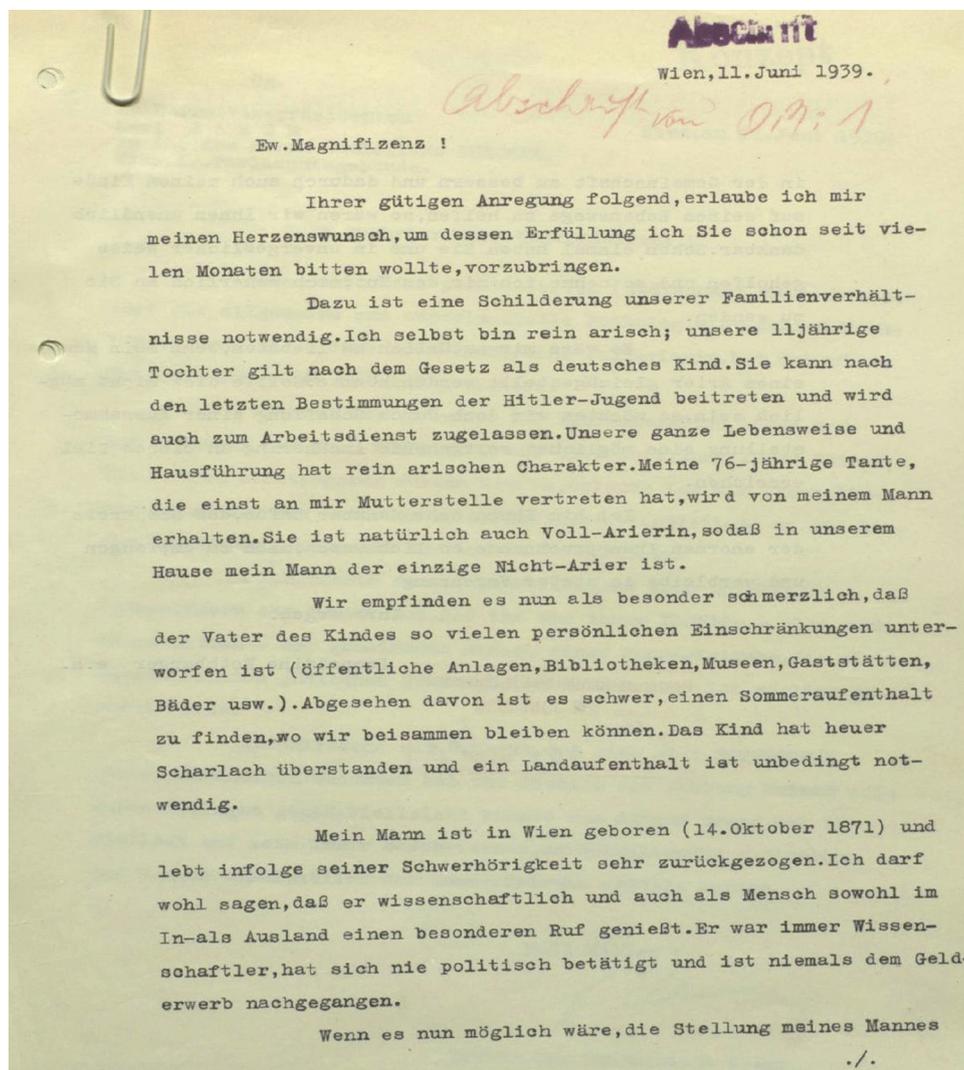


Fig. 3. Copy of a letter from Leopoldine Rothberger to the Chancellor of the University of Vienna dated 11 June 1939: UAW, Dekanatsakten der Medizinischen Fakultät, No. 1100 ex 1938/39: Request for special position for Prof. Dr. Julius Rothberger [107]. "Dear Magnifizienz!

Following your kind suggestion, I would like to express my heart's desire, which I have been asking you to fulfill for many months.

For this purpose a description of our family relationships is necessary. I myself am purely Aryan; our eleven-year-old daughter is a German child by law. She is allowed to join the Hitler Youth according to the last regulations and is also admitted to the "Arbeitsdienst". Our entire way of life and house management has a purely Aryan character.

My 76-year-old aunt, who used to play the role of a mother for me, is financially supported by my husband. Of course, she is also a full Aryan, so my husband is the only non-Aryan in our house.

We now find it particularly painful that the father of the child is subject to so many personal restrictions (public facilities, libraries, museums, restaurants, baths, etc.). Apart from that, it is difficult to find a summer residence where we can stay together.

The child has recently survived scarlet fever and a stay in the country is essential.

My husband was born in Vienna (14 October 1871) and lives quite secluded due to his hearing loss. I may say that he enjoys a special scientific and human reputation both at home and abroad. He has always been a scientist, has never been politically active and has never pursued money making [...]."

2005 [114]. And Fritz Schajowicz has been commemorated by the "Fritz Schajowicz Travel Grant" of the "Österreichische Gesellschaft für Pathologie" ("Austrian Society for Pathology"), implemented in 2013. Other universities, university cities and professional associations are now following suit. The former Hamburg pathologists Paul Kimmelstiel and Friedrich Wohlwill have been commemorated since 2014 by "stumbling blocks" in front of Hamburg University Medical Centre. The same holds true, for example, for the disenfranchised German-Jewish pathologists Ludwig Pick ("stumbling block" in Berlin, 2011) and Philipp Schwartz (grave of honor in Zurich; memorial on the campus of the University of Frankfurt; scholarship in Schwartz's name from the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation; plaque on the building in Frankfurt where he lived, 2014–2017) [115].

In a direct comparison, the memory of Rothberger has so far been somewhat more modest. His name was mentioned in several collective commemorative initiatives from Vienna:

- (1) The "Gedenkbuch für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus an der Universität Wien 1938" ("Memorial Book for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna in 1938"), which is dedicated to expelled students and lecturers of the university, has attracted particular attention here [116].
- (2) In addition to a handwritten book of remembrance, the continually updated online database currently contains the names of more than 2200 individuals affected, including that of Rothberger [117].
- (3) Furthermore, the University of Vienna and the Medical University

of Vienna (the latter was founded in 2004 as the successor institution to the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna) support projects aimed at bringing Nazi victims and their biographies back into collective memory. Archival sources necessarily play an essential role in these biographical reconstructions. A systematic review of the collections and book inventories of the Medical Faculty to search for unlawfully appropriated Nazi loot has, moreover, been undertaken since 2007. Rothberger's case too has come into play here. It was possible to identify Nazi loot from Rothberger's possessions in the university stocks by means of handwritten names on books and personal bookplates as well as a piece of information from Rothberger in his statement of assets for 1938. This led to the presentation of thirty-nine books from Carl Julius Rothberger's possessions to his daughter Bertha Gutmann, who had emigrated to America after the Second World War, in a ceremony in September 2010 attended by the then rector of the Medical University and the Secretary General of the *Nationalfonds Österreich* (National Fund of the Republic of Austria) [118].

4. Discussion

On the one hand, Rothberger's biography is unusual for NS victims – yet on the other, it is a prototypical case of a Jewish university lecturer deprived of his rights.

Rothberger's case is unusual to the extent that the deprivation of his rights is barely palpable in a superficial examination of his biography.



Abb. 616. Philippof, I., Augustinerstraße 8.

Fig. 4. Philippof, photograph from the beginning of the 20th century (unknown photographer) [110].

His work at the university finishes when he was already advanced in years, so that the peculiarities of the end of his career are hardly noticeable. Rothberger was not removed from his position at an early point in his career, unlike his Viennese colleagues Hans Popper [113] and Rudolf Kronfeld [119] or the likewise recently studied German pathologists Walter Pagel [120], Paul Kimmelstiel [121], Philipp Schwartz [115] and Walther Berblinger [122], who experienced racial persecution,

Furthermore and unlike the aforementioned pathologists, he had decided against emigration – there is thus no noticeable finding in this respect either. While the biographies of the aforementioned young academics were, so to speak, split into two parts due to their forced emigration, and they were forced to continue their careers in foreign countries, Rothberger's biography appears comparatively homogeneous and uniform at first glance. This very "inconspicuousness" is perhaps the explanation as to why Rothberger has never aroused the same amount of interest as a Nazi victim in past decades as Hans Popper or Philipp Schwartz have – although he is of comparable importance in terms of scientific history. In any case, Rothberger's biography remained largely under the "radar" of historical biographers.

Yet on closer inspection, Rothberger reveals a multitude of highly characteristic features of Jewish university lecturers deprived of their

rights [123]: Like many of his colleagues, he was first and foremost regarded as a Jew despite his far-reaching efforts at assimilation, his hardly having practiced his faith when at university and his entering into a "mixed marriage". Like many of his colleagues, he experienced steadily growing discrimination and a deprivation of his rights with the advent of National Socialism; like many Nazi victims he was forced into retirement, taken into "Schutzhaft" and robbed of significant assets, and like so many victims he found a violent death before the end of the war – even if this did not occur directly through the Nazi system, but as a result of the terror of a war instigated by the National Socialists

The way in which Rothberger's university dealt with its Nazi past in the immediate post-war period is also almost paradigmatic of Austrian and German universities during that period: The above ascertainment that the professors in Vienna who were incriminated in the Nazi regime were often able to continue their university careers after "successful" denazification also holds true for other locations. In fact, a recently published cross-sectional study on leading representatives of the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Pathologie" ("German Society for Pathology") showed that more than two thirds of the German DGP chairmen appointed up to 1986 and a considerable number of the pathologists presented with awards by the DGP during this period had belonged to the Nazi Party in the Third Reich [124,125]. This quantitative result

can be illustrated by way of several individual studies published on holders of chairs in pathology: Former party members were appointed to university chairs in Hamburg in the person of Carl Krauspe (1948) [126], in Walter Müller in Essen (1947) [127] and in Herwig Hamperl in Marburg (1949) [128], to give just a few examples. Others continued their post-war careers in forensic medicine and achieved full professorships there, such as Hans W. Sachs in Münster (1970) [129].

All the more important are the above-mentioned recent efforts to remember the victims of the Nazi regime. Those initiatives show that society in Austria and Germany is now ready to bring long ignored and in some cases almost forgotten Nazi victims back into public memory – a painstaking process for which archival sources provide indispensable assistance. Rothberger has also benefited from these general efforts. However, in view of Rothberger's outstanding life's work, it would be worth considering to pay greater tribute to him as an *individual* – similar to what was done with Hans Popper, Bernhard Gottlieb or Fritz Schajowicz.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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