

There Goes This Art of Manliness: Naturism and Racial Hygiene in Germany

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Nineteenth century bourgeois culture then has not lost its capacity to astound. Much as we know, we know too little about it, and many wrong things.

Peter Gay
The Bourgeois Experience'

Public social nudism is the rule in Germany rather than the exception as in other countries. Whether you spend your lunch hour in the nude on *Halensee* lake on upper *Kurfürstendamm* in Berlin or on the banks of the *Isar* river in downtown Munich, complete nakedness is the accepted practice of men, women, and children of all ages. Millions of city people of both sexes meet socially in sexually mixed saunas, and holidays in the nude on beaches all over Europe are a billion *Deutschmark* business. Anglo-Saxons have been surprised by that different attitude towards public nudity from early on. Advocates of physical culture claimed,

Britain-let's confess it-is a land of canting hypocrisy. Its religion is a giant masquerade. The alleged righteous person regards nudity in the light of immorality. He thinks the Nudist camps are hotbeds of vice. He cannot think otherwise-his mentality will not allow him to. His idea is based on a long and false tradition.²

I assume that public nudity makes a difference in the sex/gender system of a particular culture.³ I will therefore try to investigate the attitudes which determined sex (body) and gender (cultural definitions of body) particularly at a time when public nudity was still relatively new in Germany and *shocking* if not a criminal offense in the Anglo-Saxon world, i.e., in the late nineteenth and the first third of this century. In England the first nudists' group was started in 1924 in North London. In addition a *Gymnosophical Society* was founded by Harold C. Booth (who had been to nudist camps in Berlin), and this group discussed

1. Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience. Victoria to Freud*. vol. 1. *Education of the Senses*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 9.

2. Cedric Belfrage, "Naturism Transforms a Nation," *Health & Efficiency*, N.S. 4 (February 1934): 2, 40.

3. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210 was the first to use this term

social nudity in theory-with their clothes on. It dissolved itself in 1927.⁴ In the United States nudism had its first toehold by 1929. It was introduced by Kurt Barthel, a German, who had been active in the nudist movement in his homeland and planned to continue his practice after his emigration.⁵

I assume that the ideology of nudity, German *naturism* (*Naturismus*), and male as well as female body experiences are related in a dialectical way, in that they grow-as agent and product, formed and reformed-in continued contradictory interaction. As nothing has been published in terms of secondary literature on *naturism* with the sex/gender system in mind, I have to rely on books and journals of physical culture, *Turnen*, and sport as well as the *naturist* press and general reviews of the time as my main primary sources.⁶ As most of the *naturist* literature of the period was written by men, it will be telling more about the sexual ideology of men than of women. Public nudity is at the crossroad of public/private, individual/collective, and biological/social. *Naturism* helps, therefore, to understand the *biosocial construction*⁷ of gender in Germany.

German *naturism* seems to have had six roots,⁸ the Beauty Movement (*Schönheitsbewegung*), the Young Movement (*Jugendbewegung*), the Natural Healing Movement (*Naturheilmovement*), Physical Culture (*Körperkultur*),⁹ Rhythmical Gymnastics and Dance, and nudism. I will try to show that their common ideological denominator was a German brand of Social Darwinism, i.e., racial hygiene. Although it is tempting to pursue the issues involved into the Nazi era,¹⁰ I will try to exclude the political utilization of Social Darwinism in the Germany of that period” in this context as much as possible. I will also

4. Harold C. Booth, “Freikörperkultur in England,” *Freikörperkultur und Lebensform* 1 (Dec. 1929): 334-35.

5. Fred Ilfeld, Jr. and Roger Lauer, *Social Nudism in America* (New Haven, Conn.: College & University Press, 1964). 28.

6. I gratefully acknowledge the usage of the *Internationale FKK-Bibliothek*, Forsthaus am Brand, 3507 Baunatal 2. Jörg Damm, the owner/librarian, was most helpful in providing liberal access to this unique collection. This constantly enlarged library contains over 4,000 bibliographical units, the first 3,100 of which are in a printed catalogue. Cf. Andreas Kuntz-Stahl, ed., *Vom Naturismus zum Nudismus—Internationale FKK-Bibliothek Kassel. Bestandsverzeichnis* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1985).

7. Nancy M. Theriot, *The Biosocial Construction of Femininity. Mothers and Daughters in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1988). It should be pointed out that the German language does not differentiate between *sex* and *gender*, both meaning *Geschlecht*, for the linguistic implications cf. Dorothea Langer, “Für eine Ethnologie der Geschlechter. Begriffstheoretische Überlegungen zum Sprachverhalten in der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie,” in Brigitte Kossek et al., eds., *Verkehren der Geschlechter* (Wien: Wiener Frauenverlag, 1989), 57-76.

8. Francis and Mason Merrill, *Among the Nudists* (London: Douglas, 1931), 196, omit physical culture and dance as a separate influence. Janos Frecot et al., *Fidus. 1868-1948* (München: Rogner & Bernhard, 1972), 15-57 emphasize the reform movements as its bases and leaves out most of the physical culture and sport side. Gisela Spitzer, *Der Deutsche Naturismus. Idee und Entwicklung einer volkerzieherischen Bewegung im Schnittfeld von Lebensreform. Sport und Politik* (Ahrensburg; Czwalina, 1983) stresses the political dichotomy of the *bourgeois* and the *workers'* roots of naturism. For the importance of the international workers' sport movement cf. Arnd Krüger and James Riordan, eds., *Der internationale Arbeitersport. Der Schlüssel zum Arbeitersport in zehn Ländern* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1985). English edition (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, forthcoming).

9. In Eastern European terminology *physical culture* comprises *dunce* and *sport*, cf. Wolfgang Eichel et al., eds. *Geschichte der Körperkultur in Deutschland* (Berlin: Sportverlag, 1969). For our time period cf. vol. 2, 291-360, vol. 3, 1-191. I will, however, follow the terminology of the time and keep them separate.

10. Lothar Tirala, *Sport und Rasse*. (Frankfurt/M: Bechhold, 1936) and Arthur Gütt, *Leibesübungen im Dienst der Rassenpflege*. (Langensalza: Beyer & Söhne, 1935) are some of the more prominent applications onto the sport movement. It shows that racial hygiene can lead straight into the Nazi brand of racism.

11. For the political utilization of sport in Germany cf. Arnd Krüger, *Sport und Politik. Vom Turnvater Jahr*

leave out the sports movement and other reform movements although some of the elements mentioned in this paper are present in there as well.

The Beauty Movement

The nineteenth century was preoccupied with beauty. Beauty, according to Hegel, is the sensual realization of an idea.¹² He had claimed in his lectures on aesthetics that classical Greek art has been *the* perfection in the realm of beauty. "Nothing can be nor become more beautiful."¹³ Friedrich Theodor Vischer, the most important German aestheticist of the nineteenth century since Hegel,¹⁴ whose five volumes of aesthetics remained most influential until World War I¹⁵ vulgarized Hegelian thought:

In the realm of beauty there is cloudless joy. Here we are permitted to be sensual, as here the senses are the obliging sisters of the spirit, which they supply on blooming paths with the purest nourishment. Here we are satisfied as spiritual beings without having to break with our sensuality . . . Cheerfulness and seriousness are in perfect peace and harmony. . . . It is Sunday. Workday souls do not understand this and are writing about indecency.¹⁶

The aesthetics of neo-classicism included the viewing of nudes in the arts. There were special recommendations as to how to treat nudity in the classroom situation, where as a by-product "an impression of the beauty of the human body will be achieved which is valuable for the physical, aesthetic, and moral lives of the cultured man in his clothes."¹⁷

The painter Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach (1851-1913) is generally accredited¹⁸ to have been the first to combine the painting of nudes with practicing nudism himself.¹⁹ For the development of beauty and nudity as part of *Jugendstil*,²⁰ the new wave in art and architecture, his disciple Hugo Höppner (1868-1948), called *Fidus*, became most important.²¹ Drawings by *Fidus* were published in many journals. He can be regarded as the most influential illustrator of nudes from 1889 onward.²² A typical example is shown in illustration 1.

In 1901 he drew the title picture of the new journal *Kraft und Schönheit*

zum Staatsamateur (Hannover; Fackelträger, 1975).

12. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1970), 3: 151.

13. *Ibid.*, 14: 128.

14. Michael Neumann, "Bildung und Gehorsam. Zur ästhetischen Ideologie des Bildungsbürgertums," in *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum. Zur Sozialgeschichte seiner Idee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976) 39.

15. Willi Oelmüller, *Friedrich Theodor Vischer und das Problem der nachhegelschen Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1959).

16. Friedrich Theodor Vischer, *Über das Erhabene und Komische* (Stuttgart, 1837), 38-39.

17. J. Friz, "Das Nackte in der Schule," *Christliches Kunstblatt für Kirche, Schule und Haus* 49 (Jan. 1907): 9-13 (He used Michelangelo's *Passing of the Soul to Adam* as instructional example).

18. Georg Pfitzner, *Der Naturismus in Deutschland, Osterreich und der Schweiz* (Hamburg-Altona: Danehl, 1964), 15.

19. He led a hermit life near Munich and was brought to trial in 1888 for being in the nude with his son, and with his disciple Fidus. Frecot, *Fidus*, 72f.

20. Dolf Sternberger, "Sinnlichkeit urn die Jahrhundertwende," in Jost Hermand, ed., *Jugendstil* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche, 1971), 100-106.

21. Frecot, *Fidus*, 467-482 has the most complete collection of his work. There were two special editions of journals dealing with him *Die Schönheit* 16 (1919/20), No. 1; *Die Freude* 1 (1923/24), No. 16.

22. Frecot, *Fidus*, 305-399 has a complete overview of his life work.

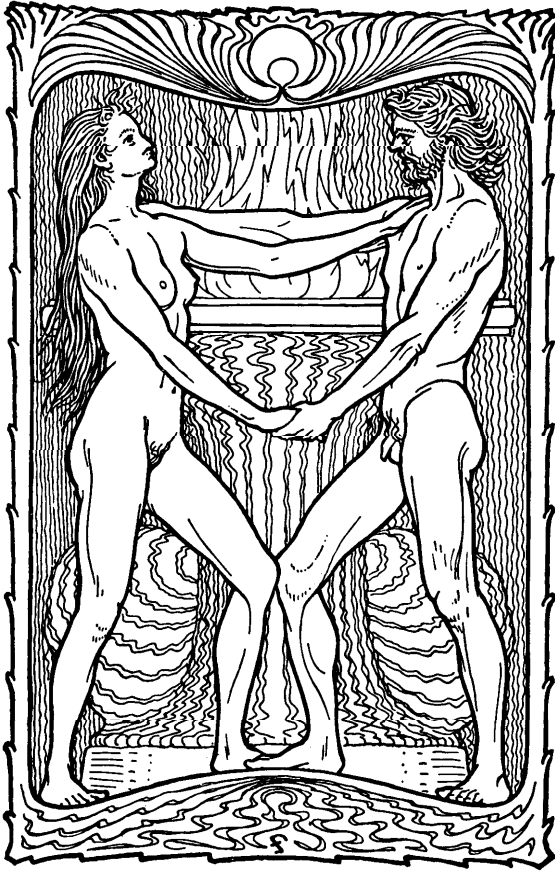


Figure I. Liebe (love). Drawing by Fidus. From R. Ungewitter, *Die Nacktheit*. (Stuttgart 1905).

(Strength and Beauty), the back of a nude male in a body building like situation. While this relatively inexpensively produced journal was at the edge of the beauty and the physical culture movements, the journal *Die Schönheit* (Beauty) which was started in 1902 soon became the voice of the beauty movement. It was expensively produced on glossy paper with many coloured prints. The purpose was expressed in the first editorial:

Created for free and noble women and men the *Schönheit* will become a modern journal in the service of classical ideals. We will cultivate everything which will make human existence pleasant, honorable, and sunny: the beauty of the body, of dress, of the home and public environment, love and joy, dance and play, the arts and good education, health and naturality, moral and social enyouthment. We want to ennoble the sensual thinking and to fight earnestly and seriously against false shame when we consider it dangerous.²³

23. *Die Schönheit* 1 (1902/03): 1, 1.

The journal broke many taboos and had the financial stamina to achieve its aims. Nudist groups all over Germany reported about their existence in it. In 1907 it won a case in the federal court to be permitted to print photos of nude men and women as photography was considered a modern art form. In one of the soirees sponsored by the journal Olga Desmond, the *Venus of London*, was the first dancer completely in the nude (1908).²⁴

All of the adult bourgeois proponents of naturism at one point or another have published in *Die Schözeit* or have been dealt with in the journal. The beauty movement spoke up against the double standard of morals and in favor of coeducation.²⁵ As trends are very often set by the upper class, this journal provided not only a discussion forum but was most influential in setting trends for Germany. While a hidden body does not have to be beautiful as long as the dress makes it appear that way, the exposed body has to have an attractive form to conform to the ideals of the time. According to the ideology of the journal a beautiful soul could only be in a beautiful body.

While *Jugendstil* drawings of women and men were youthfully slim, the reality often looked different. But also nude photography proclaimed a body image of women difficult to achieve. From 1905 onward *Die Schönheit* also published photographs of fully nude men. In all of the journals, far more pictures of nude women than men were published. This peculiar relationship also became obvious when at the founding assembly of *Hellas* (a Berlin nudist group) forty men and only two or three women showed up.²⁶ The ambiguous situation was described by Grotthuss:

There are nude shows in Paris but the French would never dream of insisting to visit them because of an artistic interest . . . The French have the courage at least to admit their lust . . . our art enthusiasts have to invent a new religion to enjoy their lascivious amusement with a clear conscience.²⁷

On the other hand it was argued that it is not nudity which is indecent but the lack of understanding of it. "When the beauty of nudeness is again purely sensed (as in ancient Greece) then nobody will be capable of soiling it with their inpure thoughts."²⁸

In the sex/gender system the availability of life photography of beautiful female and male nudes increased the pressure to do something for one's own body, as it was readily compared to others. In most fields of social nudity lascivious behavior was completely absent. The educated upper class *Bildungsbürger*, particularly in the Protestant northern German cities, started to include social nudity in its lifestyle. While the *Turners* still flexed their biceps on their photographs as gigantic phallic symbols, the male nude photographs were seldom that aggressive. Gender started to become defined by the realities and not the fantasies about life.

24. Pfitzner, *Naturismus in Deutschland*, 22.

25. C. E. Ries, "Geschlecht und Erziehung," *Die Schönheit* 1 (1902/03): 11, 692-704.

26. Frecot, *Fidus*, 49.

27. Jeannot Emil von Grotthuss, *Aus deutscher Dämmerung. Schattenbilder einer Übergangskultur* (Stuttgart: Greiner & Pfeiffer, 1909, 4th ed.), 298.

28. Bruno Judeich, "Das Erzieherische des Nackten," *Die Schönheit* 4 (1906/07): 7, 517.

The Youth Movement

There is a vast amount of literature on the German youth movement, a life reform movement,²⁹ which started in the last years of the 19th century and was almost completely incorporated into the *Hitler Youth* in 1933.³⁰ The youth movement was a protest movement which reacted against the moral code of the adult world. It is therefore not surprising that the moral double standard was soon attacked and that it placed a sense of comradeship between the sexes instead of the separation of the sexes. It is seen as playing an important role in the emancipation of women in Germany.³¹ Its followers advocated life reform, scoutism, and back to nature activities like swimming, hiking and camping.³² In contrast to the actual Boy Scouts, the organized (e.g., *Wandervogel*³³) or unorganized youth groups were generally mixed. *Manliness*, an important concept for the Baden-Powell followers,³⁴ had a completely different meaning for such mixed groups. Co-educational swimming in the nude was the rule from the very early 1900s onward.³⁵

It has been widely accepted that the youth movement had a considerable impact on the moral education of the German youth in that period. For them social nudism was not the main purpose for hiking and living in nature. Neo-classicism for them was part of the school system against which they revolted in the first place. *Naturism* meant for the youth movement living in nature and living naturally, i.e., in the nude if convenient.

The youth movement went one step further than the beauty movement.³⁶ Sexuality at first was practiced liberally in some groups as a form of revolt against the morals of their parents.³⁷ Then it was openly discussed in publications after the First World War:³⁸

For us there is no other solution as the personal responsibility towards the female soul and the search for a form of living together which is not necessarily for a

29. The other life reform movements of the time were antialcoholism, land reform, gymnastics and sport, anti-vaccination, dress reform, physical culture, nudism, natural healing, reform of living conditions, vegetarianism, anti-vivisectionism, reform of city building, cf. Wolfgang R. Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform. Strukturmerkmale einer sozialreformerischen Bewegung im Deutschland der Industrialisierungsperiode* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 13.

30. The archives of the German Youth movement are on *Burg Ludwigstein*, 3430 Witzenhausen 1. It is publishing a yearbook. For a documentation cf. Werner Kindt, *Dokumentation der Jugendbewegung*, 3 vols. (Düsseldorf: E. Diederichs, 1963, 1974, 1986). In English cf. Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement. 1900-1945. An Interpretive and Documentary History* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

31. Magdalena Musial, *Jugendbewegung und Emanzipation der Frau*. (Phil. Diss. Essen, 1982); Irmgard Klante, "Mädchen, Mutter, Kameradin, Weiblichkeitsbilder der bürgerlichen Jugendbewegung," *Jahrbuch des Archivs der Deutschen Jugendbewegung* 15 (1984/85): 75-86.

32. It should be noted though that their attitudes towards sexuality were quite different from Rousseau's. Cf. Hilke Hentze, *Sexualität in der Pädagogik des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt/M: P. Lang, 1978), 17-46.

33. Winfried Mogge, *Bilder aus dem Wandervogel-Leben*. (Köln: Wissenschaft & Politik, 1986).

34. Allen Warren, "Popular Manliness: Baden-Powell, Scouting and the Development of Manly Character," in James A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality. Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 199-219.

35. Spitzer, *Deutsche Naturismus*, 135.

36. For the relationship between the two movements cf. Peter Ulrich Hein, "Kunst, Hedonismus und Jugendbewegung," *Jahrbuch des Archivs der Deutschen Jugendbewegung* 14 (1982/83): 117-158.

37. "Geschlechtsnot der Jugend." Über Jugendbewegung und Sexualität, Thomas Koerber et al., eds. "Mit uns sieht die neue Zeit." *Der Mythos Jugend* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1985), 245-309.

38. Marion E. P. de Ras, *Körper, Eros und weibliche Kultur. Mädchen im Wandervogel und in der Bündischen Jugend. 1900-1933* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1988), 40-66.

lifetime. Who wants to live ascetically should do so, but this should not end in masturbation. Who likes to be engaged to be married for ten years like in the old days, should do so. We young new men and women have freer attitudes than the old, we see nothing shocking in a nude body, in sexual intercourse nothing immoral if it is based on deep love even outside civic bonds. For us “chaste” means something different from untouched, we understand it as a pure relationship towards the opposite sex . . . therefore we detest prostitution.³⁹

Not all of the girls and women consented to that view, though. For many the development had gone much too fast. The youth movement reached a wide middle class membership. After the admission of women to higher education,⁴⁰ it was only natural that the two sexes would share other experiences as well—and that this would not be exclusively a matter for the academic youth to participate in. There have never been any attempts to form exclusive women’s universities in Germany, nor women’s colleges within mixed universities.

De Ras sees four directions in the discussion of sexuality: a complete liberty which led to Lamberty’s propagation of polygamy, the advocacy of male or female homosexuality, and the above described attempt for a new chastity.⁴¹ For the sex/gender system the youth movement played an important role in that it practiced *naturism* as much as it preached it. Virginity was no longer an aim in itself. Having had visual if not physical contact with nude *comrades* of the opposite sex helped to avoid many frustrations particularly on the wedding night. It also shifted the attitude in the sex/gender system on the male side:

The shyness of the European to go in the nude has its main reason in showing the private parts . . . Much shyness has a good reason as the penis of the male adult has often become quite ugly . . . it looks today mostly like this: in a green-grey color of death as very few have ever let any sun or light at this part of the body which is sweating very much. The acid of the sweat is lixiviating the skin, giving it a loathsome color and a filthy smell . . . this is a process of rotting . . . If the penis is, however, exposed to the air and sun it will gain a silken skin and color: the finest skin of the body.⁴²

This denunciation by the youth movement is in sharp contrast to the image of the male gender. It is, however, a strong encouragement to join the ranks of the physical culture movement. The youth movement, however, did more to influence the education system in terms of the reform movement in education⁴³ than the physical culture⁴⁴ movement.

The Natural Healing Movement

The healthy body has occupied many creative minds in the history of mankind. Haley has shown us the importance the Victorians have placed upon

39. Ulrich Linse, in *Junge Menschen. Monatshefte für Politik, Kunst und Literatur und Leben aus dem Geiste der jungen Generation* 4 (Jan. 1922): 21f.

40. Gay, *Bourgeois Experience*, 220-225.

41. De Ras, *Körper, Eros und weibliche Kultur*, 46.

42. H. Sieker, “Fünf Sätze zu einer Hygiene der Ehe,” *Junge Menschen* 9 (July 1927): 172.

43. Cf. Edgar Beckers and Elke Richter, *Kommentierte Bibliographie zur Reformpädagogik* (St. Augustin: Richarz, 1979).

44. Arnd Krüger “Konrad Paschen. Eine Würdigung,” in Krüger and Dieter Niedlich, eds. *Ursachen der Schuport-Misere in Deutschland* (London: Arena, 1979), 266.

it.⁴⁵ The German “Crusaders for Fitness”⁴⁶ did not only include water cures for which you had to undress partially, but fresh air in the nude (*air baths*) played an important role. Father Kneipp had a huge impact in Germany and abroad, publishing more than 2 million books before 1921. Internationally renowned German medicine encouraged many American graduate physicians to pursue advanced studies there.⁴⁷ Bilz’ three volume encyclopedia of natural healing had over one hundred editions and more than one million copies were sold.⁴⁸ Because natural healing had a strong basis in the natural sciences, it has had such a strong role in Germany that, even today, natural healers (*Heilpraktiker*) are licensed by the state and can be appropriately reimbursed by the health insurance system. It should be pointed out that natural healing did not advocate fully nude public sunbathing but sexually segregated areas in which bathing shorts were worn.⁴⁹

Therapeutic nudity has a long tradition. Hippocrates had observed that you should not just lie around in the sun lazily but be active.⁵⁰ Bathing came back to Europe in the Renaissance.⁵¹ Arnold Rikli (1823-1904), a Swiss physicist, had personal experience with air baths against pleurisy (1852) and started a sun and air bath clinic with 56 separately fenced units in which nudity in the sun could be practiced in private.⁵² His sanatorium in Veldes/Ober-Krain is accredited by *Die Schönheit* as being the foundation of *sun and light culture*⁵³ and he is called its apostle.⁵⁴ Heliotherapy was soon propagated for tuberculosis and many skin diseases.⁵⁵

From 1882 onward many cities started to build sporting grounds, playing fields and public swimming baths. This German *playground movement* also advocated in some cities the use of sunbathing for the therapeutic benefit of the youth. One of its movements organised free summer holidays in the mountains

45. Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

46. James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness. The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) shows many cross influences between the United States, Britain, and Germany.

47. Roberta J. Park, “Health, Exercise, and the Biomedical Impulse, 1870-1914,” *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 61 (June 1990): 129.

48. F. E. Bilz, *Das neue Naturheilverfahren. Lehr- und Nachschlagbuch der naturgemäßen Heilweise und Gesundheitspflege*. (Leipzig: F. E. Bilz, 1900, 100th Jubiläums edition). 3 vols., 2978pp; Bilz, *Große illustrierte Hausbibliothek . . . unentbehrliches Nachschlagebuch für jedermann zur Pflege des Geistes und Körpers . . . ein Lehrbuch zur naturgemäßen Heilweise und Gesundheitspflege* (Leipzig: Bilz, 1902); cf. in English, Bilz, *The natural method of healing. A new and complete guide to health. Translated from the latest German edition* (Leipzig: Bilz, 1901). He also published a journal: *F. E. Bilz’ Gesundheitsrat. Illustriertes Familienblatt der Naturheilkunde mit Unterhaltungs- und humoristischen Teilen*. 1st vol. 1898.

49. Bilz, *Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 1, 877f. “Luftbad.”

50. Alfred Brauchle, *Die Geschichte der Naturheilkunde* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1951). 17.

51. Arnd Krüger, “Schwimmen, Der Wandel in der Einstellung zu einer Form der Leibesübung,” Arnd Krüger and John McClelland, eds., *Die Anfänge des modernen Sports in der Renaissance*, (London: Arena, 1984) 19-42.

52. Spitzer, *Deutsche Naturismus*, 26.

53. *Die Schönheit* 7 (1908/09), Beiblatt, 171.

54. Georg Herrmann, *Deutsches Kulturwörterbuch. Taschenlexikon der Lebenserneuerung für Vegetarismus und Lebensreform . . .* (Konstanz: Kulturverlag, 1962), 66.

55. Richard Ungewitter, *Nacktheit und Aufstieg* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1922), 30-59 has a lengthy review of all the positive results.

or at the seaside for poor city children because of the therapeutic value of air and sun.⁵⁶

In 1891, 131 natural healing sanatoria and air bathing installations were counted in Germany.⁵⁷ In 1913 there were already over 380. As Germans tend to organize themselves in clubs, the federation for natural healing had 885 clubs with 148,000 members in the same year.⁵⁸

Although the natural healing movement did not follow any particular ideology, it had an important role in the sex/gender system as it made nudity for health reasons acceptable. Given the preoccupation of imperial Germany with health, the liberating effect can be seen. Natural healing not only liberated the skin, and advocated doing exercises in the sun, but it also spread medical information liberally in a lay fashion, which helped to change the gender image of men and women alike. Birth control devices were propagated⁵⁹ with the same mechanical enthusiasm as booths for electric light⁶⁰ or mechanotherapeutical training devices.⁶¹ Although conservative medical opinion was still reluctant to acknowledge the existence of the nude body,⁶² natural healing had a large popular support.⁶³

Physical Culture

Since *mens sana in corpore sano sit*, the healthy body was not only attempted by natural healing procedures but also by physical exercise. Swedish gymnastics which combined the two on a scientific basis has not been well accepted in Germany, as the traditional *Turnen* was too strong.⁶⁴ While *Turnen* prepared in an unspecific way, the followers of Ling knew why they were doing which exercise. Ling's system did not achieve the same popularity in Germany as J. P.

56. Eerke U. Hamer, *Die Anfänge der "Spielbewegung" in Deutschland* (London: Arena, 1989), 267-280. For the positive view of the playground movement towards physical culture cf. Ferdinand Hueppe, *Hygiene der Leibesübungen* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1910), 23 (he was a physician and president of the German Football Union); F. A. Schmidt et al., *Schönheit und Gymnastik* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907), 1-50 (he was the vice-president of the German Turner Federation and a physician).

57. Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform*, 88.

58. *Ibid.*, 144.

59. Bilz, *Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 1, 415-419, "Frauenkrankheiten (Anhang). Kindersegen, zu großer, Vermeidung desselben." For an international view cf. Peter Gay, *Bourgeois Experience*, 261ff. It is still a long way for the sex reform movement to get started. Cf. Atina Grossmann, "Girllkultur or thoroughly rationalized female. A new woman in Weimar Germany?" in Judith Friedlander et al., eds., *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), 62-80. It should be noted that the natural healing movement reaffirms women of their natural possibilities and had therefore quite a different position to the one described by Patricia Vertinsky, "Body shapes: The role of the medical establishment in forming female exercise and physical education in nineteenth-century North America," in James A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park., eds., *From "Fair Sex" to Feminism. Sport and Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-industrial Eras* (London: Cass, 1987), 256-281.

60. Bilz, *Jubiläumsausgabe*, 244-248, "Elektrische Lichtbäder."

61. Walter Borgers, "Von der Motionsmaschine zum Fitness-Studio. Aspekte des apparativen Zugriffs auf den Körper," *Brennpunkte der Sportwissenschaft* 2 (1988): 130-152.

62. Gertrud Pfister, "Physicians as Experts of Female Physical Culture," *Journal of Sport History* 17 (Summer 1990): 183-98.

63. C. Pototzky, "Luft- und Sonnenbäder" *Die Umschau. Übersicht über die Fortschritte und Bewegungen auf dem Gesamtgebiet der Wissenschaft und Technik, sowie ihrer Beziehungen zu Literatur und Kunst* 12 (Aug. 15, 1980): 33,643-646.

64. Arnd Krüger, "The Struggle between Turnen, Sport, and Swedish Gymnastics in Germany," in Guy Bonhomme et al., eds., *La place du jeu dans l'éducation. Histoire et Pédagogie* (Paris: FIDEPS, 1989), 123-137.

Müller's.⁶⁵ After 1904 Müller's books had a tremendous international commercial success, being translated into 24 languages, as his system could be done individually in 5 to 15 minutes per day, and had the same scientific appeal as Ling's. Although Scandinavians were known for their readiness to swim in the nude on their beaches and lakes, Müller in his main work is always wearing bathing shorts. He did, however, also publish *Mein Freilichtbuch*, in which he explained his own relation to nudity. For him fresh air and exercises were the key to health. Although he was practicing nudism, he did not want to convert this sideline of his into the center of his system.⁶⁶

Within the physical culture movement one can therefore differentiate between *physical culture* and *free physical culture* (*Freikörperkultur*), the former like Müller taking nudity as accidental, the latter as primary emphasis of their movement in the first half of the twentieth century. It should, however, be noted that not all of these movements had a liberating effect on the sex/gender system. As much of physical culture has to do with the demonstration of strength,⁶⁷ it is a field where, for biological reasons, men are always superior to women. Kirchner, who tried to copy Müller, even went as far as to claim that

Men in particular cannot do without my system. Only the muscular man is irresistibly attractive to women. A shiver of admiration comes over her each time she sees how one of these strong beings lifts a heavy weight. She loves to see the hefty muscles bulge forward. She loves to watch the firm, strong hands which are often as strong as they are soft.⁶⁸

Müller opposes this show of muscles. As in the classical Greek sculptures, muscles are never tense unless necessary in the present situation, he mocks those *strong men* who are constantly flexing their muscles so that everybody may be impressed by their biceps.⁶⁹ Much of Müller's popularity may be due to the fact that he was in complete concurrence with the ideals of neoclassicism and health reform. In contrast to the American *physical culture* of Bernarr Macfadden, the German stressed the nude or almost nude body. It was not only fresh air for breathing but fresh air for as much skin contact as possible.⁷⁰

The most widely published and read physical culturist in Germany has been Hans Surén.⁷¹ An army officer from 1903 to 1925, after the war he was in charge

65. Jens P. Müller, *Mein System. 15 Minuten Täglicher Arbeit für die Gesundheit* (Kopenhagen, Tillge, 1905); Müller, *Die täglichen 5 Minuten. Gymnastische Übungen zur Erziehung und Erhaltung körperlicher Leistungsfähigkeit* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1925); Müller, *Mein System für Kinder* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1913); Müller, *Mein System für Frauen* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1912). Müller pointed out, however, the weakness of the Ling system as being too vigorous for the weak and not energetic enough for the strong, cf. *5 Minuten*, p. 33.

66. J. P. Müller, *Mein Freilichtbuch* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1927). 13ff.

67. The best historical study is by Gilbert Andrieu, *L'homme et la force. Des marchands de la force au culte de la forme (XIXe et XXe siècles)* (Joinville-le-Pont: Editions Actio, 1988). A typical example of the brute demonstration of the rippled muscular body and early German bodybuilding, placing as much emphasis on the proper diet as on exercise is Max Sick, *Muskelbeherrschung oder Körperentwicklung durch Willenskraft* (Leipzig: Grethlein, 1914).

68. Raphael Eugen Kirchner, *Mein Geheimsystem (Physical Culture)*. (Leipzig: Maximilian Wendel, s.d.), 8.

69. Müller, *Mein System*, (2nd edition, 1905), p. 86.

70. Bemarr Macfadden, *Macfadden's Encyclopedia of Physical Culture* (New York: Macfadden, 1926, 7th ed.), 2: 261-1094 looks more like a *Turnen* and sport book by German standards.

71. Spitzer, *Deutsche Naturismus*, 98-110; Hans Surén, *Deutsche Gymnastik*, (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1924 4th ed.; 1925 41st ed.); *Gymnastik der Deutschen* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1935, 2 vols. 45th ed.); *Der Mensch und die*

of physical training in the army sport school of Wünsdorf. This may help to explain why most of his work is directed towards the adult male. His books are full of photographs of his own oiled body in action in which he almost looks like a bronze statue. The aesthetics of the movement is also that of the statues in that there are few unnecessarily flexed and shown-off muscles.⁷² While Müller mocks this excessive use of olive and other vegetable oils, Surén continued by publishing works on self massage (for him an important preventive measure for various diseases and proven effective by the Finns) and skin care.⁷³ He recommends spending as much time as possible in the nude-and with the oil it is possible to do so at much lower temperatures. His books are full of exercises with various relatively light weights.

Surén is self-conscious about the impression he is making running around scarcely dressed with the *Surén-Schurz*, a mini athletic support narrowing down from 3" to ½" held on a string around the waist. (see illustration 2):

Nature has created us naked. Why can't we look at each other in the nude with clean thoughts? Isn't the nude body—once it is somewhat looked after and led by a moral spirit—the best means to educate and ennoble men and women? We have to take into consideration our fellow citizens, though, during this time of narrow prudishness. Because of them we often have to wear ugly bathing gowns. The *air bathing gown* of which I have spoken is the least hindering. For some this may not be enough, though. I have had many experiences in teaching courses and have often found that women reacted unembarrassed compared to men—most likely because the latter were afraid of the comparison between themselves and the bronzed, hardened body. So they swear against the lewd indecency instead of enjoying and supporting the developing strength of our people.⁷⁴

In the context of the sex/gender system I assume that Surén's observation is quite correct. He is giving to the *art of manliness* a new meaning in that he is stressing the beauty of the whole body rather than muscular contraction of particular parts. He is neither stressing courage nor extreme strength but all-round fitness. As one is not used to this show of shining skin and vigor it tends to have a homoerotic appeal. Is that why women felt less "embarrassed," i.e., less threatened than men? Or is this our own interpretation as group pictures of male nudes, oiled as if bathed in sweat, are coded in our late twentieth century sex/gender system as a homosexual gathering?

The first woman to publish a physical culture book in Germany was the Dutch-American Bess M. Mensendieck in 1906. It contained 78 photos of the nude Mensendieck performing static exercises, posing herself like a Greek statue. The book emphasizes figure and posture control. It advocates the concurrent thinking and presents exercises to do the movements correctly.⁷⁵ In

Sonne (Stuttgart: Dieck, 1924 21st ed.; 12th ed. 1941 Berlin: Scherl); *Gymnastik am Endball* (Dresden: Limpert, 1932); *Surén-Atemgymnastik* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1935 47th ed.); *Atemgymnastik im Bild* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1922); *Schwunggymnastik* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1935 11th ed.); *Kraftgymnastik* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1935 18th ed.); *Gymnastik für Heim, Beruf und Sport* (Stuttgart: Dieck, 1929 36th ed.).

72. Surén, *Der Mensch und die Sonne*, has one opposite p. 53 titled "Spiel der Kräfte."

73. Surén, *Selbstmassage. Pflege der Haut* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1937 41st ed.), 12ff.; Surén, *Selbstmassage im Bild* (Stuttgart: Franck, 1922).

74. Suren, *Der Mensch und die Sonne*, 29f.

75. Bess M. Mensendieck, *Körperkultur des Weibes. Praktisch hygienische und praktisch ästhetische Winke*



Figure 2. Hans Surén. From H. Suren. *Mensch und Sonne* (Berlin, 1941; 11th ed.)

this respect it is difficult to call her a *naturist*. She does, however, stress that man has lost much of natural movement and that, only by learning enough about anatomy and precise execution of movement, will it be possible to learn it again.⁷⁶ Nudity for her is mainly a means for self-control. Unaffected grace in

(München: Bruckmann, 1906) 124. As of the 5th edition (München, 1912) it is called *Körperkultur der Frau*. Even in the 9th edition (München, 1925) it still uses the same photographs. Her motto which shows up one way or another throughout her work: [Mensendieck *Bewegungsprobleme. Die Gestaltung schöner Arme* (München: Bruckmann, 1927)] "Don't work in a drill-like manner. Link muscle action and brain, Look, absorb, compare by thinking, judge. Only the opinion which you have acquired yourself is of value."

76. Bess M. Mensendieck, *Funktionelles Frauenturnen* (München: Bruckmann, 1923), 11. It contains 164 pictures; most of the women are wearing the Surén-Schutz and have their faces covered. The same idea has been taken up and applied to music as well. Cf. Siegfried Eberhardt, *Der Körper in Form und Hemmung. Die Beherrschung als Disposition der Lebensgrundlage* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926).

everyday movement is as much her aim as the improvement of health through conscious living (cf. illustration 3).⁷⁷

She had quite a number of followers and prepared students as *female teachers of the Mensendieck system*. As she was back in the United States during the war years, her system developed away from her original thought, stressing group rather than individual postural control and more “uncontrolled” exercises.⁷⁸ She therefore explicitly pointed out that the techniques of the *Mensendieck-Bund* had nothing to do with hers,⁷⁹ founding an opposing *International Mensendieck-Liga* for the *true Mensendieck system*.⁸⁰

The 1920s were a time when many gymnastic schools were founded in Germany. Having successfully finished a course for gymnastic teachers, their graduates were often employed by the school system because of a lack of female physical education teachers.⁸¹ The separate physical culture movement for men was absorbed by *Turnen* and *sport*. Very little remained as a body building

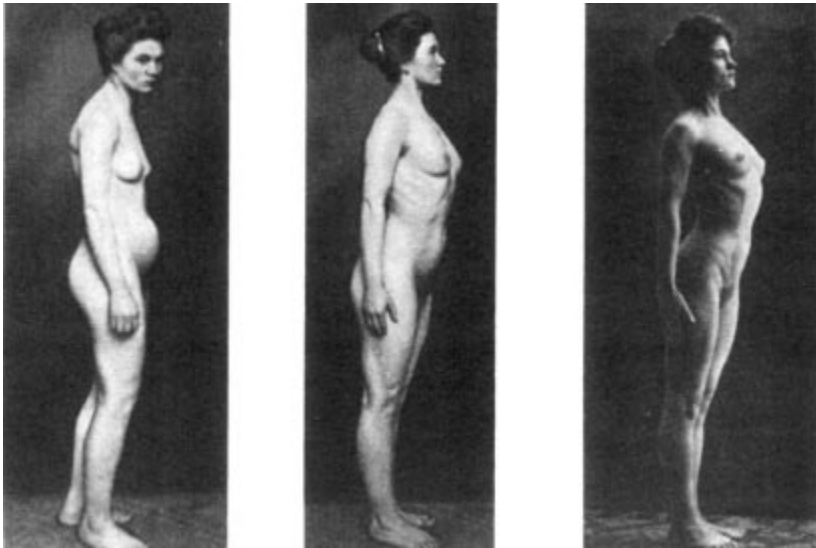


Figure 3. Bess Mensendieck.

1. Posture before exercises 2. Posture after 1 month 3. Energetic posture after 3 months

From B. Mensendieck, *Körperkultur der Frau* (Munich, 1912).

77. In a later book she uses a model to show both dressed and undressed, the same everyday movements to make the point even clearer. Bess M. Mensendieck, *Anmut der Bewegung im täglichen Leben* (München: Bruckmann, 1929).

78. Fritz Giese and Hedwig Hagemann, eds., *Weibliche Körperbildung und Bewegungskunst. Auf der Grundlage des System Mensendieck* (München: Delphin, 1922) 219 gives the names and address of 123 of the teachers in Germany and 19 abroad. One of those is in the United States.

79. Mensendieck, *Funktionelles Frauenturnen*, 323f.

80. Mensendieck, *Anmut der Bewegung*, 1st page (without number).

81. Arnd Krüger, “Turnen und Turnunterricht zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik. Die Grundlage der heutigen Schulsportmisere?” in Kruger and Niedlich, *Ursachen der Schulsport*, 13-31.

subculture. The gymnastic schools had a strong affiliation to dance and maintained what they considered their female identity.

The striving for physical perfection and self-determination can be seen vividly in Bess Mensendieck who was quite aware that she intruded into what was considered a male domain. She therefore asked her lady followers to "think for themselves." Men are said by her to have distributed the goods of the earth according to the motto: "For us men the brain for you women . . . the uterus." She therefore opposes the dance movement as it makes women stop to think and then act rationally.⁸² Some of physical culture questioned the traditional gender role stereotypes in the sex/gender system. Is this why the Surén type man appeared *soft* and the Mensendieck type woman *harsh*?

Rhythmical Gymnastics and Dance

"The beauty of strength belongs to men, the beauty of expression to women,"⁸³ is the common sex/gender system stereotype which seems to explain why rhythmical gymnastics and dance are mainly a female domain in Germany, while, e.g., in classical as much as in present Greek culture, there has not been this gender specific differentiation. Rudolf von Laban, the originator of modern dance, claimed, however, "Everybody has the dancer in himself or herself."⁸⁴ For him a dancer is a person "who combines a clear mind, deep feelings, and a strong will to a harmonious well-balanced whole, the parts of which are in constant flux."⁸⁵ He advocates therefore that children of both sexes should include plays in their dances in which they pretend to be of the opposite gender so as to learn to express all sensations.⁸⁶

Within the dance and rhythmical gymnastics movement you have two quite distinct directions: one trying to perfect motion and permit by this the showing of expression, and the other expressionist line using the perfection of motion for nonverbal communication of the inner self.⁸⁷ Laban, a dancer by training, the inventor of *kinetography*,⁸⁸ is an advocate of the former. This is the same notion as was already formulated at the beginning of the rhythmical gym-

82. Mensendieck, *Funktionelles Frauenturnen*, 321.

83. Hans W. Fischer, *Körperschönheit und Körperkultur. Sport-Gymnastik-Tanz* (Berlin: Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft, 1928), 8 Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender. Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 226ff. points out that many of the best modern male dancers have been homosexuals as only that way can they deal with the gender role expectations. Peter Petersen, *Rhythmik und rhythmische Gymnastik* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, Nachfolger, 1926).

84. Rudolf von Laban, "Motto," in Max von Boehn, *Der Tanz* (Berlin: Wegweiser, 1925), 1.

85. Rudolf von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (Stuttgart: Seiffert, 1920) 3.

86. Rudolf von Laban, *Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz* (Oldenburg: Stallung, 1926) 114. Petersen, *Rhythmik und rhythmische Gymnastik*.

87. For a characterization of the schools cf. Carl Diem, *Theorie der Gymnastik* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930). 104-117; Lisa Scheller, *Schritte. Die Entwicklung des Frauenturnens im nordwestdeutschen Raum* (Celle: Pohl, s.d. ca. 1980). 40-47. For some of the most prominent schools and their *master*, e.g., Wolfgang Bode, *Rudolf Bode—Leben und Werk* (München: Gymnastik und Rhythmus, 1972); Helmut Loges, *Freiheit und Form der Menschlichen Bewegung. Carl Loges 1887-1987* (Duderstadt: Mecke, 1987). The same differentiation between the two approaches is made in music and rhythm with *Musikunterricht* (learning to play an instrument) and *Musikerziehung* (learning to express oneself musically), cf. Elfriede Feudel, *Rhythmische Erziehung* (Braunschweig: Kallmeyer, 1939). For an overview of the various concepts of *rhythm* and *rhythmicality* cf. Peter Röthig, ed., *Beiträge zur Theorie und Lehre vom Rhythmus* (Schorndorf: Hofmann, 1966).

88. Valerie Preston-Dunlop, *Practical Kinetography Laban* (London: Macdonald & Evans, 1969). For his more complete theory cf. Rudolf Laban, *The Mastery of Movement* (London: Macdonald & Evans, 1971 3rd rev. ed. by Lisa Ullmann).

nastic movement by Delsartes.⁸⁹ It is closer to the tradition of dance.⁹⁰ They have an influence on the *naturist* movement only by teaching complete perfection which can be better supervised in the nude. On the whole, however, his followers do wear clothes.

The *naturist* approach to dancing was first introduced to Germany by Elizabeth Duncan, the sister of the famous dancer Isidora. They did have their success in Germany as the ground was well prepared by a general acceptance of physical culture (cf. illustration 4).⁹¹

In 1911 Emil Jaques-Dalcroze was the first to start a modern dance and gymnastics school in Dresden after several years of teaching courses. Many more schools arose in the 1920s. Only in 1922 did they have a joint symposium to see whether they could have enough in common to cooperate, and then they split up.⁹² As they followed their notions with an almost religious fervor, they may almost be described as sects.⁹³ The Dalcroze system considered itself to be a personal experience and not a method; it may therefore be counted under the roots of *naturism*.⁹⁴ "Who has learned the least can do the most," is its credo.⁹⁵

To teach free expression through the body can have a considerable liberating influence for the sex/gender system. Although the main impetus was taking place in the 1920s, which were *roaring* anyway, it should not be overlooked that rhythmical gymnastics did more than any other form of bodily movements to create *schools*, prepare teachers and find its way into the educational system. Its long term effect should therefore not be underestimated. Similarly as with the *beauty movement*, rhythmical gymnastics and the attempt for self realization through movement had an upper class appeal.⁹⁶ As the courses in the schools were quite expensive, they were socially exclusive at first. Although most of the schools were run by men, the emphasis on self expression rather than on the reproduction of learned motions had the chance to permit the unity of expression of sex and gender. It should not be overlooked, however, that very soon the movement for rhythmical gymnastics became almost exclusively a female domain. Was Bess Mensendieck right, that women again were thinking and doing only what men expected from them?⁹⁷

89. Carl Diem, *Theorie der Gymnastik*, 104.

90. Fritz Hanna Winter, *Lebendige Form. Rhythmus und Freiheit in Gymnastik, Sport und Tanz* (Karlsruhe: G. Braun, 1924).

91. Isadora Duncan, *Memoiren* (Zürich: Amalthea, 1928).

92. Ludwig Pallat and Franz Hilker, eds., *Künstlerische Köperschulung* (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1923).

93. Rudolf von Laban, *Gymnastik und Tanz* (Oldenburg: Stelling, 1926), 30-44.

94. Adolphe Appia, "Über Ursprung und Anfänge der rhythmischen Gymnastik," *Der Rhythmus. Ein Jahrbuch* (Jena: Diederichs, 1911), 27.

95. Emil Jaques-Dalcroze, "Was die rhythmische Gymnastik ihnen gibt und was sie von ihnen fordert. Ansprache an die Schüler und Schülerinnen des Normalkurses 1. Jahr," *ibid.*, 56. For the fight between the schools over the differences between rhythm and musical measure (*Takt*) cf. Elfriede Freudel, *Rhythmik. Theorie und Praxis der körperlich-musikalischen Erziehung* (München: Delphin, 1926), 15-27. For the differences between Laban and Dalcroze cf. Fritz Hanna Winther, *Körperbildung als Kunst und Pflicht* (München: Delphin, 1920), 36ff.

96. In the beauty manuals of the 1920s rhythmical gymnastics has always its place. See, e.g., Lisbeth Ankenbrand, *Der Willie zur Schönheit. Verjüinge Dich durch natürliche Schönheitspflege* (Stuttgart: Süd-deutsches Verlagshaus, 1928).

97. Mensendieck, *Funktionelles Frauenturnen*, 320.



Figure 4. A dance rhythm. From D. Menzler, *Die Schönheit deines Körpers* (Stuttgart, 1924).

Nudism and Naturism

It makes a big difference whether you are doing physical culture in the nude in nature or whether you place your body in the nude into nature. Languishing women at the sea side, water fairies bending over towards the reed, Eve's daughters stretching out for the fruit, which you can see in so called beauty pictures have nothing to do with healthy, serious, even harsh physical culture.⁹⁸

For the *nudists*, being in the nude was the most important issue because of which they combined in their organisations, while for the other *naturists* some of the other courses they were fighting for were more important, but they readily included being in the nude for the benefit of their other causes. The most

98. Dora Menzler, *Die Schönheit Deines Körpers* (Stuttgart: Dieck, 1924), 30.

prominent propagator of nudism in Germany was Richard Ungewitter (1868-1958). With his first book *Die Nacktheit* (1905), (*Nudity*), he shocked late imperial Germany. There were five more books in the same vein: *Nackt* (1909), *Kultur und Nacktheit* (1911), *Nacktheit und Kultur* (1913), *Nacktheit und Aufstieg* (1919), and *Nacktheit und Moral* (1925). Each sold well over 100,000 copies.⁹⁹ The books are presented in such a way as to shock the audience. Nudity until that time had not often been used in the title of books, or nude photography on covers of books. They also show photos of the author working in the nude at his desk¹⁰⁰ or standing around in the wood (cf. illustration 5). Much of the following edition of his work is filled with stories about the scandal it had been causing.

Ungewitter was active in forming nudist clubs. This way it was possible to have semi-public nudity without anybody taking offence. Many of the clubs combined and formed leagues and federations. In the 1920s when the politisation of German public life was at its height, it was quite natural to have bourgeois as well as workers' nudist clubs (*Freikörperkultur*— free physical culture). Many of these organisations produced their own journals.¹⁰¹ In addition to nudism most of them placed emphasis on one or more reform motives, often health reform, vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, etc. It was argued that it is not the nude that is immoral, but that which the on-looker is imagining about it¹⁰²

The nudists tried to act natural. It was therefore becoming more and more of a family affair where you take your wife and children to the *club*. Some of the organisations which arose after the war may have been founded by people of the *Jugendbewegung* who had come back from the war and were longing for the experience they had had at the front and in their pre-war groups: that of complete trust and comradeship. While in Germany people in general were addressing themselves by their family name (*Herr, Frau, Fräulein . . .*) it was customary in the nudist clubs to address neighbors by their first names.¹⁰³

The question discussed in their journals was whether “being in the nude means already to be part of a nude culture movement”? It is argued that many call themselves *friend of the light* who are only pure on their outside but inside

99. Richard Ungewitter, *Die Nacktheit in entwicklungsgeschichtlicher, gesundheitlicher, moralischer und künstlerischer Beleuchtung* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1905); *Nackt. Eine kritische Studie* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1909); *Kultur und Nacktheit* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1911); *Nacktheit und Kultur. Neue Forderungen* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1913); *Nacktheit und Aufstieg. Ziele zur Erneuerung des deutschen Volkes* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1919); *Nacktheit und Moral. Wege zur Rettung des deutschen Volkes* (Stuttgart: Ungewitter, 1925). He published some more brochures. Cf. Pfitzner, *Naturismus in Deutschland*, 24-28. For the purpose of this study I will leave out the many other propagators of nudism, cf. *ibidem*.

100. Benjamin Franklin has been accredited with being the first to work in the nude at his desk. Cf. his letter to M. Dubourg from London July 28, 1760. “I rise almost every morning, and sit in my chamber without any clothes whatever, half an hour or an hour, according to the season, either reading or writing. ‘This practice is not in the least painful, but, on the contrary, agreeable.” Quoted in Frances and Mason Merrill, *Among the Nudists* (London: Douglas, 1931), 199.

101. Spitzer, *Deutsche Naturismus*, 81-89. For an overview of the multitudes of clubs and organisations cf. Arno Vossen, *Sonnenmenschen. Sechs Jahrzehnte Freikörperkultur in Deutschland* (Hamburg: Deutscher Verband für Freikörperkultur, 1956).

102. Harro Magnussen, “Ist das Nackte unsittlich?” *Die Umschau* 12 (1908): 5, 82.

103. Michael Andritzky and Thomas Rautenberg, eds., “*Wir sind nackt und nennen uns Du.*” *Von Lichtfreunden und Sonnenkämpfern. Eine Geschichte der Freikörperkultur* (Giessen: Anabas, 1989).



Figure 5. Richard Ungewitter “in a pleasant game.”
From R. Ungewitter, *Die Nacktheit* (Stuttgart, 1905).

have filthy thoughts. Those who are willing to know themselves from the outside should also know themselves from the inside and strive there as well for perfection. The danger is, however, that commercialisation may take charge of the nudist movement and make it *chic* to go in the nude. By this, the movement would lose its moral imperative.¹⁰⁴ To live in nature had a particular appeal in the big cities, so Berlin has been one of the leading cities in the nudist movement.¹⁰⁵ Within the movement you were taught not to feel ashamed.¹⁰⁶ There are, moreover, those who just preach the expression of physical joy through nudity and movement (cf. illustration 6).¹⁰⁷

104. Karl Kamm, “Geistige Nacktheit,” *Licht-Land. Nachrichten-, Werbe- und Kampfblatt der Licht- und neudeutschen Bewegung* 1 (1924): 12, 1-3.

105. Charly Strässer, *Nacktkultur im Alten Berlin*. Catalogue to the Exposition *Berlin—Urheimat der FKK*. (Kassel: Lichtscharverlag, 1981).

106. *Körperbildung Nacktkultur. Blätter Freier Menschen*. Special Issue no. 4 *Schämst Du Dich?* (Leipzig: E. Oldenburg, 1930).

107. Magnus Weidemann, *Körper und Tanz* (Rudolfstadt: Greifenverlag, 1925).



Figure 6. Photo by Magnus Weidemann. From M. Weidemann, *Sonnenleben. Aus der Not zum Lebensglück* (Keitem, n.d. [1924]).

The legal situation did not prevent nudism in Germany provided it was not done in public, i.e., a club or a private home was the best setting. In a number of court cases this was clearly defined: If you looked through a hole in a fence or used binoculars to spot nudes, you were not committing an offense. A policeman was not permitted to take offense, but only to witness. If you wanted to take offense, you had to do so immediately. If you looked at the nudes for a certain while, you could no longer be offended, unless the situation changed.¹⁰⁸ A city was also permitted to reserve a certain area for nudists even without a fence. The island of Sylt did so and has had the reputation of being the island of the nudists ever since.

The nudists discussed sexuality in their publications quite frequently. As nudity in the mind of the public is associated with sexuality they were trying to differentiate between their nudity and that to be seen in cabarets. It is, however,

108. Robert Laurer and Walter Brauns, eds., *Nacktheit als Verbrechen* (Egestorf: Laurer, 1927); Bernhard Schulze, *Die Strafbarkeit des gemeinsamen Nacktbadens nach geltendem Recht und in der Rechtsprechung* (Rudolfstadt: Gesundes Leben, 1927).

acknowledged that sport and physical culture particularly in fresh air and sun have an invigorating effect which also stimulates the sexual glands. Just like the *Jugendbewegung* it therefore turns against prostitution and speaks out for a moral and *biological* relationship between the sexes.¹⁰⁹ Ungewitter calls it a question of trust:

A beautifully built body does not have to be afraid of nudity. To take off your clothes, particularly in front of persons of the other sex is a matter of trust. Girls and women with natural feelings will not be embarrassed to take off their clothes in front of men whom they know and whom they trust or to take a joint bath, for example, as they have nothing to be ashamed of. The prudish will, however, never take their clothes off even if they have just praised the chivalry of the gentlemen present.¹¹⁰

What are the aims of this campaign against prudishness? What are the impacts of nudism on the sex/gender system? Why has this movement been so successful in Germany and not successful to the same extent in any other European country? Looking at naturism, it becomes obvious that at first it was connected with a certain degree of asceticism, physical culture and even sport. This connection has been maintained ever since. Today, the nudists form an association within the German Sports Federation (DSB), the German sports governing body. The nudists have gone this way since 1933 when they were at first prohibited and then coordinated (*Gleichschaltung*) into a national federation of their choice.¹¹¹ On the other hand, particularly from the 1920s onward, there is a strong trend towards hedonism-to nudity for nudity's sake.¹¹² But the sports movement itself did go through a similar shift of emphasis. This close alliance with the sport movement—*Nacktsport* (sport in the nude) was one of the keywords¹¹³—is only a partial explanation of the success story of nudism and naturism. In one other aspect did they hit a national concern which was stronger and different in Germany than elsewhere: it presented itself as an effective means of racial hygiene, which was considered a national duty of first rank.¹¹⁴

Naturism and Racial Hygiene

Social Darwinism had a different impact on Germany than on many other countries as it was absorbed as a collective more than an individual responsibility.

109. See, e.g., Werner Schulte, *Körper—Kultur* (München: Reinhardt, 1928) 60-63; Pasul von Lager, "Erlebnisse der Nacktheit," *Die Freude. Monatshefte für freie Lebensgestaltung* 5 (May 1928): 193-197. For the opposite opinion from a religious point of view which rejects all nudity cf. Fr. W. Foerster, "Der Kultur des Nackten," *Der Türmer. Monatschrift für Gemüt und Geist* 9 (April 1907): 123-126.

110. Ungewitter, *Nacktheit und Kultur*, 46.

111. Arno Vossen, *Sonnenmenschen. Sechs Jahrzehnte Freikörperkultur in Deutschland* (Hamburg: DVF, 1956), 24-32; Dietger Pforte, "Zur Freikörperkultur-Bewegung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland," in Andritzky and Rautenberg, *Wir sind nackt und nennen uns Du.* 136-45.

112. Ulf Ermann Ziegler, *Nackt unter Nackten* (Berlin: Nischen, 1990), 22.

113. Cf. the discussion about nudity in sports (including school phys. ed.) in the journal of the physical education and sports teachers' association *Die Leibesübungen* special edition on "Nacktheit und Leibesübung" (nudity and physical education), (October 5, 1925): 19,457-478; a journal *Nacktsport* existed from 1920-27 and was the official review of several naturist groups.

114. There is a special journal for these endeavors: *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie einschließlich Rassen- und Gesellschaftshygiene* (since 1904); in relation to sport cf. Heinrich Plager, "Allgemeine Lebenserneuerung," in Edmund Neuendorff, ed., *Die Deutschen Leibesübungen* (Berlin: Andermann, 1927), 124-139; cf. Arnd Krüger, "Turnen und Turnunterricht zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik. Die Grundlage der heutigen Schulsportmisere?" in Krüger and Niedlich, *Ursachen der Schulsport, 22.*

ity.¹¹⁵ While imperialism and nationalism were strong in Germany and eventually helped to bring about the first world war, at the same time, Germany was experiencing a dramatic decline in population which was explained by various theories at the time.¹¹⁶ Racial hygiene was supposed to improve the stock of a population by encouraging people with “positive” genes to procreate extensively and by hindering those with “negative” ones to procreate at all. Eventually this led to the perversion of the Nazi racial theories. The physical education and the hygiene movements have been closely connected in Germany particularly since the international hygiene exhibition in Dresden in 1911.¹¹⁷

A positive selection for the sake of breeding a better population (*Zuchtwahl*) was advocated by many of the racial hygienists. This was, however, not that easy in a time when in some areas fifty percent and more of the population was supposed to have syphilis¹¹⁸ which did not have a reasonable cure at the time and was spread particularly by prostitution. The personal fear of syphilis, the “lust epidemic,”¹¹⁹ was increased by the national campaigns against the population decline as syphilis was partially to blame for this: syphilis was passed from the prostitute to her customer, from the customer to his (future) wife and from the mother to the child. It was responsible for the high infant mortality, the relatively low life expectancy and the low recruitment possibilities for the army particularly in the cities. It was thus a threat to the very core of German imperialism. The German *Turners* who were proud of their art of manliness were no different:

At the time of the XIth German Turnfest in Frankfurt (1908) the main roads were crowded during the festive days, but the roads leading to the brothels were so full of men that it was dangerous to walk there. When one *Turner* left the brothel three others rushed in. Finally the doors had to be locked with many standing still in line outside.¹²⁰

Many citizens were afraid that due to reaching into other parts of Europe,

115. Cf. Helmut Böhme, *Prologema zu einer Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Deutschlands im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968); Jürgen Kroll, *Zur Entstehung und Institutionalisierung einer naturwissenschaftlichen und sozialpolitischen Bewegung: Die Entwicklung der Eugenik/Rassenhygiene bis zum Jahre 1933* (Diss. Tübingen, 1983); Heinz-Georg Marten, *Sozialbiologismus. Biologische Grundpositionen der politischen Ideengeschichte* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1983); Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society. Germany 1800-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 130-163.

116. J. Borntraeger, *Der Geburtenrückgang in Deutschland. Seine Bewertung und Bekämpfung* (Würzburg: Kabitzsch, 1913); Walter Claassen, “Die Abnehmende Kriegstüchtigkeit in Deutschland in Stadt und Land von 1902-1907,” *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 6 (1909):1, 73-77; Hermann Paull, *Die Lebenskrise des deutschen Volkes. Geburtenrückgang, Fürsorgewesen und Familie*. (Berlin: Dümmler, 1929); John E. Knodel, *The decline of fertility in Germany. 1871-1939* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

117. Erker U. Hamer, *Spielbewegung*, 319-361; Ludwig Flügge, “Rassenbiologie und Sport,” *Rassenhygiene und Sexualethik* (Berlin: Literarisches Institut, 1924) 69-83.

118. The death-rate of persons infected by syphilis was supposed to be 30 to 75 p.c. higher than of non-syphilitic population. Cf. Max von Gruber, *Die Pflicht gesund zu sein* (München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1913), 13; Hermann Werner Siemens, *Grundzüge der Vererbungslehre, Rassenhygiene und Bevölkerungspolitik* (München: Lehmann, 1930), 90; Walter Claassen, “Das Ausbreiten der Geschlechtskrankheiten in Berlin 1892-1910,” *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 10 (1913): 4, 479-83; Erich Stern, *Die Erziehung und die sexuelle Frage*. (Berlin: Union Deutsche Verlagses., 1927), 171-300; A. Blaschko, “Die Geschlechts-krankheiten und ihre soziale Bedeutung,” Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht, ed., *Einführung in die Sexualpädagogik*. (Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1921) 81-101.

119. Bilz, *Jubiläumsausgabe*, 1362-69.

120. Siegfried, quoted in Ungewitter, *Nackt*, 67.

Germany was losing its national identity¹²¹ as by intermarriage much foreign stock was incorporated into Germany. Nudism and naturism in one form or another were supposed to be a cure against both¹²² and also against masturbation, considered to be one of the main reasons for insanity.¹²³ If you can see your future mate in the nude, you can judge for yourself whether he or she has any hidden *defects*. This is particularly the case with syphilis which, before the final stages, can be detected on the body more readily, most of the time, than on the head and hands alone. Social nudity particularly for the young person, “to see the realities of life” was therefore considered a healthy alternative: seeing instead of dreaming and masturbating, touching the clean nude body of a comrade in play instead of that of a prostitute with syphilis. One could stay clean in mind and body and make the right selection for a future mate.

The “right selection” in the nude was also geared against the Jewish male, as he was easily identified by circumcision-but the racist arguments are directed against other foreign nationals as well.¹²⁴ Women did not have much of a choice whom to marry as they were generally “given away” by their parents. But syphilis and racial consideration did give women a legitimate reason to oppose the choice of their parents by voicing a breeding selection of their own-a concern for the German *Volk* and race was one of the few chances to speak out against the parents’ will. In *naturism* the male also had the chance to look at his future bride in the nude and thus make a knowledgeable choice-if not a breeding selection.

Although racial hygiene was also practiced voluntarily in such countries as the United States and Great Britain,¹²⁵ the national preoccupation with it in Germany was so immense that even *nudism* was accepted as applied racial hygiene. It should be kept in mind that at the time it was not well established by science which traits could be inherited and which were acquired. Physical form was therefore considered of genetic origin.¹²⁶ In the context of the social norms of the time, social nudity in the naturist groups seemed to be one of the few legitimate possibilities to see the other sex in the nude, live, without falling back on the various practices of prostitution.

Of course, not all of the *naturists* were racists, but a sufficient amount were, so that later on they had no difficulty in claiming that they were among the forerunners of national socialism.¹²⁷ Surén, the most popular author, could easily show that his brand had always been a *German* gymnastics by which he

121. For the official form cf. Christian, *Die Rassenhygiene in der Gesittung, Gesetzgebung und Politik* (Berlin: Schoetz, 1923).

122. Ungewitter, *Nacktheit und Kultur*, 130ff.

123. Wilhelm Stekel, *Onanie und Homosexualität* (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1917).

124. Ungewitter, *Nacktheit und Aufstieg*, 116ff.; Ungewitter, *Nacktheit und Moral*, 86ff.

125. J. Kaup, *Volkshygiene oder sefektive Rassenhygiene*. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1922), 171-73.

126. Wilhelm Schallmayer, *Vererbung und Auslese. In ihrer soziologischen und politischen Bedeutung. Preisgekrönte Studie über Volksentartung und Volkseugenik* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1910); Richard Semon, “Beweise für die Vererbung erworbener Eigenschaften,” *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 4 (1907): 1, 146.

127. Hajo, Bennett, *Grundformen der Leibbeserziehung* (Schorndorf: Hofmann, 1965) 75; Dieter Pforte, “Zur Freikörperkultur-Bewegung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland,” in Andritzky and Rautenberg, “*Wir sind nackt und nennen uns Du*,” 136-45.

meant based on the aryan race.¹²⁸ Pudor, one of the other early protagonists of *nudism*, was also openly racist.¹²⁹ Ungewitter organized his disciples in the *Treibund für aufsteigendes Leben* (Loyal fellowship for ascending life) which became a part of the national working group of the federations of German light fighters (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Bünde deutscher Lichtkämpfer*). The aims of the *Treibund* were

nudity of both sexes at bathing, play, and sport as a means of education for a life free from prudishness and with true morality for a thorough selection of marriages on the basis of racial, physical, spiritual, and soulful advantages in the sense of a positive breeding selection to assure an ever ascending life.¹³⁰

Fidus whose drawings were to be found in all *naturist* publications was also very active in illustrating *völkisch* and racist journals.¹³¹ There are, however, also proletarian *nudist* groups which were not racist and tried to use the social nudity for educational and emancipatory aims.¹³²

Conclusions

Why was *naturism* so successful in Germany? The reform movements were reflecting a deeply rooted discontent with the stage civilization and the public morals had reached. For the 1920s this became very obvious but as could be seen in the case of social nudity and the public norms this movement started at the turn of the century. The outcry against social nudity was very limited as soon as it became an upper class affair and was done in what was supposed to be the best interest of the nation, i.e., racial hygiene. Some of the most prominent military men like von Moltke, the commanding general of the joint chiefs of staff, were actively supporting the movement.¹³³ Leaders of the young playground and sport movement like Dr. F. A. Schmidt¹³⁴ and Dr. Ferdinand Hueppe,¹³⁵ and Dr. Hermann Altrock¹³⁶ supported it. As it was supposed to be a

128. Dieter Pforte, "Hans Surén—eine deutsche FKK-Karriere," in *ibid.*, 130-135; Hans Surén, *Mensch und Sonne. Arisch-olympischer Geist* (Berlin: Scherl, 1936).

129. Spitzer, *Deutsche Naturismus*, 60-80; Pfützer, *Naturismus in Deutschland*, 18-20; cf. Heinrich Pudor, *Die Gesetze der Schönheit bei Sport, Spiel und Tanz* (Langensalza: Beyer & Söhne, 1931).

130. "Treibund für aufsteigendes Leben," *Licht-Land. Beilage zu den Monatsheften "Die Freude"* 1(1924): 3,40; the notion of *ascending* life comes from Willibald Hentschel, *Vom aufsteigenden Leben. Ziele der Rassen-Hygiene* (Leipzig: Matthes, 1918); *Varuna. Das Gesetz des aufsteigenden und sinkenden Lebens in der Völkergeschichte*. (Leipzig: Matthes, 1918). The same author was well known for his racism. Cf. Hentschel, *Mittgart. Ein Weg zur Erneuerung der germanischen Rasse* (Leipzig: Hammer-Verlag, 1904). This book is illustrated by Fidus.

131. Frecot et al., *Fidus*, has many of his illustrations including many swastikas and other racist symbols.

132. See, e.g., *Freie Menschen. Bund für sozialistische Lebensgestaltung und Freikörperkultur* (Free Men. Federation for socialist life style and free physical culture), cf. Vossen, *Sonnenmenschen*, 21f. Cf. Adolf Koch, *Körperkultur und Erziehung* (Berlin: Weiss, 1950, rep. Berlin: Hug, 1984); Koch, ed., *Körperbildung-Nacktkultur. Anlagen und Bekenntnisse* (Leipzig, Oldenburg, 1924).

133. He was, among others, honorary president of the *Verein für Körperkultur*, Berlin. Cf. *Festschrift zum Kostümfest* (Berlin: Kraft und Schönheit, 13. February 1908) 4.

134. *Ibid.*, 36f.

135. The president of the German soccer federation and professor for public hygiene at the German University of Prague practiced rowing in the nude himself. Cf. Ferdinand Hueppe, *Hygiene der Körperübungen*. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1922). 255.

136. Altrock became the first full professor for physical education in Germany at the university of Leipzig. Cf. Hermann Altrock, "Gymnastik und Nacktheit," in Koch, ed., *Körperbildung-Nacktkultur*, 60f.

cure against the population decline and important for the benefit of racial hygiene, the opposition was mainly restricted to the Catholic church.¹³⁷ On the whole it was a protestant northern city movement reaching in one way or another half of the German population, although the amount of organized nudists was limited.

In terms of the sex/gender system it can be safely assumed that social nudity did make quite a difference at the beginning. To look at and feel the body of a comrade of the opposite sex, be it male or female, had an emancipatory effect particularly for young men and women. But the dialectic of the matter should not be overlooked: under the guise of racial hygiene an otherwise indecent activity became sanctioned-but racial hygiene in itself looks at women and men only in their sexual functions, it thus reduced women all the more to their reproductive biological function. When the various branches of social nudity were coordinated into the Nazi state that was openly spoken out:

German women are not urged to be mere breeding machines. The full exercise of the reproductive function is regarded not as breeding only, but breeding for quality. A woman's life is held to be full and socially useful only when her children are strong, healthy, intelligent and racially pure.¹³⁸

For men social nudity also made a difference: Sexual pretense, symbols, and imagination became less important than the reality of the sexes. It had to be understood that women would no longer accept anybody and anything without a chance to compare. Physical make-believe as part of the art of manliness lost its importance in the social nudist groups. Men, women, and children alike had the feeling of being on more equal terms than before when being in the nude together.

137. *Gesetz und Freiheit*. (Früher "Deutsche Freikörperkultur") (May 1936), 123.

138. Clifford Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany. Its Women and Family Life* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1930), 174.