

**Mediating Philanthropy in Changing Political Circumstances:
The Rockefeller Foundation's Funding for Brain Research in Germany, 1930-1950**

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The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) was one of the first foreign institutions to react to the National Socialists' rise to power in Germany and the expulsion of Jewish scientists from their offices. With its thorough commitment to science in Germany and with its ideal of a republic of rational, liberal and free scientists, the RF found its funding in Germany in a situation which threatened both the sciences in general and the personal freedom of some scientists in particular. As early as 1933, the RF set up an emergency program, dedicating \$60,000 alone for the Medical Sciences Section, to help German scientists continue their careers outside of Germany. At the same time, the RF aimed to maintain its position as an impartial and non-ideological funding organization -- a position that ruled out a complete withdrawal for political reasons from further activities in Germany. Trapped in this ambivalence, the RF attempted to react with the dual strategy of, on the one hand, critically evaluating existing funding programs and, on the other, continuing to fund new projects on the basis of sound scientific reasoning. Therefore, the RF did not cease its activities in Germany in 1933; indeed, it did not do so until the United States entered into World War II. Instead, the RF began a complex and sometimes ambivalent process of careful, individual, and critical decision-making beyond the established procedure of scientific evaluation and referencing.

The former leading role the German scientists played in brain research and the central role of psychobiology within the spectrum of the RF's activities aggravated, if anything, the general difficulties of the RF after the Nazi takeover in this particular field of activities. During the Weimar Republic, the RF was heavily engaged in restoring Germany's reputation with regard to brain research, giving large amounts of money towards the construction and maintenance of new research centers in psychiatry and the neurosciences, such as the Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie (DFA) at Munich, the Kaiser Wilhelm-Institut für Hirnforschung (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research), and the Neurologisches Labor at Breslau. In addition to these large-scale commitments, the RF had funded, during the 1920s and early 1930s, some projects by individual scientists engaged in eugenics and hereditary diseases who soon became close allies of the new regime and its ambitions for a racial science, such as, for example, Ernst Rudin's program of an epidemiology of inherited nervous and psychiatric disease, or Walther Jaensch's outpatients' clinic for constitutional medicine at the Charité. As far as I can determine from an initial survey of the archival material, the RF withdrew from the more ideologically-tainted projects but continued funding similar projects if they were conducted by scientists of unquestionable reputation. For example in 1933, the RF started funding a project by the psychiatrist Johannes Lange, director of the psychiatric clinic at Breslau, to investigate the heredity of mental diseases; the project continued even after Werner Wagner succeeded Lange, who died in 1938.

The case of the DFA, and the RF's funding for neuropsychiatric research in the Munich region in general, exemplify some aspects of the intricacy of the situation and the various strategies with which the RF reacted. Envisioned by its founder Emil Kraepelin as psychiatric research institute and opened in 1928, after Kraepelin's death the DFA turned into an internationally acclaimed leading center of psychiatry under the direction of Walther Spielmeier and Felix Plaut. Like the National Hospital at Queen Square in London for neurology, it became a model institution, strengthening basic research in psychiatry in combination with clinical practice and the thorough training of young scholars. The Maudsley Hospital in London and the psychiatric environment at Boston were funded and developed along similar principles. As a model institution, the DFA was awarded \$81,000 over seven years beginning in 1933. Soon after the Nazi takeover, Ernst Rudin, a Swiss-born eugenicist and ardent propagator of psychiatry as racial science, was selected as permanent "Führer" of the DFA, discontinuing the rotation of the position of acting director among its department heads. However, the RF continued funding the DFA as planned and added an extra \$3,700 in 1935, as compensation for a deteriorated exchange rate. It justified the decision by pointing towards Spielmeier and Plaut, and their indisputable quality, as the grant specified them as recipients of the money. From the point of view of the RF, the situation became untenable in 1935 with Spielmeier's sudden death and Plaut's dismissal because of his non-Aryan descent. The RF then withdrew immediately from its engagement on basis of the same argument, leaving Rudin with no more than the salaries for the following few months.

This was not the end of the contacts between the RF and the DFA, however. When Willibald Scholz was elected successor to Spielmeier in 1936, he approached the RF via its Paris officer about the possibility of a new grant for his department. On his way back

from a lecture trip to China in 1937, he stopped in the United States to meet with many psychiatric colleagues and also with Robert A. Lambert from the RF. On this occasion, the RF went as far as preparing what was called a "hot item" for its Executive Committee meeting in November 1937: a proposal detailing a new grant to the DFA of \$14,500 over four years, beginning in 1938; however, in the meeting the proposed grant was postponed.

Still, the RF continued to fund other psychiatric projects at Munich during this period. Oswald Bumke at the University Hospital received RF money continually from 1932 to 1939; and Hugo Spatz continued to hold his own grant for histological studies from the end of 1934, being able to take it with him to his new position as director of Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research at Berlin-Buch. Willibald Scholz, despite the war, remained friends with the RF's Alan Gregg, whom he had met in Paris in 1937. In 1946, in a reply to a detailed description of the situation of the DFA, where Scholz was a commissioned director, Gregg described how far, at least under the exceptional circumstances of the Nazi regime, the bonds between RF officers and foreign scientists could sometimes develop. After Spielmeyer and his wife died, Gregg had arranged for their daughter to come to the U.S. to live with his own family; in 1946 she was about to finish her studies at Yale.

Due to its previous commitments, the RF's relationship with the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research at Berlin-Buch was somewhat similar. The RF had contributed money for the construction of a grandiose research institute in a new building, adding more funds for equipment, and had proceeded with these plans against local resistance from within the university. Here, the situation became difficult after the *Machtergreifung* because Oskar Vogt, the director, who had close ties to the foundation, was accused of socialist activities and the Institute was ransacked by party troops. Several members of the RF visited Berlin, including its president Max Mason in 1934, and as a consequence Vogt was able to stay in office, at least until 1936, while his enemy, the ardent Nazi Max H. Fischer, was expelled. Apparently these struggles paralyzed almost any research activities at the Institute, and the RF received no further project proposals. Not until 1937, with the Institute under the new directorship of Spatz, did the RF award further grants, funding the introduction of new experimental methods and supporting Ewald Weisschedel and Richard Jung, two former RF fellows with international training. Again, the international reputation of the project -- it was elaborated on principles developed by Walter R. Hess at Zurich -- paved the ground for continued funding of brain research in Germany. The RF argued along similar lines, for example, when it funded the work of Georges Schaltenbrand and Wilhelm Tonnis in neurology and neurosurgery at Wurzburg, or Kurt Beringer's studies of mescaline-induced hallucinations and insulin-shock therapy at the Neuropsychiatric Clinic at Freiburg. Br. from 1936 to 1940.

The situation is somewhat different in the case of the physiological laboratory of Herman Rein at Gottingen. Rein certainly was the rising star amongst young German physiologists, and his funding by the RF from 1932 to 1937 reflects his rapid career. Engaged in research on oxygen consumption and tissue metabolism, Rein's work soon moved center stage in Nazi Germany's war-oriented physiology. The RF continued its

funding even after learning about Rein's other sources of income, namely the German Ministry of Science and Education. Although he formally maintained his independent position as director of a university department until the end of the war, Rein was at the same time embedded into the networks of military science in Germany, with the German Air Force Ministry funding an extra wing for aviation physiology in his newly built institute in Gottingen. In an internal memorandum to Ivan O'Brien, officer at the Paris bureau, Gregg summarized the foundation's position in 1936 as follows: "We haven't any categorical or sweeping objection to giving research aid, at present time, to investigators in Germany. Long term projects, however, and undertakings subject to political pressure do furnish obstacles to support from the outside of Germany, and it is evident that under the general circumstances somewhat cogent reasons must be given for aid, even if this aid is of short duration and small magnitude."

In conclusion, the RF navigated in difficult waters with its activities in Nazi Germany and was certainly quite aware of many problems in doing so. Judging from the notes and memoranda in the project files, the foundation decided to continue its funding even in the light of political actions against such activities at home, as indicated in the memo by Gregg, and it continued to act along these lines until the United States entered the war in 1941. Immediately after the war, by pointing towards the destruction done by German weapons and forces, the RF argued that the needs of countries such as Belgium or Norway now were more pressing. This resulted in the somewhat paradoxical situation of German science being helped by the RF while the Nazi regime was in place, but not immediately afterward. This, certainly, was not the intention of the RF but the result of the decision to maintain a position of negotiating international and "free" science even and especially in Germany for as long as possible. However, it has to be noted here, that the involvement of German scientists in murder, and in war atrocities, did not become known before the beginning of World War II and the end of funding. Furthermore, the RF soon resumed funding well-selected projects in post-war psychobiology in Germany, such as the creation of the first clinic for psychosomatic medicine at Heidelberg under Alexander Mitscherlich. Finally, one has to keep in mind that the RF helped many of the better-known neurologists and psychiatrists who had been dismissed from their jobs in Germany to start new careers outside their home country.