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The Many Beginnings of Rassenhygiene

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Abstract

This paper traces the beginnings of German eugenics – Rassenhygiene – in four stories around its early protagonists Pauline Rüdin, Alfred Ploetz, and Carl Hauptmann. The thesis takes a “polyphone” approach that formally reflects the polyperspective nature of history. Three core questions regarding the relationship between Rassenhygiene and the medical practice, Rassenhygiene and the nation state, as well as Rassenhygiene and modernity guide the interpretation and the results. Ultimately, the insights gained from the polyphone analysis will be discussed in interaction with the categories of gender, space, and the ambivalent.

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A. Introduction

In the summer of 1890, the steam ship *Emden* left Northern Germany for New York. On board were Alfred and Pauline Ploetz, who were newlywed doctors from Zurich with lofty ambitions and far reaching dreams. They travelled across the Atlantic to practice medicine, first in Springfield, Massachusetts, and later in Meriden, Connecticut. More importantly, they took on this voyage to collect data and money for their real, though somewhat secret project; they planned to implement a study on heredity and to formulate and induce a eugenic utopia: racial enhancement through complete control of sexuality including systemic sterilization. For this purpose, they started to create a private database of genealogical trees and to conduct breeding experiments on chickens. In 1895, Alfred Ploetz published the results of their studies¹ in what is considered the first genuinely German eugenic attempt. In this book, Alfred Ploetz coined the term *Rassenhygiene* (racial hygiene) which, in the 20th century, was to become popular not only in Germany but beyond.² Contemporary discussions continue to reference these early eugenic arguments.³

Until the 1990s, *Rassenhygiene* was considered a uniquely German concept. In the historiographical tradition, the specific German “trait” of eugenics was seen as particular, different, and apart from broader eugenic movements. For reasons of clarification, “*Rassenhygiene*” will be used to describe the specific project of Alfred Ploetz and his friends, and “eugenics” to refer to eugenic movements in a broad sense. *Rassenhygiene* was analysed in the context of the Nazi trajectory and was associated with the Nazi euthanasia.⁴ More recent publications, beginning with Paul Weindling's 1989 “Health, Race, and German Unification,” have taken a more nuanced approach. He links *Rassenhygiene* to the process of German unification, namely as one of Germany's main unifying strategies. Trained doctors, according to Weindling, established this new science due to a lack of employment possibilities within their profession in Germany.⁵ However, by nature of his argument, he remains within a specifically German frame.⁶ The 1990s saw an immense increase in

¹ In other historiography on the beginning of *Rassenhygiene*, it would be *his*, not *their* project. Despite greatly contributing to *Rassenhygiene*, Pauline Ploetz is not received as a contributor.

² *Rassenhygiene* will be used as if it was an English term. *Rassenhygiene* combines the concept of *race* with *hygiene*. While Alfred Ploetz only thought it a German translation of the anglophone *eugenics*, it resonated in a “semantological space” already existing. Eugenics, on the other hand, was a neologism.

³ To name just two examples from leading German newspapers: The Zeit Online condemns the natural sciences in particular for allowing a “return of a bullshit science,” while the NZZ Online simply reinstates their arguments, titling: “Womöglich ist ‘Rasse’ doch mehr als ein soziales Konstrukt?” See Evans, Rückkehr; Schär, Erbgut und Rasse.

⁴ Additionally, the post-war German physicians were highly self-critical and identified origins of the Nazi atrocities within their discipline. Their main target was *Rassenhygiene* and the eugenic doctors, with Alfred Ploetz importantly among them. See Becker, *Rassenhygiene*; Weindling, Health; Kühl, *Rassisten*.

⁵ Weindling, Health, p. 63.

⁶ Weindling, Health, p. 20-25. The contemporary historian Stefan Kühl places Weindling within the group that promotes German exceptionalism. Kühl, *Internationale*, p. 12.

research on the history of eugenics. In Switzerland, this was fuelled by a political discussion about reparations to victims of applied eugenics.⁷ The leading exponent of this historiography is Regina Wecker who, in a number of publications, addresses the connection of Nazi Germany and eugenics as well as eugenics and modernity, convincingly demonstrating the disconnectedness between Nazism and eugenics.⁸ Ultimately, Stefan Kühl's "Die Internationale der Rassisten" (second edition 2014) situates Rassenhygiene within an international eugenic context by analyzing the international nature of, and links between, the various national eugenic bodies. Rassenhygiene, the newly formed consensus in historiography states, must be analysed in its own right and carefully discussed in regard to the Nazi period. Furthermore, the story has to continue after 1945.⁹ The publications above provide the immediate historiographic context of this paper.

In accordance with these core insights, Rassenhygiene is situated in a eugenic, not a Nazi, context. This placement can be enriched by taking not an *international* view (like Kühl), but to ask if it is possible to comprehend Rassenhygiene in a *transnational* frame. "Transnational" is used in the following to describe people and institutions that do not think or work in national bodies but use other categories as mechanisms of identification and structure.¹⁰ Is early Rassenhygiene transnational in this sense? Do the exponents or the ideology break with the limitations of the nation state in a fundamental way?

Within this transnational frame, the paper will take a *polyphonic* approach, partly taken from the historian Yair Mintzker and partly from the literary theorist and philosopher Michail Bakhtin. With special consideration to the historical form, polyphonic history means to write not just one, but rather a multitude of narratives. It is polyglot, describing history from various perspectives, using different stories. Mintzker analyses the case of the German Jew Süss-Oppenheimer, in which he does not try to (re-)tell this notorious story but focuses on four individuals around him. In doing so, he creates a shadow image of Oppenheimer's case based on the premise that these four stories are epistemologically more approachable than the imprisoned Oppenheimer's. As with the story of Jew Süss's trial, the polyphonic narrative does not pursue a "true" and "ultimate" story. Instead, it aims to account for the contingent and complex ways of history.

⁷ In 1999/2000, the Swiss parliament debated a compensation payment to the victims of eugenic sterilizations. The motion was denied, though a historic reappraisal was set in place. Wecker, Eugenik, 18-19.

⁸ Wecker, Eugenik; Wecker; Sexualität; Wecker; Psychiatrie.

⁹ Prominently Weingart, et al., present a comprehensive analysis with this aim, but also Stefan Kühl. See Weingart; Rasse; Kühl, Rassisten.

¹⁰ National, on the other hand, implies the dominance of nation states. By focusing on the early phase of Rassenhygiene, it is possible to choose this frame. As soon as actual eugenic bodies formed in Europe, they were more or less national. Nonetheless Alfred Plotz tried to broaden their horizon (like the Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene) throughout his entire life.

Bakhtin, on the other hand, did not develop his theories as a historian but as a literary theorist. Having spent a considerable part of his life in political imprisonment, the publication and therefore reception of his work only commenced well into the second half of the 20th century. He introduced his concept of the *polyphone* in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, in which he described a specific, co-creational relationship between the abstract polyphone author and the hero. The polyphone author does not write about, but with the hero. She is in dialogue with the hero; she does not present him from an Archimedean point, but as an open, unfinished, and incomplete individual.¹¹ To make this statement more expansive: An individual (story) by itself can never constitute “reality.” It is only in dialogue and through a multitude of perspectives that “realities” emerge.

Polyphone history, in our case, means to acknowledge the polyperspective and interacting co-creation of “reality,” not just in the way historians approach sources, but also reflecting on the form, in how they tell their stories. This approach does not forbid all generalizations, but should make their composition visible and approachable. This will be accomplished through combining a micro- and a macroanalysis. The dialogical nature of “reality” implies that every possible instance of language (and therefore reality) is co-created, incorporates the multitude of perspectives, and is enmeshed, like a ball of wool.¹²

The *polyphone* will be used as a methodological guide to the way history will be understood and told in this paper. The emergence of Rassenhygiene is embodied in and told through the stories of three witnesses. The heroes of these narratives are friends, two are even husband and spouse, yet each person provides his or her own unique perspective on the events and how they unfold. They were essential to the conception of Rassenhygiene, even though the contributions of Carl Hauptmann, who will be introduced below, and Pauline Ploetz have not been acknowledged by the historiography.

Upon “his and Pauline’s” return from the US in 1894, Alfred Ploetz published a groundbreaking book in which he introduced the term *Rassenhygiene* into the German scientific discourse.¹³ He went

¹¹ Sasse, Bakhtin, p. 54.

¹² The first, historical *enmeshment* is the plot of the journey itself, the connections across the continents and nations. The second is metahistorical; taking the metaphor of the *enmeshment* and using it to describe the formation of history itself. History, the metaphor goes, derives from many unique perspectives that enmesh and form reality. It is the latter enmeshment that translates into the specific form chosen here and it is an important aspect of what makes this a valuable contribution to the historiographic context briefly presented above.

¹³ Ploetz, Tüchtigkeit.

on to found numerous journals, societies, and other institutions that formed the main body of northern European eugenics.¹⁴ Many considered him the “father” of German eugenics.¹⁵

Pauline Ploetz, on the other hand, had not yet appeared as a person of historiographic interest in relation to Rassenhygiene or eugenics.¹⁶ After joining the group of friends around Alfred Ploetz in 1885, she was one of the first women to graduate as a Doctor of Medicine from Zurich University. They married in 1890 and embarked on their voyage to the United States. Upon returning to Europe, she became the fifth woman to practice medicine in Berlin.¹⁷ Although they divorced before the end of the century, she continued to practice medicine in Berlin and Switzerland. Despite her involvement with the scientific work and establishment of Rassenhygiene, her contributions are muted and almost obscured by the sources. In the final chapter, a short investigation in the underlying gendered stereotypes and social roles will reflect upon this revealing the systemic understatement of female work.

The third perspective comes from Carl Hauptmann, who was a writer and Alfred Ploetz's best friend. They met in secondary school in Wroclaw (Breslau) and became close companions. Together with their friends and siblings, they founded a secret pan-Germanic club called “Ikarier” in 1879.¹⁸ After finishing his *Abitur*, Carl Hauptmann moved to Jena to study biology with Ernst Haeckel. While there, he met his future wife, with whose inheritance he supported Alfred and Pauline Ploetz's journey to the United States. Carl Hauptmann's work oscillated between science and writing. Because many protagonists carry the same last name, this paper will use first names.

Both the *Carl Hauptmann Archiv* in Berlin, and the *Nachlass Alfred Ploetz* in Munich contain ample correspondence and diaries between all the protagonists. Pauline Ploetz's letters and estate rest in part with her niece's husband, Adolf Zerbin. Unfortunately, he does not allow access to historians. Nonetheless, close to a hundred letters addressed to Martha Hauptmann survive in the *Carl Hauptmann Archiv*. Additionally, published works, as well as various published correspondences, most notably August Forel's, who was a mentor to all three, are taken into account in this paper. Ultimately, Gerhart Hauptmann's “Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend,” an autobiographical account of his childhood, provides vivid images of his childhood, alongside with his brother Carl Hauptmann.

¹⁴ Except for England.

¹⁵ See Becker, Rassenhygiene, p. 58f. Doecke, Ploetz; Weingart, Rasse; and also the Wikipedia article on Alfred Ploetz: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Ploetz> [Status: 11.6.2018].

¹⁶ There is little research on Pauline; it primarily discusses her role as a pioneer female doctor. Rohner, Frauenstudium, p. 57-59; Schleiermacher, Ärztinnen, p. 283.

¹⁷ Rohner, Frauenstudium, p. 57.

¹⁸ This group resonates to this day, resulting in a recent novel by Uwe Timm; Ikarien.

These three, Alfred, Pauline, and Carl, were at the forefront of the formulation of German eugenic theory. In spite of this, they have never been juxtaposed this way. Doing so allows to ask three questions about early Rassenhygiene suggested by the existing research and through interaction with the sources. The first investigation explores connections between Rassenhygiene and medical practice. The second question, as formulated above, investigates the *transnational* nature of Rassenhygiene. A central part of this inquiry is about its relationship with the German nation state. The ultimate examination inspects Rassenhygiene, and, more comprehensive, eugenics as such, in its relationship with *modernity*.¹⁹

In order to give a polyphone answer to these questions, small chapters called *interludes* differentiate an analytical from a narrating voice. These interludes serve to reflect and interpret the narrating, heroes' perspectives. Furthermore, they serve to play the *Jeux d'Échelles*, the game of scales that allows the analysis to jump from micro- to macroanalysis.²⁰ The three questions also move up in scale concerning space and time: starting with a question immanent to the emergence of Rassenhygiene, thinking subsequently about its transnational nature and the implications for the nation state, and ending with a question concerning modernity.

The narration is structured into four chapters, each written from specific perspectives, interlaced with interludes. These chapters are formative episodes of Rassenhygiene. These episodes are student societies that anticipated Rassenhygiene (Ikarier and Pacifica, the second student society), as well as imprinting life stages ("Discussions in Hottingen" and "Doctors in America"). The impetus of the paper lies on the last episode, a second journey to the US. This focus is due to both the empirical situation as well as the epistemological possibilities. An analytical discussion reflective of the core questions and reviewing the polyphone insights will conclude this paper. The analytical categories of space, gender, and ambivalence²¹ are combined with problems and chances of the polyphone. These categories will be introduced below.

¹⁹ *Modernity* will be characterized with the help of the social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, who understands modernity as a project of the unambivalent, of believing in reason and constructing unambivalent truths. Bauman, *Modernity*; Bauman, *Holocaust*.

²⁰ Tanner, *Anthropologie*, p. 110-117; Revel, *Jeux d'Échelles*.

²¹ Like modernity, the notion of the *ambivalent* is taken from Zygmunt Bauman. Ambivalence is a core category of *postmodernity*, separating it from the reason and fact seeking modernity. See footnote 19 and page 43.

B. Four Stories on the Emergence of Rassenhygiene

I. Ikarier

Wroclaw, Carl Hauptmann

Carl Hauptmann was born on May 11, 1858 in Ober-Salzbrunn, Silesia, the fourth of five children. His mother was the daughter of the royal well inspector and his family owned the local hotel, *Zur Krone*. In 1864, Carl started primary school in Ober-Salzbrunn and read extensively in his parent's small library, especially adventure and nature books by Defoe, Cooper, Humboldt, and Buffon.²² Science and literature were his two great passions.²³ The family's financial situation began deteriorating in 1869 and they were forced to move out of the *Krone*. At the same time, Germany was unified and Salzbrunn, "in national euphoria,"²⁴ celebrated the Prussian victory at the Battle of Sedan. *Sedantag*, the official victory celebration, typifies the context of the German unification throughout Carl's childhood and coming of age.²⁵

At age 14, Carl moved to Wroclaw to study at *Städtische Realschule 1. Ordnung am Zwinger*. His youngest sibling, Gerhart, joined him there in 1874. As Gerhart later wrote of their habitation, they shared a room at a "guest house, where I did not get sufficient food".²⁶ With the family's financial hardships and Carl's bout of pneumonia in 1877, the brothers were forced to move out of the guest-house, finding shelter with the rich parents of Carl's friend. During that time, Alfred Ploetz, another classmate of Carl's, started visiting the brothers more regularly. They frequented the Wroclaw Theater to see plays by Schiller, Goethe, and Shakespeare, among others.²⁷

Carl's relationship with Alfred deepened, involving visits to their respective families and, most important, thematic inspiration. Evolutionary theory fascinated the young boys; inspired by Charles Darwin and Ernst Haeckel.²⁸ Each one reinforced the diverse passions of the other by offering resonance for ideas and discussions, mutually strengthening their convictions. Carl received an

²² Berger, *Chronik*, p. 11. The "Chronik zu Leben und Werk" is supposed to be the supplement to a complete edition of Carl Hauptmann, an ongoing, yet far from finished project by Frommann-Holzboog. This project is an example of the kind of reception Carl Hauptmann received for most of his life: A small circle of enthusiastic people promote and finance his literature, yet he failed to reach a greater audience.

²³ While both science and literature would remain the two great focal points in his life, he is exclusively remembered for the latter.

²⁴ Berger, *Chronik*, p. 12.

²⁵ Behl, *Chronik*, p. 15; Berger, *Chronik*, p. 12.

²⁶ Hauptmann, *Abenteuer*, quoted from: Berger, *Chronik*, p. 14.

²⁷ Berger, *Chronik*, p. 16.

²⁸ The latter would remain central in Carl's life, eventually becoming his *Doktorvater*.

award for a thesis on *vaterländische Geschichte* and was allowed to present the paper during the celebration of the Sedan victory on September 2, 1879.²⁹

The same year, Carl and his friends, mostly fellow students, founded a secret blood brotherhood. Inspired by the evolutionary theorists Haeckel and Darwin on one hand, the authors Felix Dahn³⁰ and Étienne Cabet on the other, the students named themselves: *Ikarier*.³¹ Their name *Ikarier* – Icarians – derived from Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*, a utopian novel, in which an English nobleman travels to a remote island country that has established an ideal communal society.³² Alfred later remembered this event in the following way:

Durch die Lektüre der Werke Darwins, Haeckels und anderer Biologen, bereits auf der Schule, sowie durch die eines Teiles der Romane von Felix Dahn und anderer Verherrlicher des germanischen Altertums und Mittelalters wurde ich nachhaltend begeistert für die germanischen Rassen (heut würden wir sagen: der nordischen Rasse) und beschloss, es zu meiner Lebensaufgabe zu machen, die germanischen Rassen in Deutschland und in anderen Staaten mit Bevölkerungen germanischer Sprache wieder zu Reinheit und Höhe des ersten Jahrtausends hinaufführen zu helfen. Ich gewann mit wenig Mühe eine Anzahl meiner Freunde und Kameraden für diese Sache. Um unserer Zusammengehörigkeit und unserem festen Willen, unser Leben nach unseren Zielen zu gestalten, einen feierlichen und sinnfälligen Ausdruck zu geben, wanderten wir begeisterten Jünglinge in die Umgebung von Breslau und schwuren unter einer alten Eiche der Zelitzer Wiesen, unser Leben der Wiederaufrichtung des Germanischen zu weihen.³³

Carl was 21 years old, and Alfred only 19, when they committed their life to the purity, and even resurrection of the Germanic races. This brotherhood, built upon science and mysticism alike, was more than an expression of youthful foolishness, exemplified by the theatrical blood oath in the middle of the night. Their enthusiasm and juvenile momentum carried their dreams sky-high. Their ambition was the establishment of a political entity with rigid entry requirements regarding “race” (familial origin, hair color, etc.) and a socialist way of production that would both keep the body well trained and allow for ample time to study and practice art.³⁴ This already hinted at something

²⁹ Both the subject of *vaterländische Geschichte* and the reading at *Sedantag* itself account for the prominent role of unification as a societal frame of his time. See Berger, *Chronik*, p. 16.

³⁰ Felix Dahn glorified the Germanic in his most influential book “Kampf um Rom” in a Darwinist jargon. Kurt, Dahn.

³¹ Weindling calls them “Bund zur Ertüchtigung der Rasse.” Weindling, *Health*, p. 63.

³² The book sparked an enthusiastic settler movement in the US, where a number of Icarian communities were founded. This ideal society of the Icarians would fascinate the young men for the time to come: This brotherhood worked as a model for the later society “Pacifica,” that actually went on to explore the Icarian colonies in the US.

³³ Ploetz, *Lebenserinnerungen*, quoted from Doecke, Ploetz, p. 4-5. The German orthography has been adjusted to Swiss contemporary spelling rules to ease the reading. No further changes have been made to the quotes.

³⁴ This would become much more pronounced and articulate with the second group *Pacifica*, but the groundwork was laid out in this society. Doecke, Ploetz, p. 4-7; 12-14.

more fundamental in the entire group's convictions: It aimed at an incorporation of science³⁵ and racism with socialism and mysticism, based on secrecy and elitism.³⁶

Interlude, the author

Four observations should not go unnoticed in this context. First of all, the young men were extremely self-confident and ambitious. Even though they chose different careers, an underlying eugenic conviction bridged subjects and persisted through the disciplines. While their ambition was both combined for this greater goal, it also resulted in competition amongst them. Carl especially struggled with his brother's growing fame, which he would never match.³⁷ Secondly, Alfred's role as a secretive networker was exemplified. Despite not being as much of a public figure as Gerhart, Alfred gained considerable status within the eugenic community worldwide. The culmination of his global prominence was the nomination for the Nobel peace prize in 1936.³⁸ Thirdly, the personal bonds between these young men were extremely strong. The triad of Carl, Alfred, and Gerhart remained stable throughout their lives, and there were more prosopographical continuities.³⁹ These continuities lasted into the 1930s and, therefore, into Nazi Germany.⁴⁰ Emphasis is necessary here because there are historiographic interpretations that understand this early Rassenhygiene as separate from the Nazi's usage of it.⁴¹ The personnel persistence alone casts serious doubt on any such narrative.

³⁵ Alfred Ploetz's later brother-in-law, Anastasius Nordenholz, would go on to write about "Scientologie," the alleged source for the contemporary sect "Scientology."

³⁶ To Weindling, German nationalism is a central objective of Alfred Ploetz's. Considering his overall thesis, namely that Rassenhygiene is a unifying factor within the emerging German nation state, this is of little surprise. However, to Alfred Ploetz *Germanic* and *Nordic* can be easily exchanged, sometimes including the entire "white race." Early German Rassenhygiene therefore serves as a bad example for this German nationalism.

³⁷ Especially Carl Hauptmann would remain frustrated throughout his life. Alfred Ploetz wished him in a New Year's letter in 1891: "Wir gratulieren Euch [...] zu dem neuen Jahr des Begehrens, und wünschen Euch, dass das leidige Missverhältnis zwischen dem [Begehren] und dem Erreichten möglichst günstig für Euch ausfällt." A(lfred) P(loetz) and P(auline) P(loetz) to C(arl) H(Hauptmann) and M(ar)t(ha) H(auptmann), 14.12.1891, N(achlass)P(loetz)-1/25; another example is the emotional note from 8.6.1896, in which he described a desperate need to receive the same acknowledgment from their parents as his younger brother did, C(arl)H(auptmann)S(ammlung)-119.

³⁸ In a letter from the US in 1892, Alfred Ploetz stated: "[...] der ist ein schlechter Soldat, der nicht daran denkt, General zu werden." The aspiration was set. AP to CH, 14.1.1892, C(arl)H(auptmann)A(rchiv)-K121; AP to Agnes Bluhm, 24.11.1936; Agnes Bluhm to AP, 26.11.1936, NPI-1/25.

³⁹ Because of this nature of relationships between the exponents of early Rassenhygiene, prosopographical studies have formed a central tool of historiography. See Weindling, *Health; Becker; Rassenhygiene*.

⁴⁰ Alfred Ploetz, for example, was personally appointed to a professorship by Hitler. There clearly must have been common ground and sympathies on both sides: the Nazi state and eugenic exponents and organizations. Despite the justified historiographic trend to take Rassenhygiene out of the Nazi trajectory, the mutual benefits of cooperation between the two are obvious in the 1930s. There were biographical continuities that link the emergence in the 19th century with the culmination of Rassenhygiene in Nazi Germany. Wecker, *Eugenik; Proctor, Nazi doctors*.

⁴¹ This is to a certain extent true for Regina Wecker in *Wecker, Eugenik*.

Ultimately, the *Ikarier*, as well as early Rassenhygiene, were based on a combination of eugenics and socialism.⁴² They used Darwinist and Marxist⁴³ laws to structure time by mechanic and predictable rules and to formulate a utopian and calculable future. They placed the cultural heights of a biologized notion of the Germanic a thousand years before their time. Simultaneously, a utopian vision of purity and resurrection in their own future was formulated. The multitude of –isms, Darwinism, racism, socialism, mysticism, elitism, are therefore symptomatic. Their goal was to save the Germanic races, whereby *Nordic* and *Germanic* was used interchangeably and always including at least all German speaking countries like Switzerland and Austria. Within these concepts, different sub-races were allowed. Biologized, “scientific” ideas are intermingled with cultural ones, rendering a historical distinction between the study of scientific facts and cultural interpretation not only unsuitable, but even misleading.

Wroclaw, Carl Hauptmann

While Carl was a respected member of the group, he would always be second in command to Alfred, who had a special kind of authority among his peers. It was Alfred’s enthusiasm that carried them. Carl’s brother Gerhart recounted:

In einem verschlossenen Zimmer [...] ins Gebet genommen, erfuhr ich, dass ich gewürdigt worden sei, in eine bestimmte Gemeinschaft einzutreten. Näheres könne mir aber nur eröffnet werden, wenn ich durch einen altgermanischen Schwur tiefstes Stillschweigen angelobe. Hochbeglückt, ja beseligt, tat ich das, und man wollte nun wissen, ob ich in einen Geheimbund einzutreten willens sei, der ein pangermanisches Ziel habe und die Vereinigung aller germanischen Stämme und Völker herbeiführen solle.⁴⁴

The actual act of the blood oath was conducted in 1879 in an occult procedure “in ancient-Germanic design.” Carl and Alfred, inspired by Dahn, lectured the group on the importance of a resurrection of the Germanic. Their ritualized secrecy deepened the bonds between them and nourished a feeling of privilege. Despite this grandiose and mystified commencement, the brotherhood remained limited in its achievements. Gerhart went so far as to call this a “dead epoch” and a “lost year.”⁴⁵ For the time being, their far-reaching ambitions were lost.

⁴² Even though the Nazis also called themselves “socialist,” their extreme anti-Communism differed significantly from the early utopias discussed above, that were at least sympathetic to a communist structuring of society.

⁴³ Neither Darwinism and eugenics, nor Marxism and socialism are interchangeable terms, though surely akin. The structuring rules of time, to which my argument refers, are to be found in the broader movements of Darwinism and Marxism, not just the institutionalized socialism or eugenics of Rassenhygiene.

⁴⁴ Hauptmann, *Abenteuer*, p. 330.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

Interlude, the author

Alfred would work this experience, including its early “failures”, into the theory of Rassenhygiene, with clear continuities dating back to the *Ikarier*. Through secrecy (“locked room,” “deep silence”), quasi-religious vocabulary (“ins Gebet genommen,” “beseligt,” “weihen”)⁴⁶ and occultism⁴⁷ (“ancient Germanic oath”) Alfred's Rassenhygiene would later be able to position itself in the interface of a scientific and a religious discourse, which accounted for its broad appeal, and solidified its claim to be more than a science – to be a comprehensive ideology of life.⁴⁸ The spiritual moment compensated for the scientized elitism and made Rassenhygiene an ideology of the Germanic per se. Rassenhygiene held a salvation promise.

A history of science that works “internalistically,” aiming to understand the history of scientific facts, might detect a fundamental contradiction in what was to become Rassenhygiene.⁴⁹ To such a history, a contradiction might lie in the combination of the explicit reference to the rigid methods of modern science and, an ideology that fundamentally could not be based upon these methods and therefore had to rely on belief. Genetic differences between humans, this “internalistic” historiography might state, are minimal and for the migratory nature of humans, genetic purity is a fiction. Germanic, Aryan, and Nordic (which were more or less interchangeable terms) work on a different argumentative level than genes. Ideas of racial purity are fundamentally discredited by the genetic nature of the populations they aim to describe.

A different historiography could suggest that this combination of scientific and cultural arguments is not a contradiction, but inherent to science. A history of science therefore needs to incorporate both into an analytical framework, which Hagner's understanding of “science as politics” attempts. Through this he aspires to grasp the historical genesis of knowledge, and to open up the misleading dichotomy between cultural critique and scientific facts.⁵⁰ Eugenics can serve as another example that calls to examine “science as politics” in order to understand the complexity of its implications. With the polyphone and the corresponding *Jeux d'Échelles*, this is made clear. Science and politics, in the case of Rassenhygiene, served as a mutual resource for one another.

⁴⁶ I left these quotes in German because they would lose this religious spin in English. See: Delgado: Prinzip Evolution.

⁴⁷ In 1895, AP and CH would still discuss matter of thought reading alongside religious and biological questions. AP to C, 31.7.1895, NPI-3/1.

⁴⁸ Rassenhygiene was considered part of many things, *Lebensreform* movements, science, religion etc., which also worked as a tool for a broader reception base.

⁴⁹ Hagner, *Forschung als Politik*, p. 57-60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65-67.

Jena, Carl Hauptmann

On March 13, 1880 Carl was awarded his Abitur with “satisfactory” grades. After Easter holidays with Alfred and his family, Carl matriculated at the University of Jena in order to study with Professor Haeckel, who was so enthusiastically read by the students. In Jena, Carl met Marie Thienemann, his elder brother Georg’s sister-in-law. When Marie married Gerhart, and Carl the third sister Martha Thienemann, the three Hauptmann brothers became the husbands of the three Thienemann sisters. When their father died on October 23, 1880, he left his daughters a considerable inheritance.⁵¹

During his time in Jena, Carl and Alfred regularly visited each other. Nonetheless, Carl was neither personally nor scientifically satisfied and was constantly torn between the natural sciences and philosophy; he meant to write two dissertations, one in philosophy and another in medicine. However, this was not possible and he started to dream of Zurich and the greater freedom in Switzerland.⁵²

On February 8, 1883 he finished his dissertation with Professor Haeckel and was awarded a degree *cum laude*. After a celebratory Grand Tour through Italy in the summer of 1883, Carl joined Alfred in Zurich to plan their future. September was spent in Wroclaw, together with Alfred and his friends, where he participated enthusiastically in their new society, *Pacifica*, the successor to the *Ikarier*.

⁵¹ This sum was completely spent by the three brothers, e.g. in order to finance Alfred's journeys.

⁵² At the university of Zurich the institutional frame was more liberal, allowing for Carl Hauptmann to choose more freely between subjects. Berger, Chronik, p. 24, 27.

II. Pacifica

Wroclaw, Alfred Ploetz

Alfred Ploetz was born on August 22, 1860, in Silesia. His family was neither outstandingly wealthy nor educated, and yet socially ambitious; their house was one of reading and discussion. His father, with whom he had an excellent relationship, worked as a foreman in a soap factory outside Wroclaw, which positioned the family within the middle class:

[...] in diesem sehr einfachen Hauswesen [...] gab es keine Enge der Geistigkeit. Der Siedemeister und sein Sohn standen zu einander wie Kameraden. Man konnte erkennen, wie hier ein Vater sich den Bildungsweg seines Sohnes zunutze machte.⁵³

Alfred's first involvement with eugenic topics took place early in life. It was during Gymnasium – high school – when socialist and eugenic ideas first evolved; here, he also met Carl Hauptmann. Their biological and racial interests combined with a socialist utopian fascination, exemplified through the constitution of a secret, pan-Germanic society, *Ikarier* in 1879. Though short lived, this society was characteristic for their friends' values.⁵⁴ While Carl was clearly convinced of the utopian dreams, Alfred was the group's intellectual guiding force.⁵⁵

While Carl left Wroclaw in 1880, Alfred stayed and matriculated at the University of Wroclaw to study *Nationalökonomie*, economics, because he felt it to be the most pressing of all the sciences and

⁵³ Hauptmann, Beichten, p. 247. Paul Weindling argues how racial hygiene was ultimately a middle and lower-class phenomenon. The elite values were perceived as restrictive and even repressive. When the middle-class parent financed expensive medical training, their children would nonetheless have a difficult standing as professional medical doctor. This combination drove them to embrace Rassenhygiene as a way out of the limited opportunities and cultural crisis of their time. On page 65 he draws a table with influential racial hygienists and their social familial position. Gerhart Hauptmann's quote additionally demonstrates this instrumental nature of the children's education: "zunutze machte." See Weindling, Health, p. 19, 61, 65f.

⁵⁴ Weindling, Health, p. 63-64; Doecke, Ploetz, p. 4. Compare to the preceding chapter.

⁵⁵ With the luxury of hindsight Alfred Ploetz's efforts on this behalf become apparent as a first attempt at his lifelong project: In his life, Alfred Ploetz would establish numerous groups that evolved together with his thinking. From the *Ikarier* in 1879, the *Pacifica* in 1883, the *Archiv für Rassenhygiene* in 1904, the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* in 1905, the *Widar-Bund* 1918 to the *Widar-Ring* in 1923. All were characteristic of his thinking at that specific time. They therefore trace the evolution of Rassenhygiene towards a *völkische* ideology. Emil Becker goes so far as to link Alfred Ploetz's biography with Rassenhygiene itself: "Seine [Alfred Ploetz's] Lebensgeschichte ist die Ideengeschichte der Rassenhygiene." Blecker, Rassenhygiene, p. 58. Even though he evolved toward a more national, totalitarian and biologized understanding of Rassenhygiene, Ernst Rüdin would still be able to write on the occasion of Alfred Ploetz's 70th birthday the following passage in a local newspaper: "Der die breite Öffentlichkeit wohl am meisten interessierende Grundgedanke der Ploetzschen Lehre ist die Versöhnung der Forderungen des unerbittlichen Daseinskampfes mit den Geboten des humanitären, sozialistischen und christlichen Ideals der Menschenliebe durch Rassenhygiene, soweit das überhaupt möglich ist." 25.8.1930, NPI-2/10.

subjects of his time; he was convinced socialist⁵⁶ institutions would inevitably be established.⁵⁷ The primary ideological categories therefore remained socialist categories of labor, capital, and revolution. After the dissolution of their first attempt at a socialist and utopian society, the *Ikarier*, a new attempt was launched: *Pacifica*.

Alfred's group of friends became entrenched in scientific socialism, reading Karl Kautsky and Karl Marx.⁵⁸ With the help of his friend Heinrich Lux, a mathematics student, *Pacifica* was established in November 1883. Being president of *Pacifica*, Alfred registered the society with the police under the assumption that *Pacifica* would not transgress any anti-socialist laws.⁵⁹ Despite this self-declaration, their utopian combination of socialism with science and art had clear sympathies for the far left. They were ultimately searching for the best way to institute a socialist-racist colony in the Pacific, with rigid racial entry requirements and a socialist way of life. Their group consisted of members ranging from soon to be socialist leaders, writers, and musicians, to engineers and doctors.⁶⁰ Subbranches were established in Jena, Berlin, and Zurich.⁶¹ This society was in direct connection with the *Ikarier* of 1879, yet rested on a more professional, as well as broader, and therefore firmer, personal and institutional base. Main characteristics like the socialist utopias remained, despite the narrow focus on the colonies. Furthermore, Alfred's clear leadership, closely followed by Carl and Gerhart, prevailed. While Alfred was to be president of the new republic, Carl would serve as minister of education and Gerhart as minister of culture.⁶²

Pacifica sent its president to North America in 1884, collecting 3'100 marks for this purpose.⁶³ Alfred's task was to come to know about different utopian communes and to identify the best option for future implementation. Prior to departing, Alfred visited Carl and his new wife, and together they prepared for Alfred's first journey to the United States. A considerable part of the funding came from Martha and Marie Thienemann. Although Carl participated in the preparations for this

⁵⁶ Alfred Ploetz was, because of the nature of capitalism and Marxist rules, convinced of the inevitability of the emergence of some form of socialist institutions, but remained in doubt about communism. So even though his argumentative categories were developed out of Marxism, his position was much softer. He later described himself as "kein so ganz bedingungsloser Anhänger des Sozialismus, [da] der Sozialismus sich noch mit den darwinistischen Forderungen abzufinden hätte." AP to Leutel ("Leutel" was a collective term for the inhabitants of Schreiberhau, which included both Carl's and Gerhart's families), 5.7.1892, NPI-3/1.

⁵⁷ Doecke, Ploetz, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Weindling, Health, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Tschörnter, Sieben, p. 70; Weindling, Health, p. 67.

⁶⁰ For example: Ferdinand Simon, later to marry the daughter of the socialist politician August Bebel; Karl Steinmetz, later to become a successful engineer; Wolfgang Heine; later to become Prussian minister of the Interior and the Hauptmann brothers. Weindling, Health, p. 67: "Radical politics was combined with admiration for science and literature." Also: Berger, Chronik, p. 67.

⁶¹ Weindling, Health, p. 67.

⁶² Despite living in Jena at the time, Carl would regularly visit Wroclaw and take an active part in *Pacifica*. Doecke, Ploetz, p. 11; Hauptmann, Beichten, p. 386, 452.

⁶³ This amounts to about 22'000 EUR or 26'000 CHF in 2017. See: Kaufkraftäquivalente historischer Beträge in deutschen Währungen, Deutsche Bundesbank, Januar 2018. <https://www.bundesbank.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/Statistiken/Unternehmen_Und_Private_Haushalte/Preise/kaufkraftaequivalente_historischer_betraege_in_deutschen_waehrungen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile> [Satus: 31.5.2018].

trip, it was not an existential experience for him as it was for Alfred. Carl's role was that of patron, a detached position. For Alfred, this represented the start of a utopian colony of which he would be president; he took personal risk and sacrificed time to undertake this journey, further implying his deep-seated involvement.

Alfred left Europe, departing from Bremen on March 14, 1884.⁶⁴ He first visited the University of Chicago library to study utopian colonies for several weeks.⁶⁵ Interested in the effect of socialist-ically motivated work, he explicitly meant to avoid religious communities.⁶⁶ Based on these premises, the Icarian community in Corning, Iowa, appeared most promising.⁶⁷ He lived there for several months, participating in the colony's everyday life and rites, which were mainly governed by their work schedule.⁶⁸ However, his return to Europe was in complete disillusionment:

Mit dem heutigen durchschnittlichen Menschenmaterial [ist] der Zusammenhalt solcher Kolonien, besonders solcher mit grösserer individueller Freiheit, nicht aufrecht zu erhalten. [Deshalb entstand die Überzeugung, dass] der Plan, den wir durchführen wollten, an der **Qualität der Menschen** scheitern würde, und dass ich deshalb den Schwerpunkt meiner Bestrebungen auf Bemühungen richten müsste, **die nicht bloss die Rasse schützen, sondern auch sie verbessern müssten**. Der Zusammenstoss mit den realen Faktoren der Wirtschaft und der menschlichen Natur, mit einem Wort: der Wirklichkeit, brachte eine vollständige Umwälzung in mir hervor. [...] Meine Ansichten über die für mich notwendige neue Entwicklung brachten mich folgerichtig zum Studium der Medizin.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Berger, Chronik, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Stahnisch quotes a number of teachers under which Ploetz allegedly studied in Chicago. When tracing his sources for this claim, the trail led back to Weindling, where none of these claims are to be found. To Stahnisch, this episode in Chicago is a form of knowledge transfer between American and German eugenics theorists. Yet it is obvious how Ploetz was, at this earlier point in 1884, not yet interested in the "scientific" eugenic discourse, but much more fascinated by socialist utopias. Stahnisch is confusing Alfred Ploetz's two journeys, making it possible to interpret this moment of knowledge exchange into his stay in Chicago that never happened in the described way. Stahnisch, *Early Eugenics Movement*, p. 20, p. 35; Jarausch, *Students*, p. 340, 357.

⁶⁶ Doleke, Ploetz, p. 8-9.

⁶⁷ Weindling tells this story as if Alfred Ploetz had come to Chicago without any specific utopian ideals in mind. This is unlikely because of his childhood group "Icarian," that was already fascinated with Cabet's work. See chapter I. and Weindling, *Health*, p. 69.

⁶⁸ This first journey of Alfred to the United States has sparked great interest and some confusion. Uwe Timm, who happens to be married to a grandchild of Alfred Ploetz, recently published a voluminous novel called "Ikarien" about this very journey. Within the frame of a post-war American investigation into Nazi ideology, a fictional friend recounts Alfred Ploetz's youth and most importantly his early fascination with utopian socialism. His narrative interprets the early Alfred Ploetz as a pure socialist, who fails to hold up to his ideals and turns into a sad social Darwinist. Even from the short introduction above can easily be inferred how misleading this simple story from the good to the bad guy is in light of the historic complexity and the ambiguous interests of the young Alfred Ploetz. Timm uses real names in his book, which makes this all the more complicated. See Timm, *Ikarien*.

Another example of confusing Alfred's journeys to America is Stahnisch's 2014 contribution, in which he mixes the second and longer stay in the US with his first one. Despite Alfred Ploetz's frequent appearance in historic publications, his story is rarely verified and more often than not taken from Weindling. See Stahnisch, *Early Eugenics Movement*, p. 68-69; taken from Black, *War against the weak*, p. 261-262; who already does not differentiate between the two journeys, and ultimately quotes Weindling, *Health*, p. 69.

⁶⁹ Ploetz, *Lebenserinnerungen*, quoted from Doleke, Ploetz, p. 13.

During his return to Europe, he drafted a “Constitution of the Freeland Society,” which was distributed among the members of *Pacifica*. In this Charter for the incipient colony, the biologized racial principles explicitly preceded the socialist ideals in their importance to the formation of society. One proposed measure to guarantee the German race's survival was to build colonies to which only members in excellent health would be admitted.⁷⁰ More concretely, they aimed at establishing an economically experimental and racist colony in Europe, à la Icarians:

Die wirtschaftliche Verfassung dieser Kolonie sollte eine sozialistische sein, was aber, natürlich, da sie auf rassischer Grundlage aufgebaut werden sollte, nichts mit der Sozialdemokratie oder gar mit dem jede Persönlichkeit tötenden Kommunismus zu tun hatte.⁷¹

Promptly following Alfred's return, radicalized members of the group were arrested on communist allegations, making it unsafe for him to stay in Wroclaw. Even though he remained both – an outspoken socialist as well as a biological evolutionist and racist – the role of socialism in Alfred's thinking was lessened. Soon after returning to Europe he moved to Zurich and switched subjects, from economics to medicine. The city, situated on the Limmat River, was a liberal hub and refuge for extremists on the entire political spectrum.⁷² This change of cities corresponded to Alfred's general shift to a more biologized and racialized perception of the world.⁷³ In order to achieve their colonial dreams, they would first need to enhance the racial quality of the people. His former convictions seemed naïve to him in light of the “real factors of human nature” and the turn to medicine a logical (“folgerichtig”) step. Despite this language of profound changes, neither the socialism nor the eugenic thinking was new to him. It was a change of priorities, not of topics.

Interlude, the author

Bismarck introduced extremely rigid anti-Socialist laws in response to the economic crisis of the 1870s and the resulting ideological and political shifts.⁷⁴ The “Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie” seriously endangered the group's liberty. While all the leading figures of *Pacifica* were charged, only Heinrich Lux, the mathematics student and believer in

⁷⁰ Weindling, *Health*, p. 69. According to Weindling, Gerhart Hauptmann burnt his copy of the constitution upon receiving it in fear of anti-socialist charges. When tracing this claim to Jarausch, *Students*, p. 340, 357, it is not backed up there.

⁷¹ The *Lebenserinnerungen*, written in the 1930s, used more anti-Communist language than the group would have used at that time. Auguste Bebel, for example, was one of their closest supporters. Doecke, *Ploetz*, p. 11.

⁷² Compare to *Interlude* p. 21.

⁷³ Weindling, *Health*, p. 64: “Science was to weld socialism and nationalism into a coherent ideology of biological social reform and be the weapon in the struggle to regenerate the race.” Instead of nationalism, “pan-Germanism” should be placed, since nationalism was not the main focus of these early German eugenic theorists. Compare to *interlude* p. 19/20.

⁷⁴ Koller, *Gesetz*, p. 34.

scientific socialism, went to prison; he served a one-year sentence in a Wroclaw penitentiary.⁷⁵ Bismarck's laws and the German nation state put obstacles in the radical students' way, eventually leading to their exile and imprisonment. The state joined forces with university administrations to track down socialist sympathizers and their groups.⁷⁶ Even though their Germanic enthusiasm rests undebated, the link to the German nation state remains doubtful. Early Rassenhygiene, with its strong socialist roots, was a project in constant conflict with the German state's political leaders.⁷⁷

Paul Weindling, quoted numerous times above, offers an influential interpretation of Rassenhygiene as a strong force of German unification. In light of the episodes above, this account is problematic because the entire group's engagement transcended national boundaries; they were pan-Germanic, which included Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Austria at the least. Alfred and the entire group promoted an ideology that was explicitly designed outside of the national "container." The "transnational" implications, if they exist at all, become manifest in a racialized form. The unity of the Germanic, Nordic, and sometimes even white races, was not tied to a pan-German state. Moreover, throughout their respective careers, members of the group were in vehement disagreement with the German nation state, one reason they left. Especially during his stay in Zurich, Alfred developed an outspoken cosmopolitan demeanor that was strongly linked to his socialist positions. However, his thinking was not definite in this regard. During an 1890 stay in Paris he became disillusioned by the French, abandoning "cosmopolitanism" in favor of renewed pan-Germanism.⁷⁸ In the sobering instant of his father's death three years later, he described his cosmopolitanism to have been forever solidified.⁷⁹ This reveals a partly nationalized, partly transnational conception of race. Throughout his life, a transition from a more transnational to an explicitly national version can be observed. However, at this earlier point in time there was no clear association with any camp.

⁷⁵ Weindling, *Health*, p. 69.

⁷⁶ Jaraus, *Students*, p. 340f.

⁷⁷ This is another, strong instance in which Weindling's interpretation of Rassenhygiene as an important carrier of German unification can be challenged.

⁷⁸ AP to CH and MtH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121.

⁷⁹ AP to Leutel, 6.10.1893, CHA-K121.

III. Discussions in Hottingen

Zurich, Pauline Rüdin

Pauline Rüdin was born on March 23, 1866, in St. Gallen, the second child of four. Her father taught at the local *Gymnasium*, though he later moved his entire family to Zurich, where he became authorized signatory in the embroidery industry.⁸⁰ Pauline did exceedingly well in *Gymnasium*, graduating best in her class. In its middle-class characteristics and values, Pauline's home was comparable to the other two families introduced above.⁸¹ There were no superficial indications of extremism in the family; no traits suggesting that their home was a nursing home for two⁸² political and scientific radicals. Their household was "liberal, open to scientific and technical progress and economically ambitious."⁸³ Pauline's mother described her as a calm, serious, and restrained character that hid a deep intelligence and was accompanied by seldom outbursts of joy.⁸⁴

Her teachers and fellow students admired Pauline both for her knowledge and her diligence. Because of her exceeding capabilities and lack of interest in household work, Pauline's father suggested studying medicine.⁸⁵ She enthusiastically matriculated at the University of Zurich in 1885. This familial support indicates the open minded, even progressive nature of her parent's household even more because higher education for women—*Frauenstudium*—was still highly contested.

Interlude, the author

After a university in Paris, Zurich University was the second European institute to allow women to study medicine.⁸⁶ This coincided with the strong liberal demeanor of the city at the time; Zurich was a magnet for political refugees from all over Europe. Weindling describes it as a "mecca for students and intellectuals" fleeing prosecution elsewhere,⁸⁷ the very reason Carl, Alfred and their circle of friends selected Zurich. Consequently, many of the early female students were Russian. The first female medical graduate from Zurich, Nadeschda Suslowa, came from St. Petersburg, graduating in 1867. This small, institutional revolution resonated internationally and led to a strong

⁸⁰ Weber, Rüdin, p. 18.

⁸¹ The parallels to Alfred Ploetz's family are striking, further strengthening Weindling's argument about the origins of early exponents of Rassenhygiene. Here is another middle-class family with a socially ambitious father. See Weindling, *Health*, p. 19, 61, 65f; Weber, Rüdin, p. 20; compare to footnote 53.

⁸² The other one being her younger brother Ernst Rüdin, who will be introduced further down.

⁸³ Weber, Rüdin, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 57. This passage is based on personal documents of Pauline Rüdin's mother.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57. This passage is based on personal documents of Pauline Rüdin's mother, as well as interviews with relatives.

⁸⁶ Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Weindling, *Health*, p. 70.

influx of European, especially Russian students. In 1873, 100 out of the 114 female students were Russian,⁸⁸ using Zurich for both political refuge and education. Pauline, a Swiss student, was an exception among this international crowd and one of the first ten Swiss women to become a Doctor of Medicine.⁸⁹ Despite the progressive air of Zurich, female doctors were in constant struggle with patriarchal prejudices and systemic obstacles to women in general. Hermann Fehling, the director of the Basel gynecological hospital, lectured in 1891:

Bei allen Betrachtungen über die Zukunftsstellung der Frau in unseren Kulturstaaten haben wir von dem Ihnen nachgewiesenen psychischen und physischen Unterschied zwischen Mann und Frau auszugehen, der von Beginn der Schöpfung an besteht, und bestehen wird, so lange es ein menschliches Geschlecht gibt. [...] für Frauen, welche Gattin und Mutter sind, [ist] die Ausübung eines praktischen Berufs ausserhalb des Hauses neben den häuslichen Pflichten, ich will nicht sagen nicht möglich, aber nicht erwünscht.⁹⁰

The biologized and mythologized determination of *the home* as female and *the professional* as male discredited women not just among fellow doctors, but also among potential patients. In October 1900, for example, Pauline had to defend her title before the police in order to keep her license, because the female doctors of Berlin had been denounced by a male colleague.⁹¹ This accounts for the outspoken resistance against bourgeois values, especially among Pauline's friends.

Zurich, Pauline Rüdin

When Pauline met Alfred during the summer of 1885, she had just begun her studies.⁹² She quickly joined a group of equal-minded academics, artists, and professionals established around Alfred and Carl. Their frequent meeting point was Carl's house on *Freie Strasse* in Hottingen, where Martha Hauptmann hosted them meticulously. Due to her family inheritance, their home was fit to host not just fellow students, but also "older professors" – "ältere Leuchten."⁹³ These established and renowned figures included the philosopher Richard Avenarius, the socialist politician and a founder of the German social democratic party August Bebel, and significantly, the psychiatrist Auguste

⁸⁸ Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ By 1897, 61 foreign and only 13 Swiss women had graduated from Zurich. Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 12.

⁹⁰ Fehling, *Bestimmung*, p. 24.

⁹¹ PP to AP, 30.5.1900, NPI-2/6.

⁹² Weindling, *Health*, p. 74.

⁹³ Hauptmann, *Beichten*, p. 612. Interestingly, Bleker quotes this exact passage in *Emanzipation und Eugenik*, where it is attributed to Agnes Bluhm's "Dank" from 1941. Either Bleker is wrong, or Agnes Bluhm blatantly copied from Hauptmann's *Beichten*. Since there is no copy of the "Dank" available for this paper, the question cannot be settled. Bleker, *Emanzipation*, p. 21.

Forel.⁹⁴ At that time, Auguste Forel was a professor at the University of Zurich, as well as head of the *Psychiatrische Universitätsklinik Zürich*, the *Burghölzli*. His projects included studies on alcoholism and sexuality as well as eugenics, feminism, and ant studies. His reputation extended well beyond the boundaries of Zurich and Switzerland and his correspondents included Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud.⁹⁵ Many of the group's members, most notably Alfred Ploetz, Agnes Bluhm, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Pauline Rüdin, were influenced by his views on alcoholism and eugenics their entire lives.⁹⁶ Alfred went so far as to declare his lifelong abstinence from alcohol to Forel.⁹⁷ Agnes Bluhm⁹⁸ equally named Auguste Forel's formative impact on their personal and scientific development and Gerhart Hauptmann received an "everlasting lesson on the human psyche".⁹⁹ Ultimately, Auguste Forel was a strong advocate for women's rights in Switzerland, which explained the appeal of the group to women, and especially female doctors.¹⁰⁰ As a mentor, Forel left an immense, hard to overestimate imprint on the group. His multifaceted and ambiguous thinking¹⁰¹ anticipated the complexity of early Rassenhygiene, combining feminism and socialism with racism and eugenics. To small-town girl Pauline, this group must have seemed extremely impressive, possibly even intimidating: International fugitives, artists and professors discussing topics of alcoholism and degeneration, Darwinism and eugenics, authorship and writing, socialism and political structures, women and bourgeoisie values, Büchner and Nietzsche.¹⁰² Gerhart described the house on *Freie Strasse* as a "platonian academy".¹⁰³ Despite the "alten Leuchten", the group was one of young and progressive thinkers. In their own perspective they laid the groundwork for the future of humanity:

⁹⁴ Other, elderly and already famous members were Gustav von Bunge, a prominent physiologist, well-known for his work on abstinence and Adolf Fick, another prominent physiologist.

⁹⁵ Walser, Forel, p. 553-554.

⁹⁶ Agnes Bluhm and Alfred Ploetz would go on to spend decades and a fortune on their respective research on the degenerative effects of alcoholism: Both financed extensive animal studies with their own fortunes and worked on these experiments for decades.

⁹⁷ Doecke, Ploetz, p. 17.

⁹⁸ "Wenn ich selbst auch nicht sofort zur Totalabstinenz überging, so wurde doch schon damals der Grund zu meiner nachmaligen wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit der Alkoholfrage gelegt." Bluhm, Dank, p. 532, quoted from Bleker, Emanzipation, p. 22.

⁹⁹ Hauptmann, Beichten, p. 613.

¹⁰⁰ Walser, Forel, p. 22: "Forel wollte die Frau grundsätzlich gleichberechtigt neben dem Manne sehen." Rohner, Frauenstimmrecht, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ Auguste Forel's case is also noteworthy in relation to his memory and the valuation of his legacy. While for a long time he has been mainly remembered as a Swiss scientific pioneer and an advocate for women's rights, the reconstruction of the university campus in Zurich seemed opportune for a student initiative in 2004, urging the university to take down Forel's bust for his eugenic past. Only 4 years earlier, until the year 2000, Forel's portrait still decorated the 1000 CHS bill. To Jakob Tanner this ends a "period of forgetting," hopefully prompting research on the complex legacy of Forel. As a number of recent publications show, this has indeed been the case. Leist, Forel, p. 7-10; Bugmann, Hypnosepolitik; Germann, Laboratorien.

¹⁰² Like a handful of stones being thrown into water, each member can be said to draw its specific ripple. For this reason, the group appears in other contexts as well, for instance in: Einsele, Kreis.

¹⁰³ Hauptmann, Beichten, p. 613.

Fast mit jedem Schritt wurde damals ein neues Morgen gesucht und erlebt. Eine nagelneue Epoche ging über der Menschheit auf. Man suchte und fand überall das Neue.¹⁰⁴

The youthful and utopian discussions of the group were an inspiring experience to Pauline, and equally to her younger brother Ernst Rüdin.¹⁰⁵ A picture of this group as mainly progressive thinkers with an unfortunate eugenic twist to their ideas and phantasies would be wrong. Despite their cry for women's rights, there was a limit with regard to female leadership and prestige. Even in this progressive environment, women remained in the background and in support roles.¹⁰⁶

Interlude, the author

This interlude aims to deal with an important tension in eugenics historiography: the trajectory of eugenics into or out of modernity. In a master-narrative of European modernity, eugenics, and even more so Rassenhygiene, have been considered an anomaly of modernity.¹⁰⁷ In this view, Rassenhygiene is entirely describable within the Nazi years. This paper, which exclusively analyzes pre-1900 developments, already hints at the shortcomings of a simple equalization between Rassenhygiene and Nazi eugenics, or even Rassenhygiene and *Euthanasie*. Eugenics and Rassenhygiene have negative connotations and their stories are told as a trajectory out of modernity. This problematic version of the story enables contemporary genetics to emphasize its difference to *old eugenics* and to claim the moral high ground.¹⁰⁸

A more troubling¹⁰⁹ interpretation understands international eugenics, including Rassenhygiene, as an integral part of modernity. In its mechanism for control over sexuality, this other perspective understands eugenics as an instance of Foucauldian biopower, forming a central element in a biopolitical concept of modernity.¹¹⁰ The “German anomaly” could consequently be reinterpreted as

¹⁰⁴ Hautpmann, Beicheten, p. 616. Weindling describes this as a “virtual epidemics of utopianism,” Weindling, *Health*, p. 72.

¹⁰⁵ Ernst Rüdin, born in 1874, would go on to become one of the most successful race hygienists, shaping two psychiatric institutions in Basel and Munich and greatly participating in the 1933 “Gesetz zur Verhütung erkrankten Nachwuchses”. Weindling calls him the “co-founder of German eugenics;” Weindling, *Health*, p. 72. Weber writes about Alfred's and Pauline's influence: “Der Einfluss von Alfred Ploetz und Pauline Rüdin sowohl auf die späteren wissenschaftlichen Interessensgebiete als auch auf die Berufswahl Ernst Rüdins kann kaum hoch genug bewertet werden[...].” Weber, Rüdin, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ Despite Alfred Ploetz's open criticism to bourgeois values and his socialist agitations, his comfort seemed to have taken the upper hand in this idealist struggle: Already during the marriage with Pauline Ploetz, she was the one to lead the household during their stay in the US: he spoke of “her domestic duties” and her “talent as a chef”. Even more contradictory: he would go on to actively harm the artistic evolution of his second wife, crippling her career. AP to Leutel, 4.10.91, NPI-1/25. Nonetheless, emancipation and eugenics is an extremely fruitful area of tension for historians to examine further. An edition of letters between Alfred Ploetz and Agnes Bluhm, titled “Emanzipation und Eugenik,” contains interesting observations but remains superficial in its results. Bleker, *Emanzipation*.

¹⁰⁷ Tanner, *Eugenik*, p. 458.

¹⁰⁸ Regina Wecker and Lena Koch both agree on the interwoven nature of clinical genetics and eugenics and on both being ambivalent in terms of their scientific and discriminatory nature.

¹⁰⁹ Troubling because it would imply both a “moral risk” inherent in modern genetics, as well as an ambivalent moment in modernity itself.

¹¹⁰ Wecker, *Eugenik*, p. 24; Foucault, *Sexuality*.

a core element of modernity. Appearing in totalitarian environments as much as in democratic states, eugenics then becomes “part of modernity and the processes of modernization.”¹¹¹ If Rassenhygiene cannot be marginalized as an anomaly of modernity, this, in turn, reflects back on the nature of contemporary genetics. Eugenics, forming part of the greater project of “modernity,” did not simply cease to exist in 1945; post-WW II genetics incorporated the ideas. Human genetics only differ gradually from *old eugenics*, serving as the moment of control over the body and sexuality that is so constitutive to the nation state.¹¹²

Zurich, Pauline Rüdin and Alfred Ploetz

Choosing a bride was a complex decision for the young men around Alfred. Ideally, a wife would be a “healthy, Germanic type who would provide him with children, able to understand the importance of his scientific projects and have the financial means to support these projects.”¹¹³ The seemingly best choice was Agnes Bluhm, to whom he was briefly engaged in the summer of 1887. Despite the good fit – Agnes Bluhm was everything of the above – he gave priorities to personal and not financial happiness and decided on Pauline Rüdin, who attracted him when they met in 1885; this decision was heavily influenced by Carl and his wife.¹¹⁴ Despite Pauline’s good relationship with her parents, she only informed them of the engagement in the spring of 1888 via a letter. They in turn only reluctantly approved of the engagement, mainly because of Alfred’s socialist political standing.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, the young couple was engaged, and both were nearing the end of their education. They held a private marriage in St. Gallen in May of 1890.

¹¹¹ Wecker, *Eugenik*, p. 14.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24-37. Bauman, *Ambivalence*.

¹¹³ Weindling, *Health*, p. 74.

¹¹⁴ The process of choosing an appropriate bride typifies the treatment of women within the group: Even though the men favored women’s rights, she is set as the passive part in the marriage. Alfred’s behavior must have been extremely awkward not just to Pauline, but all the women involved. AP to MtH and M(ar)i(a) H(auptmann), 8.5.1888, CHA-K121; Weindling, *Health*, p. 74.

¹¹⁵ Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 57. She bases this passage on oral interviews with direct relatives of Pauline Rüdin’s.

IV. Doctors in America

Zurich, Alfred and Pauline Ploetz

While Pauline, then 24, finished her dissertation on extra-uterine pregnancy in 1890, her new husband Alfred worked in the physiological laboratory with Justus Gaule studying matters of heredity in frogs.¹¹⁶ The two freshly approbated doctors remained highly ambivalent toward their profession. The long-term goal was not to practice medicine, but to work as scientists. Alfred especially thought it was essential to conduct breeding experiments on simple mammals (chickens or rabbits) in order to find evidence of the counter-selective effects of alcoholism, and also of socialist institutions.¹¹⁷ These institutions, allegedly, had a degenerative effect because they freed people from the (economic) struggle for existence.¹¹⁸ A demonstrative example might be a poor baby that would (should) have died; but thanks (due) to health insurance survived. Unlikely to receive funding from the state, they were dependent on their own income and savings to finance this animal husbandry. The state had limited funds available¹¹⁹, and especially in this early phase, Rassenhygiene was not an institutionalized science or subject, which meant it was not represented in academia or politics.¹²⁰ To fund their farm, they needed a different plan.

Interlude, the author

Doctors were not paid well in Germany at the turn of the 20th century. There was a surplus of medical graduates and regulations against Swiss-educated doctors, culminating in the deprivation of the Swiss approbation in Germany in July 1900. This legislation targeted women especially for they were exclusively educated in Zurich.¹²¹ While this was a disappointment to many middle-class families who hoped to rise socially and economically by sending their children to university, it also pushed graduating doctors to other fields.¹²² Weindling detects a driving force behind the emerging

¹¹⁶ Weindling, *Health*, p. 75.

¹¹⁷ AP to Leutel, 29.4.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹¹⁸ For example: AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹¹⁹ This limited state funding is a further point to challenge the unification-thesis of Weindling. Had Rassenhygiene been in fact so important to the German nation state, why would it have led such a modest existence until the first decade of the 20th century, more than 30 years after unification?

¹²⁰ In 1892 he wrote: "Leider Gottes ist bei meinem Geldmangel die Anerkennung anderer Wissenschaftler für mich nötig, um eventuell die notwendigen Forschungsmittel und -erleichterungen zu bekommen, die man an einem obskuren Arzt in einer amerikanischen Provinzstadt nicht verschwenden wird." AP to CH, 26.8.1892, CHA-K121. This only changed in the first decades of the 20th century, when numerous national, international, and societal funds and societies were established with the aim of advancing eugenic ideals. Central to Zurich was the "Julius-Klaus" foundation. See Germann, *Laboratorien*.

¹²¹ Bleker, *Ärztinnen*, p. 29-31.

¹²² Weindling, *Health*, p. 63-75.

field of Rassenhygiene; frustrated doctors who could not work as doctors developed a new employment sector: Rassenhygiene. A second solution was to emigrate. Correspondingly and hinting at the seriousness of the situation, some American states had extraordinarily tough regulations concerning foreign approbations. In addition, German doctors already living in the US were spreading rumors about tough requirements cutting the inflow of German doctors to avoid possible competition.¹²³

Paris, Alfred and Pauline Ploetz

The young couple's idea was simple, yet far reaching and ambitious: go abroad, make enough money to live for several years, develop a new science, publish books, become famous, save humanity from degeneration, and breed the super-human.¹²⁴ Yet there was another, less ideological, factor, as well: get away from the suffocating proximity of Pauline's parents.¹²⁵

A friend arranged work and lodging for them in Paris. In June 1890, they arrived at Place du Pantheon to begin work and study in a hospital. Alfred had already commenced to collect material, mainly genealogical trees, for his dissertation. They planned to continue gathering data for scientific project on *questions of variation*, working together closely.¹²⁶ It is appropriate to speak of this project as "theirs" and not "his," because Pauline was instrumental in the development of the race hygienic program.¹²⁷ Although nothing has been published under her name, Alfred's letters account for her importance not only in formulating the ideas of Rassenhygiene, but also in conducting the experiments; in later letters he wrote about "our work" as "actively promoted" by Pauline.¹²⁸

At first, the couple planned to move to "Capland," South Africa, where Alfred's laboratory friend worked.¹²⁹ They liked living in Paris, but their letters disclose an aversion toward the French. Alfred went so far as to abandon his cosmopolitanism in favor of a renewed pan-Germanism when confronted with the French backwardness:

¹²³ AP to Leutel, 14.12.1891, NPl-1/25.

¹²⁴ AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891: "Wir haben überhaupt im Allgemeinen folgende Pläne: Praxis als erbärmliche Beschäftigung wird aufgesteckt, sobald wir damit genügend verdient haben, um eine Tierzucht in etwas geringerem Masstabe betreiben zu können. Diese wollen wir in Deutschland (oder bei Zürich) einrichten und verbinden mit wissenschaftlichen Experimenten à la Darwin. Wenn's Glück gut geht, wird damit allmählich ein biologisches Laboratorium verbunden. Das ist der einzige Weg, auf dem ich zu wissenschaftlicher Arbeit gelangen kann." NPl-1/25, AP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹²⁵ AP to CH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121: "Wir wollen sogar so rasch wie möglich fort, um der Beaufsichtigung, wie sie aus der Liebe entfließt, zu entgehen."

¹²⁶ These questions would develop into the race hygienic theory in 1895. AP to CH and MtH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121.

¹²⁷ Not just Pauline Ploetz, but Maria Hauptmann, too, collected and interpreted data. AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891, NPl-1/25.

¹²⁸ AP to Leutel, 22.7.1892, CHA-K321. This remained true after their divorce in 1898, when Pauline was helping her brother, Ernst Rüdín, with biological and psychological experiments and data collection. Rohner, *Frauenstudium*, p. 59.

¹²⁹ AP to CH and MtH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121.

Überhaupt bin ich wieder Pangermanist geworden, einfach weil ich glaube, dass keine Rasse so gute organisatorische Fähigkeiten hat und weil diese allein die Durchführung des Sozialismus, wie vieler anderer Kulturaufgaben, ermöglichen.¹³⁰

The criterion for being a good race was the implantation of socialism, the most advanced of all ideologies. A cultural property differentiated one race from another. This is a poignant example of how their thinking combined socialist convictions and premises with eugenic methods, by making one the indicator of the other.

Interlude, the author

This quote further exemplifies the fluidity between two important dichotomies. It accounts for the limits of definite classification of Alfred Ploetz's thinking in regard to the role of the nation state and any "transnational" aspect to early Rassenhygiene.¹³¹ He frequently switched between pan-German nationalist and pan-White transnational rhetoric. Secondly, the quote is another strong indication of the fluid border between scientific and cultural categories. Race articulates itself through organizational skills and "Kulturaufgaben"; those are its distinguishing features. A separation between scientific facts and cultural interpretation cannot be an adequate path for historians of science to take. Scientific facts, like all societal phenomena, lie embedded in an historical context. These interactions, the mutual interference between "science and politics", are to be made visible.¹³²

Furthermore, this passage allows to comment on an old historiographic debate about structure versus agent. While structural explanations like Weindling's and Stahnisch's have their justified place among the contingent factors that led to their journey, and with it the emergence of Rassenhygiene, a less systemic, more idiosyncratic and personal force can also be distinguished. They wanted to escape the proximity of Pauline's parents. Because of Alfred's political standing and past, their marriage was not contested by the family. They therefore meant to get away quickly in order to evade the "oversight, as results from love."¹³³ The polyphone approach makes motivations both on the micro, personal level and the macro, structural level visible, allowing for the aspired *Jeux d'Échelles*. This includes revealing the interdependent nature of micro and macro factors.

¹³⁰ AP to CH and MtH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121.

¹³¹ Compare to Interludes on pages 20 and 34.

¹³² See: Hagner, *Forschung als Politik*.

¹³³ AP to CH, 23.6.1890, CHA-K121: "Wir wollen sogar so rasch wie möglich fort, um der Beaufsichtigung, wie sie der Liebe entfließt, zu entgehen."

Springfield MA, Pauline and Alfred Ploetz

In winter 1890, they ultimately decided against South Africa, and instead embarked on a journey to the United States, where they were greeted by a contact of Auguste Forel's.¹³⁴ Their first home was Springfield, Massachusetts. Their newly opened practice worked under precarious conditions; at first, they had neither examination nor operating tables.¹³⁵ The patients came almost exclusively from the German community, which was both due to language barriers and cultural issues of trust:

Unsere Patienten sind so gut wie ausschliesslich Deutsche. [...] Ich glaube kaum, dass je Amerikaner zu mir kommen werden. Der Durchschnitts-Amerikaner hält die Leistungen seiner Landsleute für die besten der Welt.¹³⁶

The conditions made the young Ploetz family homesick, Pauline more so than Alfred. Their letters were full of frustration concerning the Americans, at being doctors, the German community and its alcoholism, their personal relationships, their marriage, and the weather. In a letter dating from their first months in the US Alfred wrote of “colossal deprivations,”¹³⁷ despite each other’s company, and Pauline sent “lament after lament”¹³⁸ across the Atlantic. They were not just disappointed in Springfield, but in the medical profession and human beings at large.

Im Grossen und Ganzen ist die Geschichte zu viel mit Betrug verquickt, ausserdem kann es Einem unmöglich behagen, das Verhalten der natürlichen Zuchtwahl auf Schritt und Tritt zu durchkreuzen und einem immer jämmerlicheren Nachwuchs die Geburtswege zu ebnet. So gut der praktizierende Arzt in einzelnen Fällen für das Individuum ist, so schädlich ist er für das Wohl der Nachkommen, wenn er nicht eifrig für eine Hygiene der Zeugung eintritt, was er nicht kann, weil nichts Positives darüber bekannt ist, und wenn dies der Fall wäre, seine Praxis und sein Ansehen bei den Leuten darunter leiden würde. Diese Leute sind nämlich wirklich zu dumm. Jetzt durch die tägl. Berührung mit Ihnen und durch den völligen Einblick in Ihr Familienleben lernt man das so genannte Volk kennen und ganz und gar nicht lieben. Viel mehr Egoismus und Unwissenheit als ich mir träumen liess.¹³⁹

Alfred came to despise what he saw as the hypocrisy of the medical practice, helping sickly individuals while harming the race and therefore the offspring. Pauline dealt differently with the isolation and the frustration, she became depressed and lonely. In a letter to Martha Hauptmann she

¹³⁴ Weindling, *Health*, p. 75.

¹³⁵ AP to Leutel, 14.12.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹³⁶ AP to Auguste Forel, 22.4.1891, in: Walser, *Forel Briefe*, p. 259.

¹³⁷ AP to Leutel, 29.4.1891, NPI-1/25; AP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121; AP to Leutel, 22.7.1892, CHA-K321.

¹³⁸ PP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹³⁹ AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891, NPI-1/25.

wrote the disillusioned line: “Here one becomes frugal.” In an autobiographical account Alfred stated:

Dass auch die Medizin nicht der gerade Weg für mich sein könnte, war mir zwar klar, und die Notwendigkeit einer selbstständigen Wissenschaft der biologischen Hebung der Rasse, die ja nicht das Interesse der Medizin hatte, die Schwachen und Kranken zu bewahren, sondern die Tüchtigkeit zu fördern, rief nach einer von den bisherigen humanitären Richtungen unabhängigen, neuen Wissenschaft, aber die Notwendigkeit, mein Leben, und damit die Möglichkeit, für meine Ideale zu arbeiten, ökonomisch zu sichern, drängte trotzdem zum Studium der Medizin.¹⁴⁰

“Medicine cannot be the way, [...] only an independent science of the biological enhancement of the race” could achieve the race hygienic project that worked against the objectives of medicine, “humanitarian” deliverance of the weak and sick – the *individual hygiene*. Their ideals would compel them to only allow the fittest to breed and consequently produce offspring. However, the lack of employment possibilities meant they had to make a living another way, medical practice. During and through this practice Alfred came to despise the sick people he worked for, thinking of them as stupid; he learned “not to love them at all.” The only option was to control the wellbeing of the offspring, which implied controlling sexuality. However, this was not yet a feasible path either in terms of scientific knowledge and public opinion.

Nonetheless, the couple’s focus was increasingly centered around *sexual hygiene*.¹⁴¹ This meant to put the impetus on future generations and not the current patient.¹⁴² Complete control of sexual intercourse, the choice of partner, the time of day, the diet in the weeks before and after, the moon cycle, and other factors were part of this sexual hygiene. Despite the central role of sexual hygiene, they had little suggestions for actual hygienic measures. They believed they could predict the gender of an unborn child with 90% confidence by analyzing the family tree and the act itself. Through sexual hygiene, the struggle for existence - the *Kampf ums Dasein*¹⁴³ - would be taken to cell level, not affecting the individual human beings anymore. This, of course, included the necessity of eliminating the majority of the population; that is, for most babies not to be born or better yet, not to

¹⁴⁰ Ploetz, Lebenserinnerungen, quoted from Doecke, Ploetz, p. 13-14.

¹⁴¹ In the *Tüchtigkeit*, Alfred Ploetz differentiates between three hygienes. *Individualhygiene* is synonymous with medicine. The antonym to *Individualhygiene* is the *Rassenhygiene*, which deals with the wellbeing of the *Volkskörper*. Ultimately, *Sexualhygiene* implies the complete control over the sexual act itself. Ploetz, *Tüchtigkeit*, p. 3-10, 224-237.

¹⁴² In the book “Die Tüchtigkeit der Rassen” Alfred Ploetz introduced the second generation as “Devarianten” and the contemporaries as “Covarianten.” Ploetz, *Tüchtigkeit*, p. 30-35.

¹⁴³ It is important to differentiate between the different additional meanings between *struggle* and *Kampf*. *Kampf* would usually be translated as *battle* or *fight*. These military connotations hold a much stronger and more urgent appeal for action. A *struggle* is more internal, a more evolving and stable concept while a *Kampf* can be won, but also lost for good.

be conceived. Ultimately, the objective was never “only” to stop degeneration, but to simultaneously elevate the human race (more accurately, the white race) to higher levels:

Können wir bewirken, dass bei beinahe jeder Zeugung die Vollkraft der Eltern ungeschmälert übertragen wird, vielleicht sogar im Sinne grösserer Differenzierung und Machtäusserung vermehrt wird? Also “progressive Variation” zu bewirken ist mein Ideal.¹⁴⁴

In October 1891, less than a year after arriving in Springfield, they moved to Meriden, Connecticut, mainly because there were “too few Germans.”¹⁴⁵ Social isolation made relocation more attractive; with more Germans there were more patients, money, and potential friends.¹⁴⁶

Interlude, the author

In spite of Alfred’s dominance over their private and public relations, Pauline’s central role to the formation of the “science” of Rassenhygiene remains beyond doubt.¹⁴⁷ She never published nor was she mentioned in the *Tüchtigkeit*; her contribution was completely silenced with respect to the public. It is unknown if she was frustrated by the appropriation of her work, first by her husband and later her brother. This cannot be solved until her personal papers are made available. The contemporary inaccessibility is revealing with regard to our time and the authority of the archive over “history.” Despite the onerous epistemological situation of Pauline’s papers, her perspective can offer rewarding insights into the role of women in science at that time, its systemic understatement, and, therefore, historiographic underestimation. This topic will arise again in later chapters.

The aforementioned quotes offer another clue concerning the first of the three main questions: The central idea of Rassenhygiene derived not from lack of opportunity within the medical profession, as Weindling suggests, but from direct experience with it. Despite being right about counter-medical aspirations of early Rassenhygiene, Weindling misinterprets this as the frustrated reaction of “wannabe” doctors. In fact, it was frustration resulting from medical practice that prompted these ideas, encountering the same maladies and patients, and wasting their time and society’s resources.¹⁴⁸ “The weak do not deserve to be born” is a conviction acquired and especially

¹⁴⁴ AP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹⁴⁵ AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹⁴⁶ AP to CH, 4.10.1891, NPI-1/25: “Je einsamer man sich hier vorkommt, desto eher riskiert man etwas, um rascher Geld zu bekommen.”

¹⁴⁷ This contribution is further made explicit in a letter from Alfred Ploetz on data evaluation and Rassenhygiene: “meine Arbeit, an der mir Paule mehr und mehr hilft.” AP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹⁴⁸ Alfred Ploetz wrote a letter to Carl Hauptmann, stating how “it is known that, except for a few exceptions, the healing power of the doctor equals zero,” expressing his disillusionment with being a doctor. AP to CH, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

consolidated through treating patients. Attempting to quantify the usefulness of Rassenhygiene versus medicine and abstention from alcohol, Alfred Ploetz allegedly found a ratio of 85 to 5 to 10.¹⁴⁹ While the arbitrary nature of the numbers is given, they nevertheless express Alfred's idealism with respect to *sexual hygiene*, and inversely his frustration with medicine.

While superficially this seems a mere quibble, Weindling's Germany-centered explanation reinforces a narrative of German exceptionalism. Focusing on the doctor's practice in general allows for the explanation to become broader, possibly including eugenic movements elsewhere.

Meriden CT, Alfred and Pauline Ploetz

Despite being a smaller city, Meriden housed a considerably larger German community than Springfield, promising more patients. Additionally, Alfred considered the three German doctors already in Meriden to be charlatans, one being a pastor, one an organist, and the last an alcoholic.¹⁵⁰ Meriden also offered the potential of more income, the main reason for their move. Moving in the winter of 1890, they quickly professionalize their equipment and settle into a more defined routine:

Es geht überhaupt hier viel besser wie in Springfield, auch ist Meriden als Stadt viel gemüthlicher, so dass wir uns beide ziemlich wohl hier fühlen, [...] Uns geht's hier fortdauernd gut, so dass wir uns ein notwendiges Möbel geleistet haben.¹⁵¹

Despite a busy practice, Alfred and Pauline continued collecting genealogical data, considering it central and decisive to their research. They frequently reported their growing number of individuals recorded in the genealogical trees to Europe: 450 people in April 1890¹⁵², 936 in 1891¹⁵³, over 1000 in January 1892¹⁵⁴, 2430 people in September 1892¹⁵⁵. By then, Alfred felt their sources drying up. He planned to convince the Harugari order, a society promoting German language and culture in the US, to ask their numerous members to submit trees, which would make this “one of the biggest genealogical works” of his time.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ AP to Leutel, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹⁵⁰ For the German population in Meriden, that amounted to about 4'000 people, 4 doctors seems like a fairly small number in comparison to, for example, the German 2015 average of 4.1 doctors per 1000 people in 2016. However, this number of 1/1000 seemed to be the limit of doctors the economy could sustain: AP to Leutel, 4.10.1891; AP to Leutel, 14.12.1891: Alfred describes an Austrian doctor arriving from Europe, who heard about an open position in Meriden. When he arrived in Meriden and found Alfred already in place, he turns away in disappointment: “Vor kurzem kam ein österr. Arzt hier an, [...] der enttäuscht mich hier schon vorfand.” This episode can hint at the number of doctors a market would sustain, and 1/1000 seems to be this number. AP to CH, 14.12.1891, NPI-1/25. OECD DATA, Doctors. <oced.org/healthres/doctors.html> [Status: 27.5.2018].

¹⁵¹ AP to Leutel, 14.12.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹⁵² AP to Leutel, 29.4.1890, NPI-1/25.

¹⁵³ AP to Leutel, 4.10.1891, NPI-1/25.

¹⁵⁴ AP to CH, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121.

¹⁵⁵ AP to Leutel, 5.9.1892, NPI-3/1.

¹⁵⁶ AP to Leutel, 5.9.1892, NPI-3/1.

In August 1892, Alfred's parents crossed the Atlantic to join them in Meriden.¹⁵⁷ His father had seriously injured his ribs, lung, and liver in a factory accident; he arrived in the US a dying man. While Alfred was generally calmed and encouraged by the presence of his parents, they had the opposite effect on Pauline. Even with their brightening economic outlook, their personal life worsened. The lowest point, for Alfred, was his father's death in September 1893. Alfred painted this loss as a profound turning point in his life:

Der Tod meines Vaters hat einen grossen Einfluss auf mich gehabt, eine Reihe von Wertmassstäben sind geändert. [...] Mein Cosmopolitismus war ein bisschen ins Wanken geraten, ist aber jetzt wohl für alle Zukunft gesichert. Ich meine nicht bloss die theoretische Überzeugung, sondern auch das fortwährende Gefühl.¹⁵⁸

This was the first death of a loved one. The inherent value of each life was, possibly for the first time, brought to Alfred's attention. Even his position on religion changed from strictly antipathetic to more understanding.¹⁵⁹ Subsequently, this loss ended the necessary, time-consuming care, allowing the two doctors to resume their race hygienic program. As the quote above attests, the doubts on the cosmopolitan vs. pan-Germanic focus of his ideology that began in Paris was, for the moment, settled. Alfred described his cosmopolitanism as indefinitely fortified – “für alle Zukunft gesichert.” This included not just a “theoretical conviction,” but also an “enduring feeling.” This passage directly relates to the letter from Paris quoted above, in which, he commented on his wavering cosmopolitanism and renewed pan-Germanism.¹⁶⁰ For the time being, this pan-white attitude remained strong and predominant in the concept of Rassenhygiene.

Interlude, the author

To Pauline, this whole episode must have felt utterly different. Alfred Ploetz's grandchildren remember her as being in great conflict with Alfred's parents.¹⁶¹ However, these are not Pauline's grandchildren but the descendants of his second wife, what makes this hearsay. This could nonetheless imply that she did not take part in this “softening” of extreme positions, that she may have been the carrier of the ideas on the *Umwert*. Unfortunately, neither letters nor personal documents survive to tell the tale, demonstrating the limits of the polyphone approach with regards to Pauline.

¹⁵⁷ AP to CH, 1.8.1892, NPI-3/1.

¹⁵⁸ AP to Leutel, 6.10.1893, CHA-K121.

¹⁵⁹ AP to Leutel, 6.10.1893, CHA-K121: “Zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben habe ich tief empfunden, eine wie grosse Wohltat der Auferstehungsglaube für die ist, die glauben können, und wie tief die heutigen Religionen im Menschen wurzeln.”

¹⁶⁰ AP to Leutel, 22.7.1892, CHA-K321. Compare to footnote 130.

¹⁶¹ In the family's recollection, this is in fact the main reason for the separation of Alfred from Pauline Ploetz. Interview with Alfred and Gerhart Ploetz, 4.4.2018, Herrsching am Ammersee.

Without the appropriate sources, her voice will always remain concealed by Alfred's. He wrote most personal letters in both their names. Detecting female agency is, in this case at least, to work against the sources.

Secondly, this fluidity of rhetoric on the nation state in the passage above mirrors that from their time in Paris. Through Alfred's thinking of these years, there was a transition from pan-Germanic (*Ikarier*), to cosmopolitan socialism (*Freie Strasse*), back to a Germanic focus (*Paris*), to the renewed and "forever fortified" cosmopolitanism above. Any static description, including the *transnational*, cannot adequately describe this early Rassenhygiene. Fluidity was a more or less conscious tool; it enabled Rassenhygiene to behave opportunistically and mobilize support from Germanic-national as well as socialist-transnational circles.

Meriden CT, Alfred and Pauline Ploetz

On November 6, 1892 Alfred published "Trostworte an einen naturwissenschaftlichen Hamlet" in the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*. In poetic language, he outlined the main conflict of Rassenhygiene between socialist protection and empowerment of the oppressed and the need for a *Kampf* for the race. A shortened version states:

[...] Seit dem grauen Alter ertönt der Schrei der Unterdrückten gegen dieses grausame Naturgesetz [The *Kampf ums Dasein*]: Wir wollen keinen Kampf, wir wollen Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit! [...]

Da kommt eine Anzahl ernster Gelehrter und verkünden: Ihr erstrebt die Entartung unseres Geschlechts! [...] Wir werden einen beispiellosen Niedergang unsere Kultur erleben. [...] Ihr könnt durch Erziehung nur entwickeln, was als Anlage schon da ist. [...] Es kommt also alles auf die Erhaltung und Verbesserung der Anlagen an. [...] Alles in allem: Eure Ideale wollen den Kampf ums Dasein aufgeben. Damit verurteilt ihr die Menschen zur allmählichen Entartung. [...]

Es ist nicht bloss ein Ideal, erwidern die Unterdrückten, es ist eine geschichtliche Notwendigkeit, die kommen muss.

Sollte es nicht doch einen Ausweg geben?

Der Menschegeist bezwingt so viel. Wenn er erforschte, welche Bedingungen es sind, unter denen die Eltern Kinder zeugen, welche bessere Anlagen haben als sie selbst, wenn er die

Gesetze der Variabilität erforscht und ihre Erscheinungen unter die Macht der Menschen beugt! [...] Dann wäre der Fortschritt gewährleistet, der Kampf ums Dasein, der bewusste und unbewusste Wettbewerb der Einzelnen um Nahrung und Kinder wäre überflüssig zur Erhaltung und Vervollkommnung der Schönheit und Kraft unserer Art. [...] ¹⁶²

This article was the first public appearance of core race hygienic ideas and published in a leftist German newspaper in New York. While reception was limited, it nonetheless comprehensively laid out the main conflict within the arena of racial Darwinism versus Marxist socialism. The scientific Hamlet attempts reconciliation between evolution of socialist institutions and their “counter-selective” effects. The *Kampf*¹⁶³ would be restored, not on the individual level, but on that of reproductive cells. A state and its doctors would only allow qualified offspring to be produced, thereby eliminating existence of the “weak and incapable” in a “humane” way.¹⁶⁴

Alfred's solution was claiming to be something new, a path out of a seemingly inevitable collision of ideologies. Published in a leftist newspaper, he sought to sensitize American socialists to what he perceived as their most pressing issue. The piece simultaneously spoke to the American and German–American communities by using German with reference to Hamlet, a work of English literature. The intended audience was not a eugenic scientist but a socialist agitator whom he tries to scare with degenerative dystopias and lure with the innocuousness of *sexual hygiene*. While his language was approachable, his ambition, attempting to bridge too many divides in too little space, may account for its limited resonance with the American public.

Interlude, the author

The development of *sexual hygiene* ties into a growing conception of disposability of the individual human being, especially one that is eugenically less “valuable.” Out of *sexual hygiene* and the contempt for the hypocrisy of the medical practice grew a notion of worthlessness - *Umwert* - of an individual life.

Das Schauspielertum, zu dem ein Arzt verdammt ist, die allmähliche gänzliche Abstumpfung gegen menschliches Leid, das stete Bewusstsein der Notwendigkeit alles Geschehens, nagen allmählich die Wurzeln des Idealismus an. Ich kann nicht mehr so lebhaft für das Volk empfinden, für diese schmutzige, gemeine, hässliche Gesellschaft, wie früher [...] Die

¹⁶² Ploetz, *Trostworte*, shortened version, NPI-4/1. See for more commentary Becker, *Rassenhygiene*, p. 61-63.

¹⁶³ Compare to footnote 143.

¹⁶⁴ AP to CH, 24.10.1891, NPI-3/1.

aristokratischen darwinistischen und die demokratischen sozialistischen Forderungen sind doch tiefere Gegensätze, als ich je gedacht habe.¹⁶⁵

Instead of focusing on “unworthy life” within a given generation, it is “unworthy offspring” that Alfred and Pauline Ploetz labor to prevent. Nonetheless, their contemporaries, too, turned increasingly “unworthy,” becoming a mass of “dirty, common and ugly people.” The inevitability of their degeneration, as the quote above indicates, causes Alfred Ploetz to doubt his socialism. In a longer story of Rassenhygiene, the struggle between the “aristocratic Darwinism” and the “democratic socialism” was firmly decided in favor of the former. Given the complex nature of the concept of *life unworthy of life*, one thread of its story can be traced to their doctor’s practice in Connecticut, however humble that thread may be.¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, this newspaper article exemplifies usage of the two ideologies pertaining to a respective structuring of time. Both ideologies offer tools and explanatory categories to elucidate the evolution of past and future in clear and calculable (unambivalent) rules. They offer a rule based, mechanical understanding of time. The Marxist ideology, as understood by Alfred, contains a dialectic, power-based, and teleological system. In the article, this is represented by the oppressed that speak of an “unpreventable historic necessity.” Dating to a dim era before time – a *graue Vorzeit* – the dialectical stages of history have unfolded on the world stage, leading to the inevitable establishment of socialist institutions.¹⁶⁷ The oppressing force of the ruling class determines past, present, and future and the oppressed’s struggle against that class. In contrast, the Darwinist ideology formulates its explanation of time in the biologized termini of evolution. The article illustrates this through the voice of the scientists. Past, present, and future, in this other temporalization, are determined by the pitiless forces of limited natural resources and the inter-racial fight over them. In combination of the two ideologies the inevitable dawn of socialist institutions has – inescapably – degenerative effects on the race. Even though both great explanations were seemingly mutually contradictory, there persisted a way out: *sexual hygiene*. The common ground, the applicability of both ideologies at the same time lies in their shared temporalization.

¹⁶⁵ AP to Leutel, 22.7.1892, CHA-K321.

¹⁶⁶ Within the polyphone there is a risk of falling victim to an apologetic moment. The responsibility of Rassenhygiene and the people involved, both in concepts like *life unworthy of life*, but also in a scientific legitimization of the Nazi regime, must not be forgotten. Contemporary eugenic ideas should be particularly scrutinized because they, too, make use of the veil of the *collective good* and the *inevitable*.

¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, this “graue Vorzeit” begins with the cries of the French revolution, revealing the relatively short horizon until history becomes myth to Alfred Ploetz.

Meriden CT, Alfred and Pauline Ploetz

With the beginning of an economic depression in 1893, staying in the US was unappealing. Unable to make a profit, their crisis continued to worsen. On February 5, 1894, Maria and Gerhart Hauptmann with their three children arrived to visit the Ploetz family in Meriden. Their marriage in crisis due to Gerhart's notorious infidelity, this journey was meant to save it.¹⁶⁸ This time marked the end of the Ploetz's stay in the US and in May 1894, the two families returned to Europe together. While they wrote about leaving the US almost as soon as they arrived there, returning to Europe was mainly due to the financial recession.¹⁶⁹

Upon their return to Europe, Pauline (and Alfred) opened a practice in Berlin, though considering Alfred's habitual and extended stays with Carl in Schreiberhau, Silesia, he was not likely to have participated greatly.¹⁷⁰ In 1895, he published his book with the full title: "Die Tüchtigkeit unserer Rasse und der Schutz der Schwachen. Ein Versuch über Rassenhygiene und ihr Verhältnis zu den humanen Idealen, besonders zum Sozialismus. Grundlinien einer Rassenhygiene 1. Teil." The main ideas did not differ from the article in the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*. Alfred and Pauline's marriage did not survive long beyond their return, ending in 1898 because Pauline did not want children.

Interlude, the author

A working thesis of this paper had been an interpretation of this second journey as a "knot", an entanglement in the transatlantic and transnational development of eugenics, both as a science and a life reform movement. For some scholars, like Frank Stahnisch, this is the case.¹⁷¹ However, the empirical evidence paints a different picture. Alfred's only major contribution to American eugenic discourse was in the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, a German newspaper, and had limited results.¹⁷² His efforts for the abolitionist cause were more pronounced; yet yielded no success. He actually abandoned his public agitations against alcoholism altogether, because it alienated him from the German community in both Springfield and Meriden, scaring away possible patients:

¹⁶⁸ Of the three Thienemanns, who married the three Hauptmanns, the first was an early widow, and the other two, Maria and Martha, had cheating husbands who, after burning through the family money, both divorced their wives and remarried considerably younger women (Gerhart in 1904, Carl in 1908). Berger, *Chronik*, p. 66-67.

¹⁶⁹ The urging pleas of their friend also played a part in this decision. AP to Leutel, 6.10.1893, CHA-K121.

¹⁷⁰ His business card reveals he only held visiting hours twice a week for only a few hours. NPI-4/1.

¹⁷¹ Stahnisch, *Early Eugenics Movement*, p. 19-22.

¹⁷² Outside Alfred Ploetz's papers and historiographic research there is no trace of a broader reception.

Dass man ein Feind der Kirchen und des Saufens ist, darf man beileibe nicht verlauten lassen, ebenso wenig, dass man sozialistische Sympathien hat. Sofort lässt der Teil der deutschen Kolonie, der sich dadurch gekränkt fühlt, einen die Sache fühlen.¹⁷³

Life in the US was to a great extent lived speaking German, which created an additional and noteworthy barrier. Ultimately, the postal service to Europe worked exceptionally well; a letter from a small village in Connecticut took two to three weeks to reach a small mountain village in southern Silesia.¹⁷⁴ This way, they both remained embedded in their social network back home.

Can an “American ingredient” to early Rassenhygiene therefore be dismissed? It would be superficial not to acknowledge the impact of American thinking on Alfred and Pauline Ploetz; not least because of the written research undoubtedly circulating across the Atlantic. The young couple decided against South Africa in favor of the US. The former would have provided a case study in evolution – the “bushmen,” the latter was a place of dreams and promises.¹⁷⁵ Alfred Ploetz’s interest in the US was always in the context of utopian colonies and visions, first with *Ikarier* and later with *Pacifica*. Their decision to make the US their home was consciously and diligently made, indicating accordance with basic American values and ideals. Consequently, because their ideals and values came in biologized and scientized form, they knew and agreed with the active eugenic community in the US, even though they did not interact with them. Additionally, Alfred (with Pauline) composed the concept for his main book in Meriden. Their disappointment with the medical profession and their judgement of people, especially sick people, is crucial to understanding the underlying moral coding of Rassenhygiene. Their views were formed and solidified through medical practice in the US. They might have had similarly disillusioning experiences with patients in Europe, but melancholy and homesickness bordering on brute aversion toward their new home contributed to a negative view on medicine, society, and individual human beings. Nonetheless, to think of this journey as proof of an early transatlantic eugenic movement, that is to interpret Alfred and Pauline Ploetz in this instance as transatlantic eugenic theorists – as appealing as such a story would be – cannot be sustained by the sources. It was only at the beginning of the 20th century, decades later, after Rassenhygiene was an established field, when he was received as a eugenicist in the US. His journeys in the 19th century went unnoticed by the eugenic circles, coming to the US as a socialist utopian at first, and the second time as – in self-denomination – an “obscure doctor in a provincial American town.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ AP to CH, 14.1.1892, CHA-K121; also AP to Auguste Forel, 22.4.1891, in: Walser, Forel Briefe, p. 259-260.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, AP to Leutel, 14.12.1891, in which he states on December 14th that this letter might almost make it for New Year's. This implies a high grade of reliability and a time span of a little less than three weeks for a letter to make the trip. See: NPI-1/25.

¹⁷⁵ AP and PP to Leutel, 23.6.1891, CHA-K121; Weindling, Health, p. 75.

¹⁷⁶ AP to CH, 26.8.1892, CHA-K121.

Early Rassenhygiene, we learned, was in conflict with the German nation state due to its socialist impetus. This manifested not just in the abrupt flight from Wroclaw, but also in hardships on a personal level regarding the Swiss approbation of doctors. Through their socialism, the group around Alfred Ploetz also differed from mainstream eugenics. However, throughout the first half of the 20th century, Rassenhygiene lost a lot of its socialist demands and evolved towards more mainstream eugenics, which call for an extremely strong and potent state, in nuce a totalitarian state. Rassenhygiene, as well as the German nation state, have therefore moved toward one another in terms of ideological composition. This was not a mere incidental correlation; they benefited and influenced each other in the course, mutually strengthening and legitimizing the totalitarian aspirations.

C. Polyphone&

The analytical discussion aims at combining the polyphone with the core analytical categories gender, space, and ambivalence. Those are the categories that suggested themselves through the preceding pages: *Gender* because of the complications with Pauline's voice, *space* because of the spatial nature of their utopias as well as the spatial structure of this paper and *ambivalence* because of the nature of the polyphone as well as the insights into Rassenhygiene and modernity. Primarily, the following discussion aims to take the analysis to a different level than the interludes allowed in terms of length and degree of abstraction. Secondly, the adaptability of the polyphone with other analytical categories shall not just be proclaimed but demonstrated.

Polyphone and Gender

Historiography on Pauline Ploetz has oscillated between her as a “feminist pioneer” and as the “wife of an important white man”.¹⁷⁷ With the polyphone, this paper can offer rewarding insights into female agency, as well as underlying stereotypical notions of “femininity”. Two aspects of her life demonstrate this agency in “male domains” most clearly. First lies her involvement with (hard) science, especially her contributions to the conception of Rassenhygiene, which has gone completely unnoticed by historians so far. Second her education and work as a female doctor, which are discussed by numerous publications.¹⁷⁸ Both instances suggest a well-earned place among the pioneers of female emancipation through an appropriation of formerly “male domains.” At first glance, Pauline truly seems like an extraordinarily emancipated woman, breaking with the gendered role allocation of her time that restricted women to the home and child bearing.

But with a second look, a different hypothesis can be suggested. What if Pauline was not such an exceptional case? What if the sources, the patriarch way of producing documents, had muted female agency almost beyond recognition? The polyphone approach allows tracing this agency to the micro-level, the back-corners of sources. Here, Maria Hauptmann, Gerhart's wife was also involved in creation of genealogical trees and discussion on the conception of Rassenhygiene.¹⁷⁹ Martha Hauptmann, in turn, was not just an important lector to Carl's work, she also was the administrator of his inheritance and publications, and preserved his memory, transforming his study into a

¹⁷⁷ For the former notion see historiography on female doctors like Rohner, *Frauenstudium*; Ziegeler, *Weibliche Ärzte*; Beuys, *Neuen Frauen*; Schleiermacher, *Ärztinnen*. For the latter see historiography on Rassenhygiene like Weindling, *Health*; Kühl, *Rassisten*; Becker, *Rassenhygiene*.

¹⁷⁸ Compare to footnote above.

¹⁷⁹ Evidence of this can be found in letters from Alfred thanking her for her help. AP to Leutel, 29.4.1891, NPI-1/25.

museum, for example. Despite this engagement, there is not a single publication from these three women. Neither did any institution deem their estates worthy of preservation; their personal documents are either lost or form part of their husband's archives. All of these factors suggest that female involvement in science and the arts was not the exception, yet the female voice has been systemically suppressed by the letters, the publications, the colleagues, the laws, the husbands, and the structure of the archive. The polyphone can reveal both the female agency as well as the suppressing forces of these institutions. It can go beyond retracing a case study of exceptionalism that ultimately reinforces a greater, patriarch master-narrative. The polyphone can demonstrate the systemic female agency, not the nonpareil, as well as the patriarch mechanism of appropriation of female work. Through the institutionalizing processes of the archives and the historical science, the appropriation is continually reinforced.

While the polyphone can reveal underlying notions of "femininity," it can equally be used for something that is too often left implicit, notions of "masculinity." At various times in the above pages the focus was laid on the extreme ambitions of the young men. They wanted to perceive themselves, and more importantly be perceived, as creators, renewers, saviors. This led to frustration and extreme pressure. Interestingly, financial recognition and success did not form part of the group's notion of masculinity. To the contrary, Alfred explicitly wanted his wife to be rich enough to support him through his studies. Carl and Gerhart did not act differently. Alfred also saw himself as a "father." This parenthood was not like a notion of "female parenthood" a caring, loving, and natural role, but a genetic, distanced, scientific notion of parenthood. While ideologically the men promoted the equality of the sexes, notions of gendered differences nonetheless kept the women from publishing their own work under their own name and consequently from forming part of a canon of sources on Rassenhygiene.

Polyphone and Space

The chapters of this paper were titled with reference not just to a person, but a place as well: for instance *Jena, Carl Hauptmann*. This space is no less co-created, no less perspective, than the narrative(s), and equally required special analytical scrutiny. The polyphone is an excellent tool to account for this constructivist understanding of space. Carl, Alfred, and Pauline all dreamt of the city on the Limmat. To Pauline, Zurich was her home; it was where her parents and siblings lived and where people spoke her language. To Alfred, Zurich became a place of dreams in the early 1880s, Zurich, the liberal hub; Zurich, where he could openly express his socialist ideas; Zurich, where he could openly express his racial utopia. Carl's Zurich was one of intellectual exchange with his friends. In Carl's dream, Zurich freed him from the tight institutional shackles of Jena University

and allowed him to study medicine and philosophy alike. *Zurich* was consequently a product of their imaginations, practices, and aspirations. However, *Zurich* was also a geographical space that could live up to certain, but not to all expectations. While the polyphone can make this construction of space visible, it can also demonstrate the reverse effect, the way in which spatial settings participate in the formation of social phenomena, demonstrating the mutual constitution of agents and space.

To this end, the space of the doctor's practice can be analyzed as a heterotopic space.¹⁸⁰ In a broad sense this Foucauldian concept captures spaces that lie outside the normal societal rules, thereby exemplifying these rules. The doctor's practice strongly aggravates a lopsided relationship of scientific knowledge about oneself; it is a scientific irruption into the self. The patient stands before the doctor in complete nakedness, it is a physical intrusion into the most private space usually reserved for the home. It is a relationship of complete power that arises through knowledge, the doctor understands the workings of the patient's body better than the patient herself. Simultaneously the practice is quasi-public, open to anyone who can pay. The doctor is anonymized through the white gown and the academic standards, and the doctor's practice additionally characterized through this combination of public and private space that can be interpreted as the intrusion of the former into the latter. Since a heterotopia can also be defined as the real-world applications of utopias, the doctor's practice is also heterotopic in that it is the manifestation of a utopian version of itself, the "ideal" doctor's practice.¹⁸¹ This "ideal" practice was the couple's reason to study medicine, yet they were thoroughly disappointed.

The four episodes have all been driven by utopias, by "noplaces". The first two placed the utopian aspirations in colonial projects, far outside the existing social or geographic realms of the group. For this reason, neither the *Ikarier* nor the *Pacifica* ever manifested in the concrete. The Icarian colonies Alfred Ploetz visited in the United States were a first and great disappointment in the heterotopic manifestation of such a dream. The other two episodes were less explicitly motivated by utopian fantasies, yet implicitly can be interpreted as such. Like all spaces, both Zurich and the USA were made up not just of their geographic shape and material specifications, but also of the dreams and expectations around and within them. Once visited, they unavoidably lost this veil of the dream that only the unknown can possess. The opening of a doctor's practice in the US is a further example of this heterotopic disenchantment. Rassenhygiene can be read as the utopian vision arising from the inevitable shortcomings of their heterotopic manifestations. In its claim for

¹⁸⁰ Foucault, *Andere Räume*.

¹⁸¹ This is a motive that frequently appears in the letters from the couple in order to contrast with the depressing actual (heterotopic) state. For example: AP to Leutel, 4.7.1891, NPI-1/25. Foucault, *Andere Räume*, p. 39.

a totalitarian state that aims to control even the most intimate of its subjects' spaces - their sexuality – it aims at transforming the entire social world into a doctor's practice, in order to fix the doctor's practice. Developing a utopian vision of their own out of the perceived deficiencies of a heterotopia became a proven technique. Whenever the group encountered the disappointing manifestation of one of their dreams, they formulated a new, more encompassing one, an escalation of utopias.

Polyphone and ambivalence

The polyphone and the ambivalent share an epistemological relationship on two levels, both on the phenomenon- and the meta-level. With regard to the former, the ambivalent can help to clarify the relationship between Rassenhygiene and modernity. For the social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, modernity's main characteristic was the aspiration to the development of un-ambivalent "facts." With the help of reason and science, modernity aims to overcome ambivalence, establishing scientific categories that leave no room for doubt.¹⁸² In the way they were introduced in the preceding pages, eugenics at large, as well as Rassenhygiene in particular, become a strong instance of this clarifying, unambivalent, scientific, reasonable, powerful, and political modernity.¹⁸³ Within its totalitarian, deeply undemocratic notion of the human and the state, Rassenhygiene can nonetheless typify this European modernity. This implies to break with the master-narrative of progressive modernity, and to introduce stories like the one of *life unworthy of life* concept of "modernity" in all its consequences. Taking eugenics out of the box for abnormal phenomena and instead analyzing it as an integral part of modernity can open new perspectives upon modernity at large, perspectives that include violent and deeply undemocratic moments and refute the master narrative of "progress".¹⁸⁴

This perspective, according to Bauman, could be called the postmodern perspective, through which the vanity of the un-ambivalent becomes apparent.¹⁸⁵ This paves the way to reflect upon the polyphone method itself as an instance of a project of ambivalence, changing the analytical position to reflect not through a polyphone lens, but to reflect on the polyphone itself. By its nature, it is a

¹⁸² Zygmunt, Ambivalence.

¹⁸³ This modernity is not *the* modernity, this paper does not want to fuel another master narrative, but aims to be an attempt at a combination of both Bauman and Foucault and does not try to claim a special metaphysical position.

¹⁸⁴ To the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, in the story of modernity, *modernity* has to be understood in its complexities, especially its violent complexities, in order to overcome the Eurocentric narrative of progress with its hegemonic position over all other histories. He views the hygienic practices as a prime instance of this more complex narrative; a thesis this paper supports. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 306-307.

¹⁸⁵ The footnote above accounts for other means to destabilize this modernity. Chakrabarty's perspective could be called *postcolonial*.

method of the ambivalent. It focuses on the role of the historian as a *storyteller*; it does not aim to generate any ultimate “truths”. There is no metaphysical end-claim, no ambition for a single story.¹⁸⁶ In this light, the polyphone method itself can be interpreted as an instance of the post-modern embrace of the ambivalent. Yet it is not limited to that, the polyphone approach can then serve as a tool to account for the complexities, especially the suppressing, violent and disruptive complexities of modernity both on the micro- and the macrolevel. Perhaps it can even help blur the lines between structure and actor, between the material and the construct.

¹⁸⁶ This is not necessarily the case because the polyphone does not search for metaphysical truths. This statement has to be understood first and foremost as an epistemological one. Despite this embrace of the ambivalent, the *Jeux d'Échelles*, in combining both micro- and macroanalysis, proved to be epistemologically rewarding, allowing for the above findings.

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