

The Influence of Epidemics on the Concept of the Bogeyman: Images, Ideological Origins, and Interdependencies of the Anti-Vaccination Movement; The Example of the Political Agitator Paul Arthur Förster (1844-1925)

Nebe, Julia; Schwanke, Enno; Groß, Dominik

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The Influence of Epidemics on the Concept of the Bogeyman: Images, Ideological Origins, and Interdependencies of the Anti-Vaccination Movement; The Example of the Political Agitator Paul Arthur Förster (1844–1925)

*Julia Nebe, Enno Schwanke & Dominik Groß **

Abstract: »Der Einfluss von Epidemien auf das Feindbild-Konzept: Bilder, ideologische Ursprünge und Interdependenzen der Anti-Impf-Bewegung am Beispiel des politischen Agitators Paul Arthur Förster«. Epidemics have always deeply affected societies. They almost inevitably lead to negotiations of questions referring to identity, belonging, and foreignness. Furthermore, epidemics create bogeymen. The biographical study by Prof. Dr. Paul Arthur Förster, founder of the first German association of vaccination opponents and an enthusiastic “*völkisch*” and anti-Semitic agitator, stands here as a prototype for a multitude of vaccination opponents and should help us to understand what kind of influence epidemics have on the creation of bogeyman. In a second step, the question of bogeyman highlights the underlying aspects of the anti-vaccination movement. It directly leads to relating questions concerning ideological proximity of anti-vaccinism to the milieu critical of scientific medicine, with its numerous organizations of alternative medicine and its associations.

Keywords: Anti-vaccination movement, “life reform” movement, anti-Semitism, *völkisch* movement, Paul Förster.

1. Introduction

In accordance with the motto “Prevention is better, not least because it’s cheaper!” (Bröckling 2008, 46) the Reich Vaccination Act was passed in 1874 –

* Julia Nebe, Institute of History, Theory and Ethics in Medicine, RWTH Aachen, Germany; julia.nebe@t-online.de.

Enno Schwanke, Historical Institute, University of Cologne, Germany; eschwank@uni-koeln.de.
Dominik Groß, Institute of History, Theory and Ethics in Medicine, RWTH Aachen University, Germany; dgross@ukaachen.de.

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just a few years after the foundation of the German Reich. The associated introduction of the legally binding smallpox vaccination as preventative medicine sparked a “legal and cultural struggle” (Förster 1900, VIII) with a critical view of scientific medicine on the part of individuals who were and are generally described as “anti-vaccinationists.” While the critics of vaccination – most of them not doctors (Oidtmann 1878; Williams 2007, 23-30) – were openly opposed to the state-based mandatory measures with which the population were threatened in the case of violations of the Vaccination Act (imprisonment, monetary fines), they cast doubt above all on the medical efficacy of the vaccination and, along with this, on its necessity and its safety (Wolff 1996, 79). The assessment by smallpox historian Paul Kübler (no date) in 1901 that there was a great ideological proximity of the anti-vaccination movement to the milieu critical of scientific medicine, with its numerous organizations of alternative medicine, its associations, and its local groups, therefore seems virtually inevitable (Kübler 1901, 336-7). If one follows this line of interpretation, one can surmise that political actions – such as the demand for personal civil liberties (Maehle 1990, 127) – were initiated by the anti-vaccinationists primarily for pragmatic reasons, i.e., in order to propel the actual debate on the medical benefits of vaccination into the political arena and thus to make it generally heard (Wolff 1996, 81-4, 102; 1998).

The German anti-vaccination movement at the close of the 19th century was, at any rate, catalyzed and sustained by a social change that had resulted from the dichotomy of a modern society and scientific world in contrast to a non-scientific everyday world. In this context, it comes as no surprise that the protagonists of German anti-vaccinationism frequently fell victim to the (over-hasty) judgement of science-minded contemporaries to be merely part of an irrational protest movement (Wolff 1996, 80). This truncated view was strengthened by the “triumphal march of rationalist enlightenment and of positivist natural sciences” (Schwanke 2015b, 27). In their wake, medicine had taken leave of an image that emphasized “man as being in God’s likeness and [the] sacrosanct right to life” (ibid., 27), and had found its way instead to an increasingly biologicistic view of human beings (compare also Zumbusch 2011, 40). From this perspective, mere conceit could be defeated by (scientific) knowledge and religious superstition by reason (Horkheimer and Adorno 2015, 9-48). Since none other than Voltaire had argued in favor of vaccination in his “Lettres philosophique” (1734), vaccination was to a certain extent elevated to an ideal of the Enlightenment (Glaser and Vajda 2001, 298; Kübler 1901, 40; Sussman 1977, 571).

In the light of this, it is no wonder that historical examination and scientific analysis has also regarded the German anti-vaccination movement above all as a part of a broader public criticism of scientific medicine and modern science (Eckart 2014, 24; Maehle 1990, 127-48; Nittinger 1857, 11-20; Thiessen 2013a; 2015, 35-64). Accordingly, anti-vaccinationists have been understood

first and foremost as “system opponents” (Thiessen 2013b, 419) of a fundamental change in the “interpretation of health and illness” (Wolff 1996, 80-3). Little attention, by contrast, has been paid to the question of the ideological, institutional, and personal cross-relationships between the anti-vaccinationist movement and other movements such as the politically diverse “life reform” movement, the *völkisch* movement, biologism, and anti-Semitism – and hence also to questions regarding possible *hidden* motives of the anti-vaccination movement (Williams 2007, 23-30).

The 19th and 20th centuries were indeed a time of medical change: During this period, medicine came to view itself as a science, and the medical professional group became a modern profession – both changes can be seen as an expression of “biopolitical modernity” (Thiessen 2013b, 410). At the same time, we are talking about a period during which increasingly vocal criticism of medicine seemed to conjure up a crisis. Thus, various movements, which can today be subsumed under the term “life reform” movements, became organized; these also included the anti-vaccination movement (Carstensen and Schmid 2016, 9-27; Krabbe 1998, 73-5). Even if the individual movements – at least at first sight – only maintained loose relationships with each other, they were unified by the common will to reshape human living circumstances in harmony with nature. These changes were to be carried out as a “life reform” by optimizing individual living practices – as a “secularized doctrine of salvation” as it were.

The present article is based on the assumption that the German anti-vaccination movement can only be understood if questions regarding the ideological roots of the anti-vaccination protagonists, their motives, and forms of transorganizational constructive co-operation are explored – in short: questions regarding the ideological cross-connections, interrelationships, and possible processes of exchange between the anti-vaccinationist movement and other contemporary movements in the German Empire. With this in mind, the present study aims to focus on the following central questions: What conclusions can be drawn regarding the arguments, motives, and ideological background of the organized German anti-vaccinationist movement? Are there any personal and ideological cross-connections to other German movements? What role was attributed to institutionalized medicine? And towards whom were the efforts to counter vaccination ultimately directed?

Following an overview of the evolution of the German Vaccination Act and its opposition thereto, the methodological starting point of the article is a biographical analysis of Paul Artur Förster (1844–1925), a Berlin grammar school professor and political agitator. He is a key figure insofar as his biography, his publications, and his personal documents yield illustrative insights into hitherto little-noted ideological, institutional, and personal cross-connections between German anti-vaccinationists and other movements. Förster has been selected here in view of both his social and publicist position and

his family situation. As founder of the “Deutscher Bund der Impfgegner” (German Association of Vaccination Opponents), founder and chairman of the (albeit less influential) “Deutscher Volksbund” (German Association), and as chairman of the “Internationaler Verein zur Bekämpfung der Wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter (Verein gegen die Vivisektion)” (International Anti-vivisection Society), Förster was a central figure in several networks. He furthermore expressed open and radical anti-Semitism in his speeches and writings (Trüb, Posch, and Richter 1973, 9; Dinges 1996, 13). Förster’s brother Bernhard Förster (1843–1889) (Bergmann 1996a, Col. 905-6), who was married to Elisabeth Nietzsche (1846–1935), also achieved some prominence as an anti-Semitic agitator – a family constellation which helped Paul Artur Förster to achieve a certain level of visibility, not least because Elisabeth Nietzsche was a sister of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900; Speit 2015, 62).

Förster’s anti-Semitic statements were aimed in the first instance at revising the equality of Jews under civil and public law, which had been valid throughout the German Reich since 1871 (Krieger 2004). A further central topic of his publications and speeches was criticism of democratic parliamentarianism, which he contrasted with a “Germanic” world order that was to be “German in essence” (Förster 1893, n. p.; 1907c, 9; Wrede 1897, 166-7).

But how can Förster’s aforementioned specific activities be related in general to his perception of himself as an anti-vaccinationist and what do these relations tell us about the ideological origins and interdependencies of the German “anti-vaccinationist movement” and what makes it so special in comparison to its European and North American counterparts (Förster 1892a, 1-2; Förster 1892b; Weindling 1991, 170)?¹ These are the very questions which we wish to examine in the following – on the basis of a concise bioergography that analyzes Förster’s life, publications, and personal documents.

2. Evolution of the German Vaccination Act (1874)

Vaccination was introduced in the area of the later German Empire at the turn of the 19th century. The first German law to require smallpox vaccination was passed in Hesse at the end of the Napoleonic era in 1807 in order to prevent

¹ Compare the literature by Paul Förster, *An die Deutschen Frauen!* (Berlin: Thormann & Goersch, [ca. 1892]), 1-2; Paul Förster, *Unsere deutsch-sozialen Grundsätze und Forderungen. Vortrag, gehalten auf dem deutsche-sozialen Parteitag in Breslau* (Leipzig: Germanicus-Verlag, 1892), and in general please see Paul Weindling, *Health, race and German politics between national unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 170; Offprint of “Der Naturarzt”, ed. *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Bundes der Vereine für naturgemäße Lebens- und Heilweise* (Naturheilkunde) E. V. 41 (1913), portfolio 6, varia 167, Archive of the Institute of History of Medicine of the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Robert Bosch Foundation), Robert Bosch Stiftung (Robert Bosch Foundation), Stuttgart, Germany.

and control the frequent smallpox outbreaks resulting from armies passing through the area (Rupp 1974, 4-5). Subsequently, other German states like Prussia, Thuringia, and the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld enacted similar laws (Hartung 2001, 13; Hess 2009, 230). From the very beginning, vaccination was mandatory in many states. The most common type of compulsion was applied to children attending schools. At first and up to the mid-19th century, immunization was widely accepted by the public as an effective instrument for preventing smallpox. Compared to the total number of deaths among the population, smallpox mortality fell to 1 percent by 1810, compared with 8 percent in the second half of the 18th century (Hess 2009, 107). Nevertheless, vaccine coverage decreased in the mid-19th century. In the 1870s, for example, only about two-thirds of infants were vaccinated (Maehle 1990, 127; please compare for the benefits of German health federalism Lee and Vögele 2001, 65-96).

This striking development was largely due to the rhetoric of representatives and agitators who supported “unorthodox medical theories” such as “life reform,” homeopathy, and naturopathy and who also challenged vaccination. Opposition to vaccination at that time was regionally limited and characterized by the involvement of individuals. Against this background, it must be asked whether the periodic outbreaks of smallpox can be attributed to an incomplete immunity of the population. In any case, during and after the Franco-Prussian War (1870/1871), particularly high smallpox losses can be observed in all states – whether they had introduced compulsory vaccination or not (Trüb, Posch, and Richter 1973, 69; Lee and Vögele 2001, 71-2). During the widespread smallpox epidemic in Bautzen (Saxony) in 1868, 100 of the 292 smallpox cases were unvaccinated persons, 19 of whom died (Hess 2009, 35). In the city hospital of Leipzig (Saxony), the mortality rate rose from 4.5 percent in the years from 1852 to 1870 up to 14.7 percent in 1870 itself and even up to 82 percent for unvaccinated infants. The high rates of loss must be attributed to considerable vaccination gaps within the population due to neglected (and partially refused) re-vaccination (Trüb, Posch, and Richter 1973, 69; Lee and Vögele 2001, 71-2).

The decisive reasons for the adoption of the German Vaccination Act on April 24, 1874, were the problems and experiences of the epidemic years 1871/1872 described above. Although many German states already required vaccination, the vaccine regulation in Germany was harmonized and standardized only with the Vaccination Act (Lee and Vögele 2001, 71-3). The most important regulations again concerned childhood vaccination and the requirements for school entry: The children for whom vaccination was mandatory were aged between 1 and 12 years (§1). Exceptional cases were children who had a medical certificate and those who had already had smallpox (§2). Vaccination as such was free and following it, a vaccination certificate was issued that had to be shown before children were enrolled in school.

Vaccination certificates were also required in the run-up to marriages or a change of residence (§6/§9/§10/§11/§13). Furthermore, public vaccination business was preferably to be transferred to official physicians. The determination of the vaccinators takes place by the state authority (§8; Bilfinger 1909; Eckhart 2016, 19; Thiessen 2018, 26-7). Vaccination could even be enforced by the police. In these cases, the parents were subjected to fines and even imprisonment (§ 14/§15/§16; Hess 2009, 256, 271, 363-6).

The propensity to vaccine refusal, opposition, and hesitancy remained a result of the distrust in vaccines and vaccine strategies (inoculation versus vaccine; Lee and Vögele 2001, 71). Similar movements flourished elsewhere in Europe (Hennock 1998, 49-71; Durbach 2005; Wolfe 2002, 430-2; Durbach 2000, 45-62; Swales 1992, 1019-22; Porter and Porter 1988, 231-52; MacLeod 1967, 106-28; Williamson 1994, 1195-6) and North America (Colgrove 2005, 167-91; Colgrove 2004, 349-78; Davidovitch 2004, 11-28; Kaufman 1967, 463-78; Walloch 2007, 2015; Walzer Leavitt, 1976, 53-68; Williamson 1994, 2007). This lack of confidence in vaccination was based on the claims that vaccines were dangerous and ineffective, and furthermore on the view that the compulsion by law was an unacceptable invasion of personal civil liberties (Hess 2009, 21, 285).

And in fact, before the discovery of microbiological pathogens, the health risks of vaccination could not be ruled out (*ibid.*, 270-85; Colgrove 2005, 171-6; Tomes 1998; Ziporyn 1988). The greatest risk actually lay in the method of vaccination. Inoculation, an older method of immunization in which smallpox material was scratched and transferred from the arm of a sick person to that of a healthy one to induce a milder form of the illness, could result in the transmission of additional diseases, especially syphilis was a problem (Lee and Vögele 2001, 71). Up to 1880, nine infections with syphilis were officially reported after the persons were vaccinated (Maehle 1990, 137-8; Deutsches Reich Reichstag 1973, 265-87, 282-3; Zumbusch 2011). A criticism which was often levelled at the vaccinating doctors and which was to some extent justified, because “good,” effective, and pure vaccine matter was rare (Hess 2009, 269-70; Colgrove 2004, 169-72). This perception did not change, even when the Federal Council decided to gradually replace the inoculation method in June 1885. Subsequent vaccination, in contrast, involved the use of cowpox, which produced only a less virulent form of the illness in humans and provided cross-protection against smallpox. Until the end of the 19th century, it was above all, the public vaccination institutes, which were responsible for a nationwide supply of vaccines according to § 9 of the Vaccination Act. After the use of inoculation as a method of smallpox immunization, in June 1885 the German Federal Council decided to only use vaccines made from animal lymphs in future. Adequate levels of animal vaccine, however, did not become available until 1917 (Hess 2009, 364; Thiessen 2018, 96-9; Zumbusch 2011).

Nevertheless, purity of vaccines and poorly executed immunizations continued to be a problem and remained a reason for complaint, especially because most of these infections occurred in children. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the compulsory character of vaccination was condemned as torture, superstition, and commercialism and gave rise to the anti-vaccination movement. This became especially evident when injuries appeared or death following vaccination (Thiessen 2018, 54-9). These cases were publicly scandalized in the three biggest and most prominent anti-vaccine periodicals – “Der Impfgegner” (The Vaccination Opponent), “Die Impffrage” (The Vaccination Question), and the “Antivaccinator” – which were closely interlinked. A superb example of this was the death of young Willi Otto in May 1905. Vaccine-critical journals reprinted his case several times. Whereas anti-vaccination believers maintained Willi Otto’s death to be a result of vaccination, whereas state institutions like the “Kaiserliche Gesundheitsamt” (Imperial Health Office) traced his death back to meningitis and pneumonia. While the risk of death caused by vaccines at that time was three and half deaths per 1 million vaccinated, anti-vaccinationists often used statistics to underpin their point of view. They argued that the overall improvements in sanitary standards were responsible for reducing smallpox rates (Leven 2017; Thiessen 2018, 34).

In 1883, as a consequence of the ongoing debates between vaccination proponents and opponents, the German Reichstag decided to launch an expert commission, which should deal with some empirical questions on vaccination: What about the development of smallpox rates after the introduction of mandatory vaccination? Can a decline in smallpox mortality rates be contributed? Are the vaccines used potentially dangerous? To what extent was the vaccine method truly responsible for co-infections with, e.g., syphilis? And within this context, should vaccines be used that were made from animal lymphs (Hess 2009, 284)?

A memorandum by the commission published in 1888 summarized the most important findings concerning the low incidence of smallpox after the introduction of compulsory vaccination and the recognition of known side effects as adverse risks of vaccination. The results engendered again a political and ideological debate over the legitimacy of the Vaccination Act. Above all, vaccination opponents vehemently demanded the introduction of a conscience clause based on the English model as well as the introduction of compensation in the event of vaccine damage (Thiessen 2018, 55, 87). In April 1914, however, after lengthy political disputes, the existing Vaccination Act, which had been enacted in 1874, was confirmed again by the government.

The attempts by the anti-vaccinationists to modify the law were finally unsuccessful. Due to their failure to abolish mandatory immunization and to introduce a conscience clause, anti-immunization lobby faded from prominence in Germany.

In the context of the First World War and its aftermaths, e.g., the post war inflation and labor shortages, anti-vaccinism almost vanished away. As a consequence, the number of members of the anti-vaccination movement decreased from 300,000 in 1914 to 60,000 in 1924 (Hess 2009, 271, 344; Maehle 1990, 128; Helmstädter 1990, 22).

Many vaccination opponents now joined ideologically-related associations like the “life-reform” movement or the anti-vivisection, homeopathy, or vegetarianism movements (Hess 2009, 344).

3. Paul Artur Förster – Life and Teachings of a Political Agitator

Paul Artur Förster was born in Delitzsch (Saxony) on November 14, 1844. He was the youngest son of the Protestant-Lutheran superintendent Karl Friedrich Förster (no date) and his wife Pauline Förster, née Spiess (no date). Förster grew up with two older brothers. Franz Theodor Förster (1829–1898), likewise a Protestant superintendent and theologian, held an associate professorship at the theological faculty of the University of Halle as of 1894. His brother Ludwig Bernhard Förster (1843–1889) was a German grammar schoolteacher and, as already mentioned, a brother-in-law of Friedrich Nietzsche (Anonymous 2009, 239).

Paul Förster was taught until 1864 at “Unser Lieben Frauen” (Our dear women) in Magdeburg, a monastery and cathedral grammar school (Kössler 2008). He subsequently completed his studies at the universities of Berlin and Göttingen. The thematic focus of his studies was classical philology and history. Already during his studies, he served from July 1866 to 1867 in the 2. *Garde-Regiment zu Fuß* (2nd Foot Guards) in the 4. *Bataillon* of this regiment during the campaign against Bavaria (ibid., 166-7). One year later, Förster passed his state exam at the University of Göttingen. Thereafter, he moved to Cadiz in Spain as a tutor for two years. This sojourn in Spain prompted Förster to undertake detailed studies (ibid.). The quintessence of these studies can be found in the works “Spanische Sprachlehre” (Spanish Language Teaching; Förster 1880) of 1880 and “Der Einfluß der Inquisition auf das geistige Leben und die Literatur der Spanier” (The Influence of the inquisition on the spiritual life and literature of the Spaniards) of 1890 (Förster 1892a; Kössler 2008). Förster left Spain on the occasion of the German-French war of 1870/1871. During the war, he served in the 29. *Infanterie-Regiment* (Infantry Regiment) at Metz in northern France. In February 1871, he was promoted to the rank of officer and was awarded the “Iron Cross.” Förster became a probationer at the Königliche Joachimsthalische Gymnasium (Königliche Joachimsthalische grammar school) in Berlin from 1871. The school gave him a position as an

assistant from January 1872. At Easter of 1873, he changed to the Luisenstädtisches Gymnasium (Luisenstädtisches grammar school) in Berlin, where he was employed until 1880 as a duly appointed teacher (Kössler 2008, 166-7). In the same year, Förster completed his doctorate at the Faculty of Philosophy in Göttingen with the paper “De hermeneuties archaeologicae principiis” (ibid.; Wrede 1897, 166). Subsequently he took up a position at the Falk-Realgymnasium in Berlin and, in 1883, as a senior teacher at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Realgymnasium (Kössler 2008, 166-7). Parallel to this, Förster turned his attention to the political and cultural spheres.

Alongside clergymen, state employees, and the self-employed, it was teachers and lecturers who took on a central key role in the reception and dissemination of *völkisch* ideology. Like many of his like-minded colleagues, Förster pursued a rigorous holistic conceptual approach in his educational endeavors (Puschner 2001, 85-90). It was not concern about individual educational issues which was characteristic here but “concern about the wider picture” (Giesecke 1999, 62-4).

Förster made use of precisely those *völkisch* clichés that modern intellectualism saw as a threat to the German *Volk*. He thus criticized, for example, the prevailing educational system as a rotted path to cultural “miseducation.” He regarded the culture, religion, and sciences of the period as well as the prevailing capitalism, liberalism, and parliamentarianism as “degenerate” (Förster 1893a, n.p.; Förster 1906, 4-5; Förster 1893b, 1-10; Förster 1914, 1-15) – the *völkisch* movement was to play a decisive role in overcoming this cultural crisis. This was a collective movement with anti-Semitic pan-German, (culturo-)nationalist, and (as will be shown), “life reformist” sub-movements (Baldwin 1999, 292-3; Gerstner, Hufenreuter, and Puschner 2008, 409-35; Puschner 2001, 85-7).

4. *Völkisch* Movement and Anti-Semitism

Given the heterogeneous historical collective movement, it is difficult to form a concept of what the term *völkisch* encompasses in the actual sense of the word. A central element of all the subcultures represented in the *völkisch* movement was, nevertheless, *völkisch* racial ideology. This pursued the central goal of racial renewal.

National-conservative circles perceived a putative “overforeignness” in the social integration and equality of Jews under public law (Rürup 1975, 7, 75, 90; Katz 1972). While the emancipation of the Jews was only one of many political, social, and economic reforms of the 19th century, the resultant economic and legal improvements for the Jews in effect led to an increased, partially latent and partially overt social exclusion of this group. The stock market crash of 1873 provided further fuel for anti-Semitism. This development was

strengthened among other things by the international works of Artur de Gobineau (1816–1882) – “Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines” (Essay on the Inequality of human races; 1853-1855) – and Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) – “Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts” (The basics of the Nineteenth Century; 1899) (Chamberlain 1899, 1-7; Gobineau 1898–1901, 1-4).

In these works, the authors described the putative fatal consequence of an intermixing of the races, whereby emphasis was placed in particular on the potential of the Jewish race to be a threat to the “Aryan race.” The highlighting of the cultural achievements of the “Aryans” and their supposed significance for the development of all of mankind corresponded with the categorization of Jews as a dangerous counter-race (Chamberlain 1899, 8-10; Conze 1984, 135-78).

Referring to supposedly negative characteristics of the Jews like profiteering, materialism, and crime, a scenario of fear in the light of Jewish world domination was evoked (Töppel 2016, 1-6; Chamberlain 1899, 253, 258, 259, 267, 347). Even if defamation of the Jews on the basis of their religious orientation was not (or was no longer) officially approved at the close of the 19th century, such stereotypes led to a new, modernized (latent) form of anti-Semitism based on racial and social Darwinian arguments. In the sense of the Fichtean dialectic of the “I” and “Not-I,” the Jews thus became the antithetical symbol of social upheaval and a modern age marked by undesirable developments (Röd 1986, 77-97). Förster offers clear examples of this, whereby he does not shy away from open defamation of the Jews:

The individuals, like the whole peoples, will be slaughtered² without compassion like slaughter cattle, slaughtered by a prescription, a promissory note, a paper with writing across it [...] the Jews [are] the main culprits for that economic and social disruption, for the confusion of public conditions, for the decline in spiritual life and in good breeding and manners. (Förster 1893b, 1, 4-5, 7)

It is not possible to completely reconstruct the origins of Förster’s radical anti-Semitism retrospectively. He is likely to have been influenced ideologically to a certain extent by his older brother, Bernhard Förster, and by protagonists such as Eugen Dühring (1833–1921), a German *Privatdozent* (Docent) for national economics and philosophy in Berlin. In his paper, “Die Judenfrage, als Racen-, Sitten-, und Cultturfrage” (Jewish question, as racial, moral and cultural question; 1880), Dühring advocated extreme racial anti-Semitism and furthermore saw indications of a conspiracy of Jewish world domination. In light of this, he called for the consistent exclusion of Jews from public service and the prohibition of mixed marriages – all of these are polemics that Förster also takes up in his publications (Förster 1907b, 42; 1892b, 6). Förster is also known to have had a personal relationship with the anti-Semitic

² In this context the word “slaughter” refers to the religious rite of slaughter in Judaism.

publisher and German journalist Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933). Alongside Theodor Fritsch and others, Förster was engaged as a co-initiator of the “Antisemitenpetition” (Anti-Semitic petition) of 1880/1881 in the “Kreuzzug gegen die Entartung des deutschen Volkes” (The struggle against the degeneration of German people; Ulbricht 1996, 252-76, 287-9; Bergmann 1996b, 449-55). The aforementioned petition called for the deprivation of all emancipatory rights acquired by Jews in the German Empire (Bergmann 1996b, 449-55). The ultimate aim, however, was the exclusion of Jews from the body of the German *Volk*, the “*Volkskörper*” (ibid., 459). Anti-Semitism and Jewish emancipation appear here as the epitome of two diametrical cultural concepts that coexisted in the German Empire, whereby the representatives of anti-Semitism saw themselves as an avant-garde in the fight against the existing social system (Volkov 1990, 35). Anti-Semitism thus became a movement that saw the supposed power of Jewishness as the main cause of economic, social, and cultural grievances (Bönisch 1996, 345).

Racially accentuated anti-Semitism runs like a thread through Förster’s writings. Equally striking are the medical-related metaphors: Anti-Semitism is described as the “cure” which is required to put an end to the acute “disease” of complete “Jewification and De-Germanization”. (Förster 1892b, 47; Förster 1907b) Like many of his like-minded contemporaries, Förster attributed the differences between *Germanness and Jewishness* to a (racial) scientific explanation:

But under such rule, we will perish [...], because the Jewish spirit and Jewish rule are by nature incompatible with the German spirit, with the national state, with the fulfillment of our historical vocation on the basis of what the fathers created and passed down to us. (Förster 1892b, 8)

In contrast to early racial-anthropological works, Jewishness is now stylized as a dangerous counter-race to the Germans: While Jewishness aimed from the beginning to oppress the German people in a racial and spiritual sense, it was the corruptibility of all moral foundations of the life of the *Volk* and of the state through money and gold that had ultimately enabled the Jews to exercise almost unlimited control over the Germans (ibid., 5-10).

For Förster, Jewishness was the “blood poisoning” that brought infirmity and infection. In his dualistic worldview, two incompatible race types stood in opposition. On the one hand, there was Jewishness with its materialism, which aimed at separating the Germans from their (cultural) history and accompanying blood ties, and which wished to cause the Germans to deteriorate into culturally torn “mixed beings” and “hybrids” under foreign educational rule (Förster 1907b, 42):

Physically we are degenerating through the admixing of Jewish blood – and in the dependence of our German women workers on the Jewish masters, in the conditions [...], in the monetary dependency of broad circles on the Jewish usurer [...], in the sexual exploitation of German girls and women by

the Jews, carried out with all means of cunning, bribery and seduction, yes, of rape, as well as in the legal mixed marriages and the all too frequent reconstitution of old coats of arms and dynasties with Jewish gold: In all this we have to fear that the degeneration, spoilage and contamination of German blood has already occurred to a much greater extent than one would most often like to believe. (Förster 1892b, 10)

On the other hand, there are the Germans, the “long established, industrious, talented and inventive *Volk* [... with] old faith, German honor, [...] justice and [...] civic spirit, [...] love and mercy, spirit and [rightful] disposition” (ibid., 1-2).

The opposing positions of Germanness and Jewishness are seen as insurmountable. Förster also categorically excluded a turning away from Jewishness by conversion, as he had already proclaimed in 1893 in “Religionslose Antisemiten” (Irreligious anti-Semites), in the *Westfälische Rundschau* (*Westphalian review*): The Jew always remains a Jew, just as the German always remains a German. For no one can change his blood, his inner being. The broad reception of Gobineau’s “*Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines*” in particular and its dissemination in the German-speaking world by figures such as the composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) gave the *völkisch* protagonists a hitherto lacking (pseudo)scientific foundation for their racially accentuated anti-Semitic theses. In the pamphlet “Heldentum and Christentum” (Heroism and Christianity) of 1881, Wagner continued the idea of mankind’s decay from the perspective of racial thinking. The basis for this was Gobineau’s thesis of decay (Hein 2006, 267). He had declared that there was a fundamental inequality of the races; this culminated in his conviction that the mixing of higher and lower races would catalyze the process of decay (Hein 2006, 267; Wagner 1881, 249-58, especially 251-3 and 257). Only the ability to regenerate and the will to turn back could be regarded as a way out (Hein 2006, 267; Wagner 1881, 253). Subsequently, the racist currents within the *völkisch* movement quickly gained momentum and were later seen as a legitimation for the persecution and extermination of the Jewish minority (Berghoff 2001, 65-6; Bergmann 1996b, 458).

An anti-Semite from the very beginning, Förster tried to use this development deliberately for his purposes by spreading his racial anti-Semitic convictions and others within the *völkisch* movement. As a “multi-functionary,” Förster was also a member of the “Gobineau-Vereinigung” (Gobineau Society; 1894), founded by the German anti-Semitic journalist Ludwig Schemann (1894), of Friedrich Lange’s (1852–1817) ideologically related “Deutschbund” (German League; 1894; since 1903 Förster was member of Gobineau Society [Gobineau-Vereinigung] Puschner 2001, 78), and of the “Alldeutscher Verband” (Pan-German League; ADV; 1891) – an organization which made pure Germanness the guiding concept of its politics and which was actively engaged against all un-German tendencies (Bergmann 1996b, 465). The “Deutschbund” in particular, with leading members such as Theodor Fritsch,

Heinrich Classen (1868–1953), Adolf Bartels (1862–1945), and indeed Paul Förster, was one of the extreme *völkisch* associations. The main motive behind their political endeavors was blood ancestry. In their view, fundamental significance lay in the potential intrinsic to blood domination, which promised a recovery of the *Volk* by its own efforts (ibid., 457). The aim was to align the physically defined race with the culturally interpreted term “*Volk*.” The potential for this interpretation can already be found in Förster in 1892 in “Wie wir stehen – wie wir siegen!” (How we stand as we win). Thus, Förster stated there, “the knowledge of the Jewish peculiarity is based on [... the] natural history, which taught us that it is a question here of two completely different races which one is trying to link together without it being possible to achieve reconciliation and fusion” (Förster 1892b, 13).

Correspondingly, it was necessary to combat the growing “spoilage und degeneration of our *Volk*” and its increasing “Jewification [...] with all seriousness and with all legal means” (ibid., 17). This stance also influenced Förster decisively in what is probably his most important work “Die Kunst des glücklichen Lebens” (The art of happy life; 1895). Influenced by a world of “error, unnatural, woe and guilt” (Förster 1907b, 8), he made reference to an imposed “self-discipline” (Förster 1900, 246) and attempted to stop this “alienation of man from himself, his [*Volk*] and his nature” (Förster 1907b, 8). In 1893, he declared provocatively, “and remember that you are a German, called to the most high, but ill at the moment; therefore help the *Volksleib* [National Body] to recover” (Förster 1893c, foreword). The term *Volksleib* is a political German metaphor that became increasingly naturalistic under the influence of evolutionary theory and social Darwinism in the last third of the 19th century. Especially German anti-Semites used that term to justify the necessity to exclude the Jews from society by vilifying them as “harmful elements” for the “Aryan race” (Weindling 1991, 48–50, 100, 108–12, 135–53; especially 154, 213–5, 223).

Förster regarded man as both a biological and socio-national being, thereby emphasizing human “dual nature” (Marten 1983, 26–7), according to which the individual person was to be regarded as a biological component of society who thus (co-)determined the qualitative value of the *Volkskörper* (ibid.; Berghoff 2001, 63), the body of the *Volk*. The concept of the nation as a sum of vital subjects became ubiquitous in the 19th century. It is decisive for the self-perception of the anti-Semites during that period, who believed themselves to be in a constant struggle for self-preservation (Berghoff 2001, 65).

In contrast to Wagner and Chamberlain, where the racial struggle is given a national-religious coloring, this motif cannot be found in Förster, as has been known since his writings on “Religionslose Antisemiten” (irreligious anti-Semites; 1893a). According to Förster, it was precisely the vulnerability through faith that would prevent the establishment of righteous armed forces. As against this, he used the language of a constant struggle between

German and Jewish-materialistic, whereby the Jewish side with its capitalism, liberalism, socialism, art, culture, and democracy is responsible for the degeneration of the modern world. In Förster's view, natural law had accordingly become detached from the prevailing doctrine of the historical school of law. And from the "equality of abilities [emerged; ...] an inequality of hopes of being able to achieve our intentions. And if therefore, two men strive for the same object but cannot enjoy it together, they become enemies" (ibid., 22).

A realization of equal legal and economic conditions was therefore impossible and the path from a "class struggle to a racial struggle" was thus predetermined (ibid., 7-22). In the fight against the "finis Germaniae" (Förster 1892b) – the end of Germanism – the *völkisch* world view as described by Förster takes up the racist ideas of the late 19th century and links them to the popular social Darwinist ideas of "survival of the fittest" (Bergmann 1996, 458).

In *völkisch* racial ideology, the war was seen as the ultimate conclusion (Puschner 2001, 81). This viewpoint can also be found in Förster: "Either we are defeated, [...] or we see [the fight] through" (Förster 1895, 7). "This final battle is, at the same time, a war of destruction against evil, the lie; wickedness, the ancient fight of light against darkness, of Ormuzd against Ahriman" (Puschner 2001, 88-9). The historical pessimism expressed by Gobineau, which saw mankind in decline through a mixing of the races, is given a positive note considering the expectations attached to the war.

5. Ideological Cross-Connections Between the German Anti-Vaccination Movement, *Völkisch* Movement, and Anti-Semitism

Due to his wide sphere of influence and his active commitment, the agitator and multifunctionary Förster was regarded by his like-minded contemporaries as a

brave fighter for all that is great, beautiful and noble against all wickedness, brutality and backwardness, as a teacher and friend of the youth, of the "natural way of life, of vegetarianism", as the father of a new "German education" and as an enemy and fighter against vaccination and vaccination coercion, against slaughter³ and vivisection. (Internationale Verein zur Bekämpfung der wissenschaftlichen Tierfolter 1926, 2)

³ In this context, the term "slaughter" is highly connective to the concept of vivisection. Understanding the history of vivisection and how animals were used in the name of science please compare Maehle 2005, 1451-2.

Under the motto “March Separately – Strike Together,” he asked his like-minded contemporaries from the fields of naturopathic medicine, anti-vaccinationism, and vegetarianism to take joint action against the scientific priesthood and ostentation of (Jewish-influenced) medicine (Maehle 1990, 32; Schemann 1931, 32; Schwanke 2015a).

The guiding principle created by Förster here contributed to a continued polemicization of conventional medicine and to its classification as Jewish and materialistic (Regin 1995, 102). A look at developments in German medicine at the close of the 19th century will be useful in helping to understand how this came about: Contemporary medicine was characterized by a rise in scientific hygiene. Both social hygiene and racial hygiene presented themselves as answers to social questions. While social hygiene was primarily based on social and charitable motivation, racial hygiene was motivated by the ideology of eugenics.

The particular affinity of the German anti-vaccination movement for racial and eugenic ideas – it was in general but one element within a wider racial world – can be explained by means of the extraordinary political and ideological environment in the German Empire. Undoubtedly, this had an impact on German medical progress. In the mid-19th century, scientific medicine associated itself with “objective facts” as against to non-scientific methods of healing. With the resulting gain in scientific integrity, medicine seemed to be immune to ideologies such as anti-Semitism. Even outstanding exponents of biological anthropology such as the German physician and anthropologist Rudolph Virchow (1821–1902), who was liberal and scientific in his orientation, failed to interpret the signs of the time. A vivid example is his speech as rector of the University of Berlin in 1893:

Our time, so sure of itself and of victory by reason of its scientific consciousness, is as apt as former ages to underestimate the strength of the mystic impulses with which the soul of the nation is infected by single adventures. Even now it is standing baffled before the enigma of anti-Semitism, whose appearance in this time of the equality of right is inexplicable to everybody, yet which, in spite of its mysteriousness, or perhaps because of it, fascinates even our cultured youth. Up to the present moment the demand for a professorship of anti-Semitism has not made itself heard; but rumour has it that there are anti-Semitic professors. (Leven 2017, 57-61)

Natural science, scientific medicine, and anti-Semitism merged at the beginning of the 20th century in the pseudo-scientific disciplines of eugenics and racial hygiene. Many condemned the increasing industrialization and urbanization of the modern world as a maldevelopment. Medical progress or conventional medicine was part of this modern, artificial world; it contradicted the Darwinian concept of “natural selection” and was reflected in the decline in births, the decreasing number of marriages, the growing number of C-section births, and the supposedly inadequate military fitness among young people (Schwanke 2015a).

Eugenics became increasingly popular in all political camps and in some cases even among Jewish scholars, not only in Germany but also in other European countries such as the United Kingdom (Leven 2017, 57-9; Black 2003; Kèuhl 1994; MacKenzie 1975; Searle 1979). This can be explained by the fact that it initially concentrated only on improving the “human race” as such or the “western cultural race” (Leven 2017, 59). It was Alfred Ploetz (1860–1940), the German physician and founder of the “German Society for Eugenics” (1905), who gave eugenics in Germany a decidedly anti-Semitic orientation. Ploetz himself, as the leading protagonist of the movement, contributed to racial hygiene through his decidedly anti-Semitic “Nordic thoughts” and more precisely to the “Aryan orientation,” which was supposed to determine the appearance of racial hygiene in Germany (ibid.). Up to that point, a multitude of ideas and concepts had existed in 19th century Germany, which were to be used in the service of “social and cultural renewal needs” and could be grouped under the concept of “life reform” (ibid., 51-61). These efforts, motivated by medical hygiene, social policy, and ideology, unified the desire for a “healthy society” in the sense of a “new human ideal.” The more radical the social changes in industrialization and urbanization were, the more fundamentally the opposing human image became (Weindling 1991, 61-3).

At the very beginning this radicalism was free of party political interests. “Life reform,” along with its numerous organizations of alternative medicine, its associations, and its local groups, such as that of the anti-vaccinationists, tended in the long term to display a “*volkstümlich-national*” attitude. The term “*volkstümlich-national*” in this context refers to the notion of the Volk’s traditions and cultural identity as well as the idea of a nation (Leven 2017, 57-61).

However, the high affinity of “life reform” and anti-vaccination movement for racial hygiene and eugenics in the German Reich can be explained less by the political orientation of its main actors, such as Paul Artur Förster, than by the ideological similarities of these concepts: Both aimed at a physical and cultural “recovery” of humanity. The “reform of life” therefore meant “self-reform” as a first step (Krabbe 1998, 73-5; Leven 2017, 58-9; Weindling 1991, 66). In a second step, this model should be used as a basis for change at the social level: a reform of the “*Volkskörper*.” German racial hygiene therefore follows the model of “life reform” in its development phases (Leven 2017, 57-61).

The close interplay of racial-hygienic ideology with anti-Jewish and *völkisch* demands proved to be a powerful mix, which could be made use of for the medical field in particular. This was favored by the physical and mental stigmatization of “racially inferior people” according to physiognomic tradition that was generally common in the first half of the 20th century (Schott 2001). It provided the basis of legitimacy for a special form of exclusion of the Jews. The result was the stigmatization of the Jewish race and the Jewish body;

character stereotypes such as greed and profiteering now became an important part of anti-Jewish polemics (Schott and Tölle 2006, 191). This was accompanied by controversies about Jewish doctors. While the stigmatization of Jewish doctors goes back to the Middle Ages, new anti-Semitic influences now found their way into medicine:

Jewish doctors were now no longer denounced as quacks or fraudsters, but primarily as representatives of “thinking alien to the *Volk*” and of a cold, analytical and scientific attitude. In the background there always lurked the suspicion of [them] wanting to undermine the “healthy feelings of the *Volk*.” (ibid., 191)

Within this context, none other than the influential publicist and anti-Semite Theodor Fritsch demanded in his “Handbuch der Judenfrage” (Handbook of the Jewish Question; 1919) that medicine must be “Germanized” in its essence and method (Kümmel 1998, 31-47). This demand was catalyzed by the “proportion argument” of demographic politics (Dühring 1892, 1982; Fritsch 1933, 244-6).

Völkisch ideology and anti-Semitism were adapted by numerous associations in the area of the “life reform” movement, among them also the organized anti-vaccinationists. This is not to deny that the latter were fighting first and foremost against the (supposed) diseases of civilization and against damage caused by civilization, and hence propagated an extensive return to nature (Hartung 1996, 35). In fact, naturopathic medicine was seen as an uncontaminated alternative to conventional medicine and a vegetarian or abstinent lifestyle was, for example, welcomed as an expression of a consistent “life reformist” stance (Maehle 1990, 118). Nevertheless, the anti-vaccination and “life reform” movements were also based on the hostile image of *scientifically progressive* and simultaneously *Jewish-influenced* medicine (Förster 1906, 50-7). The combination of these two negative images made the protagonists in question receptive to biological social teachings, to the ideology of racial hygiene, and to the demands resulting from this (Hartung 2001, 21-2). In other words, it was possible for the “life reform” and anti-vaccination movements to connect directly with the racist trait within the idea of “*Volkstum*” (de Lagarde 1878, 241-2), which propagated that the German *Volk* had to be protected from the harmful influence of Jewishness.

Ideological cross-connections of this kind between the anti-vaccination movement, the *völkisch* movement, and anti-Semitism can be demonstrated particularly well with the example of Förster. He wanted to create the basis for a new human race with his “life reformist” work, the “*Evangelium für Enthaltensame*” (Gospel for Abstinence; 1907) (Förster 1907a, 8). According to Förster, this required care of the mind, body, and soul in accordance with nature. The dangers of modern life – conventional medicine, science, and other “stimulants” – were to be answered with a natural way of life. In Förster’s work, vegetarianism, abstinence, anti-vaccinationism, and anti-

vivisectionism became concepts on the path to a healthier humanity (Förster 1895, 8-100). It thus comes as no surprise that Förster proclaims in his foreword to “Neue Bahnen der Pädagogik” (New Courses of Pedagogy; 1904), “Our time is a time of preparation, of gathering, conversion or retreat” (Förster 1904, 3; compare also Schwanke 2015a). Accordingly, he called upon his contemporaries to return to nature and to avert “rottenness” and “brutalization” (Förster 1904, 3).

This development was meanwhile flanked by anti-Jewish thinking, which fell on increasingly fertile ground. The anti-Jewish tendencies that had existed latently for centuries intensified – especially within the anti-vaccination movement – to the same extent that European Jews freed themselves from special laws and joined the educated society of “*Bildungsbürger*” (Educational citizens; Hartung 2001, 27). Now the Jews were not only perceived as a race in their own right, but also increasingly as a *Volk*-like unity with a collective “mission” (ibid.). In 1880, as mentioned above, Eugen Dühring published the anti-Semitic text “Die Judenfrage, als Racen-, Sitten-, und Cullturfrage.” Significantly, this text contains a passage in which he links the racial characteristic of Jewish doctors directly to compulsory vaccination:

Of all the learned branches of business besides the literary profession, the medical profession is probably that which is most strongly occupied by Jews. The artificial provision of a large number of requests for medical services is a factor whose activation has become increasingly unabashed. From a socio-economic point of view, i.e., apart from the superstition of vaccination itself, compulsory vaccination is always a means by which an involuntary customer base is provided for the medical profession. Such a thing is more than a monopoly; it is a coercive law and a banal law and it is less innocent than the medieval laws which, after all, only applied to things like brewing and grinding, but did not extend into our blood. But it was also here that the Jews, who advocated coercive law as a matter of course through the entire press and through their people and comrades in the *Reichstag*, stamped the efforts of doctors everywhere with the stamp of sheer commerce and made the taxation of society by the necessity of medical services into a principle. (Dühring 1892, 19)

The example chosen here is a prototypical illustration of the ideological intersection of anti-vaccinationism and racially accentuated anti-Semitism (Förster 1911, 180-1; Pfeleiderer 1933, n.p.; Ungewitter 1938).

It was not only clear programmatic overlaps which existed between the anti-vaccination movement, the “life reform” movement and the movement critical of scientific medicine but personal overlaps as well: Anti-vaccinationists were often actively engaged as vegetarians, “life reformers” and anti-vivisectionists – and were indeed often active in *völkisch* and anti-Semitic movements. By analyzing the internal networking structure of anti-vaccine societies and vaccination opponents’ numerous multiple memberships to ideologically related organizations can be lined out. The close interplay of

social Darwinian concepts, racial-hygiene ideology and anti-Jewish demands led to the formation of new radical wings (Benz 2002). The anti-vaccination movement, as well as other like-minded organizations, became part of the anti-Semitic movement in Germany. At the same time, this anti-Semitic orientation of the German anti-vaccine movement also represents a “special path.”

In Britain, the “motherland” of anti-vaccinism, anti-Semitism has never played such an important role within the anti-vaccination movement as in Germany (Uekötter and Zelinger 2012, 127). As we could see, the socio-political transformation of the *völkisch* and anti-Semitic motives in anti-vaccination became extremely evident in the German dispute over the preservation of the “blood’s purity” and the criticism of “shafts” and vivisection. The example of Paul Artur Förster is a particularly obvious one: Förster was not only founder of the Deutscher Bund der Impfgegner and a supporter of naturopathy, anti-vivisectionism, and vegetarianism, but he was also a member of numerous *völkisch* anti-Semitic organizations and deputy of the German Reichstag of the “virulent anti-Semitic” Deutschsozialen Reformpartei (German Social Reform Party; *ibid.*, 127). The anti-vaccination movement and its supporters were therefore obvious allies of smoldering anti-Semitism and subsequent ideologies such as racial hygiene and eugenics. If reference is made to these compounds, it is important to draw attention to the virulence of these patterns of thought within the German anti-vaccination movement. Especially outstanding protagonists of the movement such as Förster or the German pioneer of nudist movement Richard Ungewitter (1869–1958) shared these attitudes. However, whether the majority of vaccination opponents – mostly men from the middle class – shared these ideological convictions, cannot be answered clearly (Thiessen 2018, 146).

Given the categorical linking of man as both a biological and social individual, Förster’s active engagement against the state smallpox vaccination on national-*völkisch* grounds and ultimately also on social Darwinian ones seems almost inevitable: The smallpox vaccination was, so to speak, a counter-draft to the concept of *natural* physical resistance, which made it possible to separate the strong from the weak in the sense of natural selection (Weindling 1991, 170-1). Apart from this social Darwinist aspect (Förster 1895, 24), anti-vaccinationists were forbidden on racial grounds to transfer “special substances” of this kind to “Aryan blood”; after all, vaccination led to the leveling of the natural potential for defense and therefore of the superiority of the “Aryan race” (Bergmann 1996, 458).

The dispute over the question of vaccination – and hence over the preservation of the blood’s purity – thus also played a key role in the overarching question of the renewal of the (Germanic) society (Weindling 1991, 154, 170). Corresponding explanations on the relationship between blood and race can also accordingly be found in Förster’s “Deutsche Bildung, Deutscher Glaube,

Deutsche Erziehung” (German education, German faith, German education; Förster 1906, 50) and in “Mein Volk, meine Art!” (My people, my kind!; *ibid.*, 51), both of which appeared in 1906 (Förster 1895, 17; 1907).

It was not difficult to bring the patterns of interpretation described above into line with *völkisch* beliefs: According to *völkisch* interpretation, the Jews were guilty as *decomposers* of German culture and of the *biological substance* – of blood (Förster 1892b). Blood was thus transfigured, as it were, into a substance in which the Germanic “racial soul” was hidden. Rosenberg (1939) later explained, “but soul means race seen from the inside. And, conversely, race is the outer side of a soul” (Rosenberg 1939, 2). Racial soul and blood were thereby inseparably interwoven in their culture and in their function as creators of identity (*ibid.*; Leszczyńska 2009).

This point of view was underscored – and this should be emphasized in conclusion – by the theory of a conspiracy of threatened Jewish world domination, to which Förster also subscribed:

Vaccination – Jew – Dogs. With this tasteful pointed remark, an anti-Semitic racial fetishist who is anxiously concerned about maintaining the purity of his genuine Germanic blood asks [...]. [For] it is claimed that the Jews do not vaccinate their children. No Jewish mother brings her child to a public vaccination centre. The Jewish doctor issues the certificate of vaccination purely pro forma. If that were the case, a certain superiority would then arise, since Jewish blood would not be infected with calf pus. [...] Could the introduction of vaccination be a work of our enemies to spoil our blood and destroy our race? Is it not possible that many conspicuous degenerative phenomena of today’s race are related to this artificial blood poisoning?! (Förster 1911, 180-1)

From the very beginning, the 1874 vaccination law was considered as “Jewish” and was thus critically observed in Germany, especially against this background. Some German anti-vaccination associations in the 1930s still declared that the Vaccination Act of 1874 was demonstrably initiated by the Jewish deputies Wilhelm Löwe (1814–1886), Eduard Lasker (1829–1884), and Herbert Eulenberg (1876–1949; BAB, R 1501/3647, Schreiben Deutscher Impfgegner-Ärztebund an RMI, 25.10.1935, quoted in Thiessen 2018, 145). They suggested that submission of humanity to the “Jewish rule of money” was the real goal of vaccinations. Ultimately, the criticism was aimed at excluding Jewish doctors from German medicine. Here, the starting point of agitation was not vaccination as such, but vaccination by Jews. In this context, a look forward into the 1930s is particularly useful: At that time, “Aryan” doctors undoubtedly profited from the exclusion and deprivation of rights of its Jewish colleagues. In the dense network of public health offices, young physicians could find new state-funded positions. In the context of these crisis years of the Weimar Republic, these workplaces appeared to be very attractive (Thiessen 2018, 141). Even the everyday work of administering vaccinations offered opportunities to exclude “unpleasant Jewish colleagues” or to

enrich oneself by taking over their jobs and vaccines, for example. A significant case of this phenomenon can be found in Frankfurt am Main (Germany). Here, the medical and police authorities sought to have the state-funded position of vaccinating doctor filled with a new appointee before the planned autumn vaccinations of 1933.

This, of course, particularly affected Jewish civil servants: The reasons given were concern about “racial” vaccinations and vaccinations. It was not long before a scandal broke out: In May 1935, a Jewish medical student came to the Adolf Hitler School in Frankfurt to vaccinate the students there. The rector alerted the Frankfurt health department. The health authorities then determined that Jewish vaccinators were only admitted, if at all, to Jewish schools. In order to prevent such incidents from happening again, the health department ordered stricter control of the trainees with regard to future vaccinations. According to Malte Thiessen, Frankfurt am Main was a regional example that was representative of the whole Reich. In terms of epidemic protection, an exclusion of Jews from the vaccination programs cannot be confirmed. This will probably have changed during the Second World War due to scarcity of resources. Malte Thiessen suggests that until the start of deportations in 1938/1939, Jewish children were still vaccinated by Jewish vaccinators. He emphasizes furthermore that, in contrast to the example of Frankfurt am Main, no decree on vaccination can be found at the national level after the pass of the legislation “Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums” (Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service) or the “Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre” (Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor; *ibid.*, 141-2, especially footnote 60).

In April 1933, there were a total of about 8,000 Jewish doctors in the territory of the German Reich. It is not possible to determine how many Jews were active as vaccinators before 1933, but by the end of the 1930s, they had become a *quantité négligeable* (Engelmohr 2013, 12; Gerst 2013, A770-2).

6. Conclusion

The example of the German anti-vaccination movement with its criticism of scientific medicine shows the extent to which influential ideological thinking and *völkisch* anti-Semitic ideas influenced the so-called “naturopathic movement.” Even if the anti-vaccinationists declared that they wanted to prevent vaccination throughout society in light of their manifest skepticism towards modern medicine and even if they propagated a return to “naturalness,” a labeling of the German anti-vaccination movement as a protest movement that criticized conventional medicine falls short in its approach (Maehle 1990, 127-48; Eckart 2014, 24; Nittinger 1857, 11-20; Thiessen 2015, 35-64).

It can, rather, be shown from the example of Paul Artur Förster and his network that the vaccination issue was a question that was open to and could connect directly with *völkisch*, anti-Semitic, and biological/social Darwinian ideas. Just like the “life reform” and other contemporary counter-movements, the anti-vaccination movement had no fixed ideological or institutional boundaries. It was, rather, the case that many anti-vaccinationists belonged to like-minded movements such as the vegetarians and antivivisectionists, and also rejected any kind of special animal substances within this context (Pfleiderer 1933, n.p.). This insight can be gained on the one hand from reading reports, publication notes, and advertisements from “Der Impfgegner” (The vaccination opponent; 1876–1926); the primary professional organ of the anti-vaccinationists, and on the other hand from financial donations to the organizations in question from naturopathic associations (Spoher 1891). The anti-vaccinationists were hence organized in many different ways and interested in many different fields (Schwanke 2015a).

Particularly the *völkisch* anti-Semitic orientation, compared to its European and International counterparts like in the United Kingdom or the United States, turned the German anti-vaccination movement into something special: Biologistic, social Darwinian, and racial-hygienic influences led here in an extreme way to the view that the transfer of special animal substances to human blood, as was the case with the vaccination, constituted a desecration of one’s own race (ibid.). Vaccination was also to be categorically rejected in view of the *historical pessimism*, observed by Gobineau, which saw mankind in decline as a result of racial mixing – for the smallpox vaccination undermined natural physical resistance that, in the eyes of the anti-vaccinationists, offered a guarantee for separating the strong from the weak (Bergmann 1996, 458; Weindling 1991, 154, 170-1).

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Jörg Vögele, Luisa Rittershaus & Katharina Schuler

Epidemics and Pandemics – the Historical Perspective. Introduction.

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Grażyna Liczbińska

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