



Rüdiger vom Bruch, Uta Gerhardt, Aleksandra Pawliczek, eds. *Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006. 352 pp. ISBN 978-3-515-08965-4.



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Scholarship in Turbulent Times

This inspiring collection of essays on continuities and discontinuities in the twentieth-century history of *Wissenschaft* (in this context: scholarship) is the inaugural volume in the series *Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft*, and a byproduct of the research program “Wissenschaft, Politik und Gesellschaft: Deutschland im internationalen Zusammenhang im spätmittel- und im 20. Jahrhundert—Personen, Institutionen, Diskurse,” which is being conducted under the supervision of series editor Rüdiger vom Bruch, a well-known historian of universities and *Wissenschaft* in Germany. The project aims to analyze the interdependencies and reciprocities of scholarship, politics, and society by looking at persons, institutions, and discourses. Most of the volume’s essays deal with personnel and institutional issues in the context of *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*. Topics include the discrimination faced by academics of Jewish descent in trying to obtain professorships at the University of Berlin between 1871 and 1933; cooperation between weapons specialists across national borders and political caesurae; scholars’ political self-positioning between 1933 and 1945; med-

ical school curricula and personnel changes after 1933 and 1945, and the issue of social hygiene; and methodological and conceptual developments in agrarian science, sociology, and image statistics. While the papers presented here describe work in progress, the quality of the research described ensures that we can look forward to many insightful studies in this series that will enhance our understanding of the multifaceted relationships between scholarship, society, and politics.

The first section of the volume consists of the editors’ introduction and two essays. All three discuss the theoretical challenges posed by analyzing the complex relations between scholarship, politics, and society. In their introduction, Rüdiger vom Bruch and Aleksandra Pawliczek argue that one should not understand the relation between politics and scholarship as a simple stimulus-response model, but instead as an interdependent constellation that creates opportunities and restrictions from which both sides profit and suffer. Mitchell G. Ash takes this point even further. Instead of looking at scholarship and politics as two separate entities, and

at scholarly changes as “natural” occurrences independent from their political situation, he asks us to recognize the process-oriented character of scholarly change and to widen our perspective on scholarship to include the biographies, practices, and institutions that condition and react to them. Politics have a decisive influence on the distribution of and the accessibility to resources, he argues, both in the material sense and with regard to power. Ash makes a strong case for recognizing the importance of political caesurae such as 1933, 1945, and 1989; he believes that emphasizing the conceptual, institutional, and personal continuities is important but should not be overdone. In contrast to Ash, Uta Gerhardt pleads for reviving Max Weber’s concept of objectivity as a universal category to differentiate between “true” scholarship and scholarship that does not deserve this title. Obviously, the research of the National Socialist era would be the most prominent example of such “invalid” scholarship, because scholarly independence became severely limited after 1933, rendering “objective scholarship” impossible. Yet, Gerhardt’s argument that the Nazis imposed their ideology on the scholars (“Den Wissenschaftlern wurde Denken im Sinne des Regimes aufoktroziert,” p. 66) is not fully convincing. In recent years, a consensus has been established that the Nazis did not have to impose their ideology on German scholars because many of them were quite supportive of Nazi goals, volunteered their expertise, and advertised their work’s “national importance.”[1] Gerhardt is certainly right to point to the need to differentiate between *Wissen* and *Wissenschaft*, but one would have to go a step further and ask how scholars active during the Nazi period defined those categories, both as scholars and, in some cases, as expert advisors. Furthermore, defining the invalidity of scholarship from today’s supposedly timeless perspective does not necessarily do justice to the historical circumstances under which scholars work. To be sure, a large part of scholarship conducted during the Nazi era was corrupted by ideological instrumentalization, and fields like “racial science” clearly did not live up to the most basic scholarly standards. At the same time, however, much of the research produced under the regime was quite similar to that conducted simultaneously in democratic western countries, and thus cannot be judged *en bloc*, but has to be looked at individually.

The fourteen case studies that follow the introductory material make up the largest part of the book, with a clear emphasis on continuities and discontinuities with regard to the Nazi era. The subcategories under which the papers are organized are designed rather broadly and

offer only partial orientation: “Continuity within the Discontinuity of Epochs and Regimes in the Twentieth Century”; “Discontinuity of Programs and Orientations with Regard to the Continuity of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*”; and “The Ambivalence of Continuity and Discontinuity within the Caesurae of the Twentieth Century.” A deeper discussion of one article from each section may give readers an idea of the sort of material the volume includes.

In “Reconstruction without Return: Physics in Germany after 1945 and the Historiographical Problems of the Concept of Remigration,” Arne Schirmmacher questions the idea that the political changes of 1945 actually led to scholarly changes. He shows that areas of physics research that had been dominant in Germany before 1945 remained so after the end of the war. In trying to explain the reasons for this conceptual stability, Schirmmacher challenges the thesis that remigrants were key to reconstructing German science by helping it to overcome its war-induced institutional and methodological isolation, which had been caused by Nazi sanctioning of politically “undesirable” approaches.[2] In the field of physics, Schirmmacher argues, only very few emigrants actually returned, and those who did never became as influential as their colleagues who had not fled the country. The author correctly notes that scholarly migration started much earlier than 1933. Many German physicists had left for the United States in the 1920s because they expected American physics to become the world-leading discipline, whereas jobs were scarce in Germany. Accordingly, the evolution of specific German fields of interests in physics resulted not solely from the Nazis’ expulsion of scientists who practiced “undeutsche Physik.” Rather, it was part of a larger development that was tied less to concrete political events than to inherent changes in scholarship and the accessibility to resources, Schirmmacher argues. At this point, it would be enriching to learn to more about emigrants’ perspectives on this scenario, especially with regard to the question of the degree to which their decisions to return to Germany or to stay in their respective countries of exile were motivated by personal considerations, fears of antisemitism, and professional expectations.

Christoph Kopke’s findings about nutrition research in the postwar era in East and West Germany are similar to Schirmmacher’s in that they suggest strong continuities in scholarship. Kopke reconstructs the development of nutritional research in Germany by looking at scholarly journals published under different political regimes: *Die Ern ahrung*, a Nazi journal; the FRG’s *Ern ahrungsumschau*; and the GDR’s *Ern ahrungsforschung* and *Die*

Nahrung. Though Kopke's essay is part of the section on discontinuities, even so, personnel, institutional, and thematic continuities stand at its center. This result suggests that the boundaries between continuities and discontinuities are fluid rather than static. The fact that West German nutritionists began to think about obesity in the 1950s, only a few years after they had worked on issues of malnutrition and developed ersatz foods, might be regarded as a conceptual change. On the other hand, scholarly disciplines are part of social life and, as such, react to social conditions; hence, one might interpret the war as a more influential rupture than the 1945 caesura. This argument would not be true for the case of the GDR, however. East German nutritional research took up the problems of scarce food supplies that had been prominent until 1945. In fact, from the perspective of nutritionists whose work and lives were defined by the conditions of an economy of scarcity, it would have been ignorant not to make use of existing knowledge. Scholars in East and West adapted their scholarship to the different political settings and their respective constellations of resources, and both political systems profited from the expertise nutritionists provided.

The limits of scholarly adaptability to changing political conditions become clear in Felix Brahm and Jochen Meissner's essay on *Auslandswissenschaften* and area studies between 1925 and 1960. *Kolonialwissenschaften* survived the loss of the German colonies after World War I and subsequently became *Auslandswissenschaften*, which were utilized in the interest of Nazi expansion. 1945, however, proved to be too severe a caesura to keep the approach and its institutional structure alive. Too heavy were the ideological burdens the discipline and its representatives had amassed by the end of World War II to allow for their continuation. Even semantic changes and efforts to rid the discipline of its most "polluted" elements did not solve this problem. For example, African languages continued to be taught at the former Colonial Institute of the University of Hamburg in the 1950s, but the interdisciplinary area studies approach was sacrificed

in order to keep a low public profile. It took many years until regional studies could be reinstated at West German universities without running the risk of attracting "anti-imperial" propaganda from the GDR or left-wing critique concerning the discipline's past. In this context, it would be interesting to learn more about East German area studies, which gained importance as the eastern bloc countries became more active in the so-called Third World.

Many of the articles in this volume make clear how fruitful comparative approaches to *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* can be, especially with regard to countries that we usually do not think of as related to each other on the scholarly level. Albert Presas i Puig's example of German-Spanish cooperation on weapons research is very instructive in this regard, and one wishes for more in-depth studies that take this international perspective. Another element in the volume that would have deserved more explicit attention is the role of the public and the changing understanding of scholars' roles and responsibilities, both within and outside of the scholarly community.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Uwe Hossfeld et al., eds., *"Kämpferische Wissenschaft": Studien zur Universität Jena im Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003); Isabel Heinemann and Patrick Wagner, eds., *Wissenschaft-Planung-Vertreibung: Neuordnungskonzepte und Umsiedlungspolitik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006); and Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch, eds., *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1920-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

[2]. Claus-Dieter Krohn and Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Rückkehr und Aufbau nach 1945: Deutsche Remigranten im öffentlichen Leben Nachkriegsdeutschlands* (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 1997); and Alfons Söllner, *Fluchtpunkte: Studien zur politischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006).

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