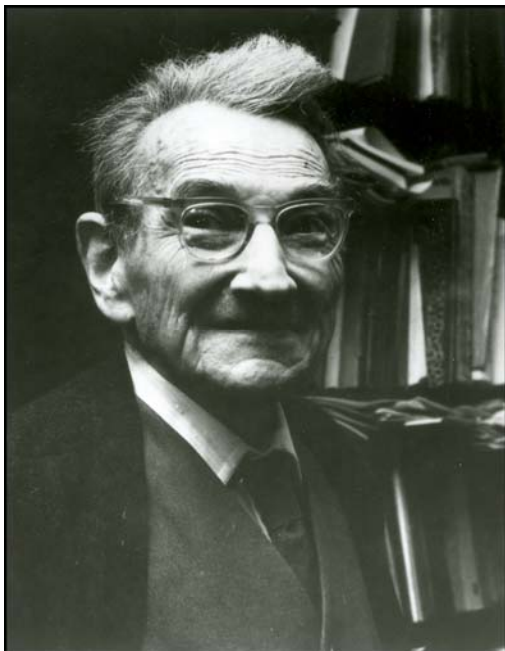


## Walter T. U. Pagel (1898–1983)



Walter Traugott Ulrich Pagel, the son of the renowned Julius Pagel (1851–1912) was born on November 12, 1898, the very year that his father published his two-volume *Einführung in die Geschichte der Medizin* [Introduction to the History of Medicine]. As a youth, Walter was destined for medicine and history and, at an early age, came to understand the nature of research. He was educated in the humanistic gymnasium and at the University of Berlin, where he took his M.D. in 1922. In that year he published his first medical paper and for many years was active in the field of pathology. His text, *Pulmonary Tuberculosis: Pathology, Diagnosis, Management and Prevention* (1939), written with two co-authors, became a classic and was published in a fourth edition in 1964.

He became active in the history of medicine during a serious illness in the 1920s, first pursuing the history of pathology but soon focusing on [Joan Baptista] van Helmont and [William] Harvey. Pagel soon became disenchanted with the traditional treatment of these two pioneers in medical science. He worked briefly with the renowned historian of medicine, Henry Siegerist, at Leipzig, then moved to a Privatdozentship at Heidelberg (1930) where he taught both pathology and history of medicine and pursued research in both areas. It was while in Heidelberg that he published his book on van Helmont (*Jo. Bapt. van Helmont: Einführung in die Philosophische Medizin des Barock* (1930)). His inaugural lecture on [Rudolf] Virchow was published as a monograph (*Virchow und die Grundlagen der Medizin des XIX Jahrhunderts* (1931)). However the bulk of his publications for the next twenty years continued to be based on his medical research.

Pagel recognized the dangers of the political change of 1933 more quickly than most and he, his wife Magda, and their three-year-old son moved to Paris where the Institut Pasteur provided accommodations for Pagel's work. Soon thereafter the family moved to Cambridge, England, and Pagel served as pathologist at the Papworth Village Settlement. He was also invited by the History of Science Lectures Committee at the university to serve as honorary secretary, a post he held from 1933 to 1939 when he moved to London. The Lectures Committee, under the leadership of Joseph Needham, served as the stimulus which ultimately led to the development of the Cambridge program in the history and philosophy of science. Together, Pagel and Needham edited a book of these early lectures [*Background to Modern Science* (1938)].

In London, Pagel became consulting pathologist at the Central Middlesex Hospital (1939–1956) [and a part-time position at Clare Hall Hospital in Barnet (1956–1967)]. His papers on tuberculosis began dwindling and his historical papers and reviews increased rapidly and continued in significant numbers for three decades. He was unusually perceptive in recognizing the significance of religion and philosophy in the thought of his principal subjects – van Helmont, Paracelsus, and Harvey.

[Pagel published over 400 items including nineteen books. According to Allen Debus, "If one takes into consideration the political upheavals that affected his life, his chronic ill health, and the fact that he held no regular academic position after 1933, the quantity and quality of his historical research is astounding. Among his more important books are: *Paracelsus: An Introduction to*

*Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance*, (1958, 2nd. ed. 1982, French translation 1962); *William Harvey's Biological Ideas: Selected Aspects and Historical Background* (1967); *Joan Baptista Van Helmont: Reformer of Science and Medicine* (1982); and *The Smiling Spleen: Paracelsianism in Storm and Stress* (1984).

Pagel received honorary degrees from the Universities of Basle, Heidelberg, and Leeds. He was appointed professor emeritus at The University of Heidelberg in 1956. He was awarded the Sarton Medal (1970), the Julius Pagel Medal (1971), the Robert Koch Medal (1973) and the William H. Welch Medal (1976) and the Fellowship of the British Academy (1976). Walter Pagel received the Dexter Award in 1969 for his skill in bringing out the relationship between Renaissance medicine and chemistry, in particular for his work on Paracelsus and van Helmont.

Walter Pagel died on March 25, 1983 at his home in Mill Hill, England.

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