

**The Historical Semantics of *Heimat* before 1920 and the  
Ecological Philosophy of R. H. Francé**

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"Es genügt nicht, die Gesetze der  
Welt zu kennen, man muß auch nach  
ihnen leben."

— Raoul Heinrich Francé, 1921

## INTRODUCTION

In 1923, the Germany-based botanist, cultural philosopher, and popular science writer Raoul Heinrich Francé published a book entitled *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*. The stated purpose of the book was to instruct readers in a new way, inspired by emerging science of ecology, of appreciating and understanding the natural environment of their home land. Each page encouraged readers to see how each tree, flower, field, swamp, pond, and cloud exists in dependent relationships with every other element of the natural environment—humans not excepted.

While this book and the human-centric ecology it features are historically interesting in their own right<sup>1</sup>, it is Francé's choice of the politically-, culturally-, and even scientifically-charged *Heimat* concept which is of interest to us in this paper. Particularly, we are interested in the discourses in which the *Heimat* idea played a role in the 19th century, and which informed the understanding of the term that Francé and his nature-loving readers would have had in early 20th century Germany. As will be seen, tracing the development of this understanding of *Heimat* brings us into close contact with a number of the main cultural, political, and scientific discourses which characterized life in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Although the cultural-political and natural-scientific spheres of life seem to be worlds away from one another, analysis of the language used in both allows us to bring them together. In the first section of this paper, by noting the analogous shift from a

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<sup>1</sup> See Jackson Bierfeldt, "Völkisch Ecology: Forests and Deserts in R. H. Francé's *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*" An unpublished paper given to the Annual Graduate Student Conference of Germanic Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 2017.

‘static’ to a ‘dynamic’ meaning of the word *Heimat* in the cultural-political and natural-scientific contexts, this paper attempts to bring botanical, agricultural, and popular scientific texts into conversation with the cultural questions of ‘nation’ and ‘belonging.’ The relationship between *Heimat* and these questions has already received much scholarship in the cultural and political spheres of 19th and 20th century German life, especially those concerned with the new German nation of 1871. The first section of this paper reviews this scholarship and finds confirmation of its central claims about shifts in the cultural understanding of *Heimat* through philological comparison of a series of contemporaneous dictionaries and encyclopedias from the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Little work has been done to examine the parallel path the word took in the natural sciences, however, where, as we will show in the latter half of the first section of this paper, *Heimat* also played a discourse-shaping role.

Looking at various natural-scientific journals, magazines, and *Sachbücher* from the 19th and early 20th centuries, *Heimat* in the natural-scientific context is shown to mirror the shift from ‘genetic’ to ‘compositional’ meaning first observed in the cultural-political context. This shift in the natural-scientific sphere is apparently modeled in part on those semantic shifts which took place in its human-cultural usage, but are also shown to be motivated by shifts within the natural-scientific community. The example examined in this paper is the influence of the ecological theories of Karl Möbius, which saw natural *Lebensgemeinschaften* as complex networks of dependent relationships and conditions, rather than as mere communities of individual organisms. The influence this shift in scientific understanding had on the word *Heimat* and its usage patterns in the natural-

scientific literature allows us to claim for *Heimat* a role in the history of Ecology—at least as far as it was understood by a lay-readership.

In the second section of this paper, we return to the figure of Francé and his book, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, as a case-study of the usefulness of the *Heimat* concept for transmitting ecological ideas to a popular audience. Looking at biographical information about Francé and his larger, philosophical project, we come to understand his choice to use the *Heimat* concept in his popular scientific works to be motivated by the fecundity of the word in both the natural-scientific and cultural-political spheres of meaning. Francé is attracted to *Heimat*'s ambiguity in the early 20th century, and variously relies on its 'static' and 'dynamic' interpretations to transmit his ecological philosophy of life to his readers. Francé explicitly refers to the *Heimat* concept as the 'common denominator' between natural and cultural understanding of community, and uses the term to bring his philosophy to bear on the questions of 'belonging' through his ecologically-motivated concept of 'harmony.'

In total, this paper widens the analysis of *Heimat*'s role in the 19th and early 20th centuries, bringing natural- and popular-scientific evidence to bear on a discussion normally left to sociologists and cultural historians. To achieve this analysis, this paper consults a wide variety of resources. Original philological research traces the course of the *Heimat* idea in dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, scientific journals, *Sachbücher* and private correspondences. Biographical research into the figure of Raoul Francé was conducted over the course of the last year as part of a larger project aimed at explaining the neglected status the scientist and writer in post-WWII

scholarship, despite the immense popularity and influence he achieved during his lifetime. By using Francé as a case-study in the semantic history of the Heimat concept, we want to suggest ways in which his work, and the works of other (pseudo-)scientists outside of the academy working in early 20th century Germany may prove useful research subjects for cultural historians and those interested in the history of the interaction of science and society.

## HEIMAT: SHIFTS IN MEANING

Before delving into the cultural and natural-scientific history of the Heimat idea, we will allow Francé to introduce it with its full sentimental valence. In the opening pages of his 1923 *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, Francé recounts a story from his student years, a "kleine Episode," he assures his readers, "seit der das Wort Heimat für mein Ohr für immer einen besonderen Klang gewann."<sup>2</sup> A school friend with whom the natural scientist had always shared his yearning to explore the as-yet untouched parts of the earth was finally leaving, on his own, to research the Südsee, and allowed the young Francé to accompany him to the Hungarian border.<sup>3</sup> There, the surly guards demanded to inspect the suspicious possessions of the nervous *Naturforscher*:

"Die vielen Glasröhrchen, der große Vorrat an Giften für Herbar und Insektenkasten mißfielen ihnen. Alles wurde einzeln durchgesehen. Da stöberten sie unterst in der Kiste eine Schachtel mit braunschwarzem Pulver auf. Unfreundlich fragten sie: 'Was ist das?' Und mein Freund sagte leise: 'Erde ist's...'. Und noch leiser: 'Erde von daheim... Ich gehe weit weg, vielleicht für immer. Und da will ich wenigstens ein wenig Heimerde haben, für meinen Kopf, wenn...'. Und die graubärtigen alten Zollwächter grüßten stumm und ehrfurchtsvoll und ließen ihn gehen ins unbekante Land."<sup>4</sup>

That Francé begins his book with this dramatic scene from his youth is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Francé was a natural scientist—a botanist, specifically—turned popular-science writer and cultural philosopher, whose penchant for romantic

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<sup>2</sup> Raoul Heinrich Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (Stuttgart: Franckh'sche Verlagshandlung, 1923), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Though, notably, the "Hungarian" detail is not mentioned in his description. Francé—who was born in Austria and grew-up in Hungary—maintains an authorial presence which always seems German, through his use of "wir" and "unser," when referring to matters dealing with Germany. Francé received an honorary German citizenship in 1923, although he permanently left the country, never to return, in 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, 5.

descriptions of research trips, the fantastical natural phenomena of the earth, and the adventurous life of the Naturforscher won him many loyal readers.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, and more prescient, this description underscores the importance and reverence Francé and his readers associate with the word *Heimat*. Among the scientific and technological equipment in the traveling natural scientist's box of belongings, the item of chief importance is simply some dirt from back home; even mistrustful customs officers are silenced by its suggestion, and can only reverently salute its power. At the conclusion of this scene, Francé asks his readers the question which serves as the point of departure for the explication of the ecological view of the world he wishes to transmit: "Welche Kraft hat diese Heimaterde?"

This prompts us to ask first, however: Welche Kraft hat dieses Heimatwort? Before returning to Francé, his book, and its usage of the *Heimat* idea, it is first necessary to understand what was commonly associated with this word by Francé and his readers at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>6</sup> Because words are not merely given phenomena which exist outside of the context of the spheres of life in which they are used, we cannot treat our analysis of the word *Heimat* one-sidedly. We will analyze the ways in which the word was used and how its meaning changed and developed in two different spheres of 19th century German which were important to Francé's readers: the cultural-political life that all members of the German nation shared, and the natural-scientific sphere of which

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<sup>5</sup> Some of Francé's better known popular-science books went through multiple printings and editions, marking him as one of the most well-known contemporary science writers of his time. Cf. Daum, Andreas. "Gegen die Verhässlingung des Lebens."

<sup>6</sup> "[T]he "genrification" of *Heimat* in composites such as *Heimatroman* (*Heimat* novel), *Heimatliteratur*, and *Heimatfilm* initially depended on readers' or audiences' prior familiarity with a whole culture of *Heimat* that had begun to consolidate by the middle of the nineteenth century." See Johannes Von Moltke, *No Place Like Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

Francé was an active participant. By investigating the word *Heimat* from the time of its rise to prominence at the end of the 18th century until the time when Francé adopted it in his popular writing in the 1920s, we will understand the cultural and intellectual background which Francé inherits with his use of the term, and we will be in a better position to understand why the word, and its related concepts, was so appealing to him as a tool for transmitting his ecological philosophy to his readers.

### **Cultural-Political**

Glossed in English as ‘Home land’, *Heimat* has been a word of great cultural weight and importance in the history of the modern German nation-state, and thus has been the subject of much research into the political and social history of Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries. Within the scholarship surrounding the cultural history of the *Heimat* concept in the 19th century, the period which interests us here, there are a few main themes which occur: 1) that *Heimat* emerged during a time of industrialization, radical social change, and nation-building, and is a product of these factors; 2) that *Heimat* not only emerged from this period of nation-building, but also played a significant role in the construction of the new German nation in the imagination of its diverse inhabitants, working to secure for them a sense of the new *German Heimat*; and 3) that the *Heimat* concept is one rooted in a particular (to a large degree fabricated) notion of the past, one which emphasizes the sentimental and agrarian roots of German communities, but is not reactionary, in that it understands itself as operating in the present and looking to the future. The underlying thread of these three themes, however, is the

biggest cultural-political question that was facing Germany in the 19th century: the question of Nation.

Celia Applegate begins her discussion of the word *Heimat* in her book *A Nation of Provincials—The German idea of Heimat* by pointing out that the enterprising writers who reintroduced the word to the common German vocabulary at the turn of the 18th century had motivations for doing so which were not merely sentimental and homely. She describes "the actors in this linguistic drama" as "writers preoccupied with the idea of the German language as the expression of the German people and as the promise of a German nation."<sup>7</sup> Applegate traces the path of the word from its sentimental, agrarian origins to become one of the keystone political concepts in navigating the complex relationship between various levels of social community organization, including state, region, and locality, in an industrializing and modernizing Germany. Alon Confino goes even further in his book, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, arguing that "in imperial Germany [the Heimat idea] itself transformed also into an actual representation of the nation. [...] The national Heimat idea possessed a national narrative and a national image and by representing interchangeably the locality, the region, and the nation, created in the mind of Germans an 'imagined community.'"<sup>8</sup> Notably, both scholars highlight the importance of the idea of 'community' in understanding *Heimat*.

The scholarship of both Applegate and Confino function within a framework which views the Heimat idea as intricately tied-up in the question of identity in post-unification Germany, and thereby having played an important role in shaping the political

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<sup>7</sup> Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 98.

landscape among an emerging bourgeois public. The problem allows itself to be put rather simply: after 1871, there existed a new state—a unified, *German* state—where there had been none before.<sup>9</sup> One of the tasks set before this new state, then, was to create a unified *German* sense of identity out of the many and disparate regions, localities, and communities under its rule. The *Heimat* idea, with its associations with community, memory, and belonging, emerged as a perfect aide in accomplishing this task of identity-creation. Although the *Heimat* idea appears in various forms and cultural objects from the time,<sup>10</sup> we are interested here in the word *Heimat* itself and the changes in meaning that it underwent during the long 19th century, and will thus restrict ourselves to a philological exploration.

Writing in 1997, Confino claims that "one hundred years ago Germans understood *Heimat* as having a national meaning and had forgotten that in the 1850s this meaning did not exist."<sup>11</sup> His account sees the concept as having swung between two poles of reference: the local and the national. In his work about the role the *Heimat* idea played on the development of the German idea of nation, he draws upon many sources, including contemporary literature, museums, and propaganda posters, in order to trace this shift in the cultural understanding of the *Heimat* concept in general, but here we should like to look simply at the history of the word *Heimat*, and how it was understood in law and

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<sup>9</sup> Applegate does qualify this understanding of the identity problem facing the "new" German State by acknowledging that "[r]ecent wisdom has for the most part turned away from such cultural phenomena, suggesting that German nationhood was less the final state of the unfolding and maturing of an idea [...] than the creation of measurable processes of economic transformation, and administrative, educational, and political communication." The problem with this "anti-idealist" wisdom, however, lies in its having "paid scant attention to the feeling of national belonging itself, concentrating instead on the forces that produced it" (Applegate, 12).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Confino's discussion of *Ortsgeschichte*: Confino, 101.

<sup>11</sup> Confino, 127.

literature. No investigation of a word can properly begin without peeking into a dictionary, of course, so we shall take that as our starting point.

Looking at the trajectory of the word *Heimat* in the cultural-political sphere of the 19th century, we notice a shift in meaning from a 'static' to a 'dynamic' understanding. The initial meaning is 'static' or 'genetic' (in the sense of *genesis*) in that one's *Heimat* was considered to be unchangeable: One is born in a particular location, and that is one's *Heimat*. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, as *Heimat* began to take on meanings in the context of the first German nation, which had not formally existed before 1871, a shift towards a more 'dynamic' or 'compositional' meaning is observed. 'Compositional,' because the concept began to be understood as something which was the product of a series of relationships, not merely the womb of these relationships itself. In this context, one's *Heimat* is where one has obligations and ties and where one is understood as being a constituent part of a whole. This need not be where one is born, but merely where one finds support and has mutual obligations to others.<sup>12</sup>

In tracing the path of this shift, we shall begin at the turn of the 19th century, the time period to which Applegate attributes *Heimat*'s major reintroduction to popular usage. A series of school dictionaries from this time reveal a rather strict geographical understanding of *Heimat*. A typical definition stresses the properties of geographical location, origin, and belonging, and may appear as "der Ort, das Land wo man daheim ist,

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ferdinand Törries, *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft* (Berlin: K. Curtius, 1922).

der Geburtsort, das Vaterland."<sup>13</sup> The primary examples given from literature have to do with either leaving or returning to the *Heimat*, treating it as a special place of origin and importance. As we have already seen in the opening section of Francé's book, in which a brave traveler prepares to take leave of his *Heimat*, possibly forever, this is the definition of *Heimat* which lends it such literary power. The associations with childhood, family, and the first location one ever knew are those which cause Applegate to characterize the term as "a mythology—nostalgic and sentimental, but also potentially useful."<sup>14</sup>

This 'genetic' meaning revealed in the dictionary entries at the turn of the 19th century is the core meaning of *Heimat*. Throughout its semantic shifting, it is this definition and its sentimental associations which remain with the word throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm show this to be the case in their dictionary, which indicates the origin of the word to be the 15th century Old High German word 'heimôti,' for which the Latin glosses *patria* (homeland) and *domicilium* (home) are given<sup>15</sup>. The Grimm brothers further show that, over the centuries, the word changes phonetically, appearing simultaneously in a few different dialects, but always with a similar gloss. Aside from some of the etymological history of the word, they also provide the primary definitions as understood around the middle of the 19th century,

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<sup>13</sup> Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch Der Deutschen Sprache* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1808), 603. Note that here, Vaterland did not yet have the nation meaning that it would later take on, but meant literally the land (or region) from which one's father came. This had particular legal meaning as the legal system favored the father's lineage. Paternal system. (Campe, Vol. 5., 255) Of note is the definition given for *Zweites Vaterland*, which is: "In weiterer Bedeutung nennt man auch dasjenige Land, in welchem man sich häuslich niedergelassen hat und als Staatsbürger lebt, sein Vaterland" (Campe Vol. 5., 256).

<sup>14</sup> Applegate, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm* Vol. 10 (Leipzig: 1874).

when they were collecting information for their dictionary. The primary definitions are given as : "1) das land oder auch nur der landstrich, in dem man geboren ist oder bleibenden aufenthalt hat" and "2) der geburtsort oder ständige wohnort." Already, one notices a shift with the addition of "aufenthalt" and "wohnort." The idea that the Heimat might not be given exclusively at birth, but might also come about within the adult life through some sort of choice or change of circumstance is contained within this shift.

Although certainly present by the time the Grimm brothers compiled their dictionary in the latter half of the 19th century, traces of this shift from the static to the dynamic conception of Heimat can already be found in the early years of the 19th century as well. One concrete place to turn to see the effects of the changing political landscape on the Heimat concept is in the legal concept of *Heimatsrecht*.<sup>16</sup> An 1819 dictionary gives the definition as follows: "das Recht der Heimath, das Recht der Eingebornen, welches einem Fremden, der sich an einem Orte, in einer Gegend niederläßt, ertheilt wird."<sup>17</sup> Applegate discusses the various forms this law took on throughout the 19th century as having "formed part of an administrative effort to make the definition of citizenship uniform and all-inclusive."<sup>18</sup> That the law includes the word *Heimat* is of note, because it secures certain rights, normally granted to one who is born in a particular region (and later, state or nation), to *anyone* who settles in the area, implicitly extending the sentimental notions bound-up in the understanding of *Heimat* to those who were

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<sup>16</sup> The analogous sphere of law in the English speaking world is referred to as Domicile Law.

<sup>17</sup> Theodor Heinsius, *Volkthümliches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (Hannover: Hahnschen Hofbuchhandlung, 1819), 705.

<sup>18</sup> Applegate, 8.

previously unassociated with it.<sup>19</sup> The implications of this emotional-legal correspondence for the development of a national identity in post-unification Germany are clear: those to whom the law applies also belong to the *Heimat*, and are entitled to its sentimental fruits as well as to its actual ones.

An essay from Adolf Bruder's 1894 *Staatslexikon* provides a comprehensive discussion of the relationship between the 'ethical feelings' surrounding *Heimat* and the legal rights associated with the new German nation, documenting their increased interconnectedness.

"Das Leben des einzelnen Menschen ist nicht zu denken ohne Beziehung zu einer bestimmten Oertlichkeit, wo er sich aufhält und seinen Lebensunterhalt erwirbt. An diese Oertlichkeit knüpfen ihn nicht nur ethische Gefühle, sondern, von Ausnahmen abgesehen, auch rechtliche Beziehungen. Diese Oertlichkeit nennt er seine Heimat."<sup>20</sup>

Some of these 'lawful relations' are shown to have to do with the legal right to live in a particular place, receive aid from in it times of need, and obtain legal status as a member of a larger organization. The essay shows how, with the introduction of the German nation after 1871, "so wird die Heimat aus einem ethischen und naturrechtlichen Begriff zu einem Begriff des positiven Staatsrechtes."<sup>21</sup> The intervention of the *Heimatrecht* in the history of the *Heimat* idea can thus be seen as one of the legal processes which helped to further the coupling of the sentimental understanding of *Heimat* and feelings of

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<sup>19</sup> For a list of these rights, and which rights are not granted, see Adolf Bruder, *Staatslexikon* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1894), 245.

<sup>20</sup> Bruder, *Staatslexikon*, 244.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

‘belonging’ to a community with the legal status of ‘belonging’ to a community; this is especially poignant for the new community of the *German* nation.

Moving our analysis now to Francé’s own time, and looking at a pair of Brockhaus dictionaries from the Weimar period, we notice a significant change in the understanding of *Heimat* when compared to the beginning of the 19th century. Although the traditional definition of "birthplace" had been carried along—dragging its emotional luggage with it—and is almost always given as the first definition, additional definitions refer to *Heimat*’s usage in reference to the German nation and the assemblage of relations accorded to it. The 1931 edition of *Der Große Brockhaus* gives the second definition of *Heimat* as: "In der Gegenwart wird die Bezeichnung H[eimat] auch gleichbedeutend mit Vaterland, Staat, gebraucht."<sup>22</sup> The 1926 Brockhaus *Kleines Konversations-Lexikon* goes so far as to explicitly render *Heimat* as a system of relations surrounding a community. The definition reads in full:

"Heimat, ursprünglich der Geburtsort, das Geburtsland; im Gegensatz zum Domizil, dem für den Gerichtsstand und die privatrechtl. Beziehungen maßgebenden faktischen Wohnort, die mit kommunalpolit. Rechten und Pflichten verknüpfte Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gemeinde."<sup>23</sup>

This definition again highlights one of the core concepts at the center of the *Heimat* idea, that of ‘belonging’ [*Zugehörigkeit*], which is seen to be based on mutual obligations within a local community [*Gemeinde*]. Those who find themselves interwoven into this network

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<sup>22</sup> Brockhaus, *Der Große Brockhaus* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1931).

<sup>23</sup> Brockhaus, *Brockhaus* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1926).

of obligations and connections of a particular community can be said to 'belong' to it, and thereby earn the right to refer to it as their *Heimat*.

The industrialization and modernization of Germany throughout the 19th century brought along with it a new set of relationships and networks, and thus, a changed conception of the *Heimat* idea. Applegate alludes to this when she characterizes the *Heimat* idea as having taken part in a "long-standing though not always explicit debate in German society about the proper relation between the locality and the nation, the particular and the general, the many and the one."<sup>24</sup> The introduction of the railroad, the nation-state, and a dynamic conception of *Heimat* opened up new opportunities for social mobility among communities, and allowed the core sentimental associations of community and belonging to be projected onto a higher, newer level of unification: the first *Deutsches Reich*. By the end of the 19th century, one could simultaneously belong to the *Heimat* of one's locality, the *Gemeinde*, and the *Heimat* of the German Nation, the *Staat*, without any apparent contradiction. It is this idea of *Heimat*, along with the sentimental 'power' attached to it, which will inform the cultural background against which Francé's treatment of *Heimat* in *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* is understood.

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<sup>24</sup> Applegate, 6.

## Natural-scientific

Although much has already been written regarding the course that the word *Heimat* took in the cultural-political sphere of the 19th century, scholarship about the role the term played in the natural sciences is somewhat limited.<sup>25</sup> Although it is not our intention in this work to embark on the full discussion of the course that the word *Heimat* took in the natural sciences throughout the 19th century, we will shed some light on two important, and seemingly contradictory patterns of usage which appear throughout the 19th century and which we will refer to as the ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ modes of the *Heimat* idea. In the section which follows, we will show how Francé reconciles these two meanings against the background established by the social-political understanding of *Heimat*, and in so doing, promotes the reconciliatory power of his ecological philosophy. In order to narrow-in on the understanding of *Heimat* in the natural-scientific context that Francé and his readers would have had, we have restricted our philological research to botanical journals and magazines, some of which would later feature reviews and advertisements for Francé’s own books, and were undoubtedly familiar to both his readers and Francé himself.

The origins of the *Heimat* idea in the natural-scientific context are difficult to ascertain exactly, but the Grimm Brothers’ dictionary points out that by 1793 the word was already used to discuss the geographic origin of plants and animals, with an emphasis on the specific physical region where the species in question is to have first

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<sup>25</sup> Andrea Bastian has a brief chapter in her book titled "Der Heimat-Begriff im funktional-zweckhaften Bereich der Naturwissenschaft," which is mostly restricted to a discussion of the term in post-WWII Germany and suggests that the prevalence of foreign words such as *Areal*, took the place that would otherwise have been suited for *Heimat*. Cf. Andrea Bastian, *Der Heimat-Begriff* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995).

come into existence.<sup>26</sup> It served as the German-language gloss for the concept of ‘original natural habitat’ and was used interchangeably with terms such as *Domizil*, *Wohnort*, and sometimes even *Vaterland*,<sup>27</sup> and indicated a fixed geographical zone in which a particular species of plant or animal was originally to be found. Throughout the 19th century, *Heimat* appears in many variations, with roughly the same meaning, such as *heimisch (zu sein)* [to be native], *beheimatet* [indigenous], and *heimatlich* [belonging or pertaining to the Heimat].

We will focus here on two general courses that the Heimat idea took in the natural-scientific context, corresponding with two main linguistic frames in which the word appears in scientific journals and magazines. The first, which we will refer to as the *objective* natural-scientific frame, corresponds with the form of expression "the Heimat of X," where X is the name of the plant or animal species under investigation.<sup>28</sup> We call this the objective usage of the word not because it has any greater claim to objective validity, but because it considers *Heimat* from a perspective which places the *object* of study at the center. For example, the 1912 journal article "Über die Heimat der Erderbse" considers the various geographical locations in which the *Erderbse* is to be found, calling these its *Heimat*.<sup>29</sup> As we will show below, it is this objective mode which undergoes the most significant change throughout the 19th century and into the early years of the 20th.

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<sup>26</sup> The example given in the dictionary is from Nemnich, who wrote "die heimath dieser pflanze ist ungewis." Cf. Philipp Andreas Nemnich, *Allgemeines Polyglotten-Lexicon Der Naturgeschichte* (Böhme, 1795).

<sup>27</sup> See fn. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Unknown, "Die Heimat unserer wichtigsten Nutzpflanzen" (1892); H. Harms, "Über die Heimat der Erderbse" (1912); A. Schulz, "Abstammung und Heimat der Saatgerste" (1913).

<sup>29</sup> H. Harms, "Über die Heimat der Erderbse, *Voandzeia subterranea* (L.) Thou." *Notizblatt des Königl. botanischen Gartens und Museums zu Dahlem bei Steglitz (Berlin), sowie der botanischen Zentralstelle für die deutschen Kolonien* (1912): 253–258.

The term first entered the natural-scientific sphere as a way of referring to the ‘genetic’ origin of a species, but became increasingly intertwined with the emerging science of ecology, developing to take on a kind of compositional meaning in explaining the relationships and interdependent conditions of living-communities, and thus tracing a trajectory of meaning roughly analogous to that we saw in the previous section.

The second main linguistic frame in which *Heimat* appears, what we will call the *subjective* frame, is the reverse of the first, and usually takes the form "the X of *our* Heimat," where *Heimat* refers to the human cultural sphere in which the species being discussed are thought to be native.<sup>30</sup> Whereas the linguistic expression of the objective mode features only two salient elements (Heimat and X), the subjective mode notably includes a third: ‘*our*.’ This human cultural sphere, referred to as ‘*our* Heimat,’ is sometimes the narrower, local definition (Thüringen, or the Rhein Valley, for example), and sometimes—increasingly in the latter years of the 19th century—the broader, national definition (meaning the German Reich or even the entire German-speaking world, including Austria and Switzerland). In either case, in the subjective mode, the term *Heimat* is not being considered from the perspective of the object under study, but is treated as a constant—an already understood value to which the object under study can be evaluated.

Aside from differences in their linguistic composition, the primary difference between the two frames is in the motivation for the research being undertaken; each

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. M. Holtmann, “Über die Notwendigkeit fortgesetzter Durchforschung unseres heimatlichen Florengebietes” (1893); M. Dankler, “Die Eidechsen unsere Heimat” (1900); Heinrich Brockhausen, “Vegetationsbilder aus der Umgegend von Rheine” (1914).

frame is associated with a particular mode of inquiry which asks different questions and makes different assumptions. Assuming the existence of a fixed, well-defined human cultural or geographical sphere as its point of entry, the subjective mode often asks of its object of study: what are you, what do you do, and where are you found? Prime examples of scientific works from the 19th century which feature this approach are those which belong to the so-called field of *Heimatkunde*, or studies of the *Heimat*.<sup>31</sup> In these works, the often taxonomical information about plants and animals contained within is not recorded and transmitted for its own sake, but instead finds its motivation in creating a better understanding of the cultural or geographical sphere to which it belongs—in other words, for the sake of the *Heimat*. For example, in “Die Eidechsen unsere Heimat,” one writer uses Germany’s native lizard species as an opportunity to call for more attention to the plant and animals species of the “German Heimat,” and laments the reluctance of modern collectors and scientists to “penetrate more deeply into the nature of our [German] Heimat.”<sup>32</sup> Often, the collection of knowledge about the *heimatliche* Nature is elevated to a moral imperative. After emphasizing the wake-up-call emanating from “unsere heimischen Vögel,” the opening paragraph of the first issue of the popular natural-scientific journal *Nerthus* goes on to outline the modern necessity for such a journal by claiming that “Um uns aber an Körper und Geist gesund zu erhalten, brauchen wir die Natur, wir müssen zurück zu ihr!”<sup>33</sup> The underlying question of all of the articles

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Confino, 106.

<sup>32</sup> Dankler, M. “Die Eidechsen unsere Heimat.”

<sup>33</sup> *Nerthus*, Issue 1, 1899.

written in this subjective mode is one of belonging, but always a focus on the human cultural sphere: What belongs here in *my* Heimat, and what does it mean for *me*?

If the subjective frame asks *who* or *what* belongs to a particular region, then it is the objective frame which asks the question of *how* and *why*. Many of the studies undertaken in the mode of the objective framework, especially those reported earlier in the 19th century, are in search of the original *Heimat* of the species in question: where it grows wild, where it can be cultivated, and the geological and climatic *conditions* which influence these.

In the objective mode, we observe a familiar course with regard to the analysis of the relationships between plants, animals and their Heimats from the genetic to the compositional. Although the early 20th century still finds studies attempting to discover the origins of plant and animal species, these studies are increasingly augmented with those concerned with the dynamic conditions allowing plant and animal species to settle and thrive where they do, as well as how these conditions come about. These studies can be considered as prefigurations of the study of ecology as we understand it today, which focuses more on the conditions and relationships of systems rather than the individual elements which compose them. These analyses was not limited merely to geological and meteorological conditions however, but also sought to tease out the effects that living creatures had on one another. One figure who had a large role in the establishment of this shift was the German zoologist Karl August Möbius, whose landmark 1877 monograph *Die Auster und Die Austernwirtschaft* is seen by many historians of science as a

pioneering work in the history of ecological theory.<sup>34</sup> While studying oyster populations on the coast of the North Sea, Möbius sought to explain the prosperity and success of oyster populations by analyzing them not only in terms of their access to food and rate and success of reproduction, but also in terms of how these factors changed in relation to the populations of other species which inhabited the same area, including cockles, muscles, and even humans, who intervene through their fishing habits. Möbius found that there was no sufficiently adequate scientific word to describe this complex set of living organisms living in relation to one another, so he coined his own:

"Die Wissenschaft besitzt noch kein Wort für eine solche Gemeinschaft von lebenden Wesen, für eine den durchschnittlichen äusseren Lebensverhältnissen entsprechende Auswahl und Zahl von Arten und Individuen, welche sich gegenseitig bedingen und durch Fortpflanzung in einem abgemessenen Gebiete dauernd erhalten. Ich nenne solche Gemeinschaft *Biocoenosis* oder *Lebensgemeinde*."<sup>35</sup>

The essential logic of Möbius's theory is that living organisms create and influence the conditions for each other's survival and prosperity, interacting dynamically in the process and re-shaping the definition of the community as they interact. Thus, a definition of the community need necessarily include all of its members, how they interact, and the effects they have on each other. He emphasizes this in his monograph, writing that "[j]ede Veränderung irgend eines mitbedingenden Faktors einer Biocönose bewirkt Veränderungen anderer Faktor derselben."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For a larger description of Karl Möbius and the reception of his monograph, see: Lynn Nyhart, *Modern Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 151.

<sup>35</sup> Karl August Möbius, *Die Auster und die Austernwirthschaft* (Verlag von Wiegandt, Hempel & Parey, 1877), 78.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

Möbius's theory quickly gained traction in the natural-scientific literature, and its effects on the use of the word *Heimat* were not far behind. By the early years of the 20th century, botanical journals feature articles such as "Neue Bürger in der heimischen Tier- und Pflanzenwelt," which explicitly acknowledges the inter-dependence of the various life-communities upon one another and their mutual role in shaping each other's *Heimat*.<sup>37</sup>

This new understanding of the *Heimat* idea as compositional and not genetic, however, was not accepted without complaint in all facets of the natural-scientific understanding of *Heimat*. The subjective mode with its static, backgrounded understanding of the *Heimat* idea as a fixed-constant exerted its normalizing pressures on the discourse. In an anonymous open letter to the *Erfurter Botanische und naturwissenschaftliche Blätter* entitled "Die Heimat unserer wichtigsten Nutzpflanzen," one reader complains that most of "our" crops come from "eine ferne Heimat," like China or even North America.<sup>38</sup> Nodding to a compositional understanding of *Heimat*, the letter-writer concedes that most of these crops "[sind] schon längst *heimisch* geworden," and always refers to them as "unsere Nutzpflanzen." Despite this, and in using language which explicitly echoes that of the *Heimatsrecht* discussed in the last section, the letter-writer still finds themselves unable to grant these plants the status of truly 'belonging,' and marshals evidence of this fact from their aesthetic effect in the landscape:

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<sup>37</sup> Kalkreuth, "Neue Bürger in der heimischen Tier- und Pflanzenwelt," *Bericht des Westpreussischen Botanisch-Zoologischen Vereins* 33 (1911): 246–249.

<sup>38</sup> Unknown, "Die Heimat unserer wichtigsten Nutzpflanzen," *Erfurter illustrierte Gartenzeitung : e. Wegweiser u. Ratgeber f. jeden, welcher Blumen-, Gemüse und Obstzucht zu seinem Vergnügen oder zu seinem Nutzen treibt* (1892): 175.

"Haben auch die oben aufgezählten Nutzpflanzen längst schon das Bürgerrecht in unseren Gegenden sich erworben, so tragen doch die meisten noch vieles in ihrem Aeusseren an sich, dass sie als Eingewanderte stempelt. So z. B. passt ein wilder Apfelbaum nicht gut in den deutschen Wald, während der Holzbirnbaum denselben ziirt, denn erster ist ein Fremdling, letzterer ein Urbewohner Deutschlands Fluren."<sup>39</sup>

Another example of this confused notion of *Heimat* which emerges as the result of these two competing modes of inquiry in the natural sciences can be seen in an article about the Kreuzschnäbel birds, which one writer describes as being *heimatlos*, despite their obvious integration into an ecological community: "Im Grossen und Ganzen kann man von einer eigentlichen Heimat der Kreuzschnäbel kaum sprechen, es sind Zigeunervögel, die ständig umherstreichen."<sup>40</sup> In this context, the label *heimatlos* is to be associated with a general mistrust, due to an understanding of their transitory nature as being rooted in a lifestyle of exploitation [*ausnutzen*] of a region before moving on to the next one, with no consideration for its status as a discrete, unified system.

This push-back against the compositional conception of the *Heimat* idea reveals one of the central tensions in the *Heimat* discourse as it played out in the natural-scientific literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: If *Heimat* is a compositional concept, dynamically constructed through relations and obligations, what, then, are its limits? How do we differentiate between what *belongs* to and what merely stands in relation to a particular community or geographical region? These questions are those which lingered in the *Heimat* discourse as it dragged into the 20th century, both in the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Bade, "Kreuzschnäbel der Heimat," *Nerthus : ill. Wochenschr. für Tier- u. Pflanzenfreunde; Organ für Sammler u. Freunde aller naturwiss. Zweige* 38 (1899): 624.

cultural-political and the natural-scientific spheres. These questions were those that Francé inherited and whose answers he saw being contained in his own theory of the relationship between nature and culture.

## DIE ENTDECKUNG DER HEIMAT

With the results of this excursus into the word *Heimat* and its development in various spheres of 19th and 20th century German society in mind, we are now in a position to turn to Francé's 1923 popular-scientific work *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, and to examine the role that the *Heimat* idea played in expressing Francé's thought. As we will show in this section, this book can be understood as the presentation of a conception of *Heimat* which explicitly serves as the nexus of interaction between the two conceptions of *Heimat* we explored in the last section: the cultural-political on the one hand, and the natural-scientific on the other. Francé synthesizes the two discourses surrounding the word in the previous century, establishing for his readers an understanding of *Heimat* which is compositional, yet maintains clear rules regarding what 'belongs' and what does not. He refers to *Heimat* as the "common denominator" between nature and culture, nodding to its prevalence in both spheres of experience, and emphasizing that both spheres can be analyzed as a unity. Inspired by a monistic strain of thought and discouraged by the hyper-specialization and dogma of materialism he perceived in the natural sciences of his time, Francé uses the conception of *Heimat* as 'common denominator' to elaborate in a popular work his theory of a set of natural laws which bear on both nature and culture, shaping and determining the direction of both. We will show how he accomplishes this by appealing to the *Heimat* idea, and, finally, we will motivate Francé's choice to use the *Heimat* concept, showing how his earlier intellectual commitments and his critical perspective on late 19th century natural sciences made the *Heimat* idea a particularly appealing vehicle for his ecological philosophy.

## Heimat as Common Denominator

After recounting the story of his traveling friend with the envelope of dirt at the bottom of his luggage, Francé asks his readers: *Welche Kraft hat diese Heimaterde?* His own attempt at an answer follows the dichotomy between a cultural and a natural-scientific understanding we traced in our discussion of the history of the word. He begins by positing an explanation from a human cultural perspective, asking his readers if perhaps "it is just the beloved people who share with us a common race [*Rasse*] and language, the experiences of youth, the friendships and shared ideas," which ultimately compose the concept of *Heimat*.<sup>41</sup> Of course, these traditional bonds play their part in the formation of *Heimat*, he immediately counters, but they are not sufficient in themselves, for if one indulges in distant memories of one's own *Heimat*, it is associations of another kind which spring most immediately to mind. This second, memory-induced evaluation of *Heimat* yields the true nature of the idea, according to Francé. The images which this act of recollection bring forth are always those of *Nature*: Forests, clouds, animals, flowers, etc. Nothing related to the *Heimat* can escape connection to the natural. Francé's prose, while couched in the authority of natural science, teems with natural romanticism, which has the effect of intertwining—at the level of the individual word—the emotional valence of the *Heimat* idea with natural objects of botanical, geological, and climatological interest. *Heimat*, he concludes, is thus the "chilly forests" which "rustle mysteriously and invitingly," "the gardens in which one played", and "the old, small city

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<sup>41</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, 6.

gleaming, turned gold in the evening sun."<sup>42</sup> It is this idea of Heimat as the nexus of these two factors while leads Francé to conclude: "So then, it is nature *and* culture that one experiences as Heimat. It is a common denominator [*gemeinsamer Nenner*] for both."<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the culturally-oriented memories of the people one has seen, emotions one has felt, and places one has lived—all of those associations one has with the sentimental notion of *Heimat* which so thoroughly permeated its social reception—are all shown to be products of the natural environment: the climactic conditions, the geological formations, the flora and the fauna. Mediating between human memories and the natural conditions which are involved in producing them, Francé's description of the Heimat is simultaneously compositional and genetic. Francé makes this explicit when he writes that:

"The universe, soil, water, climate, plants, animals, the human of the past and the humanity of today—that is, the combination of nature and culture taken together—collectively produce a fruit which they also care for and develop together, namely, the Heimat, *from which we originate and in which we are embedded*."<sup>44</sup>

With this understanding, Francé finally provides provides his readers with an answer to his question about Heimat's power, emphasizing the role that relationships play: it is "the relationship between us and things [*Dingen*], a still unclear law of the interrelationship of all things [*Zusammenhanges der Dinge*], which bestows the word

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Interestingly, Gerhard Tenschert opted to leave much of this descriptive language out of the 1982 reprint of the book, ostensibly for space-saving reasons.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (1982), 86; emphasis mine.

Heimat its magical power."<sup>45</sup> The visual metaphor that Francé chooses to depict the ecological notion of the interconnectivity between everything is that of a web of threads:

"Fäden sind es, die geknüpft sind und sich spinnen von allem, was rings um uns ist, von den Menschen, mit denen wir zusammen arbeiten und leben, mit denen wir uns freuen oder aber auseinandersetzen, von der Stadt oder dem Dorf, die wir bewohnen, von der Luft, die wir atmen, dem Wasser, das wir trinken, den guten oder kargen Bissen, die wir essen, von allen den Feldern oder Wäldern oder Bergen, von allen den Geschöpfen, mit denen wir zusammenleben müssen, von allen den Gedanken oder Taten, mit denen sich die unseren verknüpfen."<sup>46</sup>

Francé's Heimat is a product of not only human thoughts, feelings, and cultural institutions, but also of the organic and inorganic natural conditions surrounding them.

These connections are not all of equal worth and meaning, however. The same question of *Where does Heimat end?* is present in Francé's work as well. He answers that

"[e]inige dieser Fäden und Einflüsse empfinden wir als angenehm, lebensfördernd, als Erhöhung unserer Kraft und Daseinsfreude; andere gleiten an uns ab, dringen nicht ein oder hemmen und ärgern uns gar; sie machen uns krank, unlustig, unfähig. Sie werden als fremd empfunden, die anderen aber erzeugen ein Gefühl des Behagens."<sup>47</sup>

This passage emphasizes that the compositional notion of the Heimat does not require that each relationship attached to a community be understood as 'belonging' to it; there are relationships, which, although *natural*, are not *heimatlich*. In other words, those conditions and relationships which prove beneficial to a system 'belong,' and are "*heimatlich*"; those which have negative effects or are rejected are "*fremd*." Thus, as

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (1982), 25.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

synthesis of the objective and subjective modes of inquiry, Francé's Heimat is compositional, but also finds itself equipped to set clear rules and borders as to what can be said to belong or not: whether for natural-scientific Heimats or for human cultural ones. The elaboration of these rules is for Francé an exact science; it is a role (and perhaps the most important one) to be played by the modern natural scientist.<sup>48</sup> Those who have the knowledge and skills to discern the rules of the Heimat, should do so, and it is this task which Francé himself undertakes throughout much of his work. In uncovering these rules, Francé looks to nature, and in particular, to Möbius's conception of the *Lebensgemeinschaft* and the variable 'harmony' of the relationships which can be observed in analyzing it. To best understand how these rules are presented to his readers, and how Francé sees incorporates them in the context of the Heimat discussion, we need first to look first at some background information about Francé's life and work, as well as outline his larger philosophical project, of which *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* is just a small, yet critical, part.<sup>49</sup>

### **Francé's Doctrine of Life**

Francé was born in Vienna in 1874, moved to Budapest with his family as a young boy, and trained there as a botanist before becoming the youngest person to be

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<sup>48</sup> In the 1982 reprint of *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, Gerhard Tenschert appends a section from an essay Francé wrote called "Wie weit darf man ein Land ausnutzen?" In this essay, Francé claims "Es ist Sache der Naturforscher unseres Landes, festzustellen, wo die Grenzen des Naturgleichgewichts sind." Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (1982), 107.

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted here that *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* was one of Francé's more popular books on the subject of ecological theory. It went through at least 17 reprints.

inducted to the Royal Hungarian Society for the Natural Sciences at the age of 17.<sup>50</sup> Having grown dissatisfied with what he saw as a rampant materialism and confusion in the natural sciences<sup>51</sup>, Francé left Hungary without completing his doctoral degree in 1902, instead moving to Munich to found and direct its Biological Institute as a ‘Privat Gelehrter.’<sup>52</sup> His primary scientific contributions during these years were in the fields of botany and soil biology. He was regarded as the ‘Pflanzen-Brehm’ for his work on a massive eight-volume encyclopedia about plants called "Das Leben der Pflanzen," and can be considered a founder of the field of soil ecology due to work on the ecosystem of bacteria, plants, and animals living in the soil, emphasizing their importance for processes like nitrogen fixation and humus building.<sup>53</sup> Francé was also a polymath and also counted geology, climatology, and the emerging field of ecology to his fields of interest. Because he was not a professor and operated outside of ‘the academy,’ his writings about these non-botanical subjects were mostly published in a series of popular-scientific books he published throughout his long career, among which *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* should be counted.

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<sup>50</sup> Most biographical information is taken from Francé’s autobiography *Der Weg zu Mir*, his official biography, *Das Buch eines Lebens*, and the English-language biography assembled and self-published by Dr. Rene Roth, *The Doctrine of Life*.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Erika Jenny’s description of the last decade of the 19th century in her 1931 dissertation *Die Heimatkunstbewegung*: "Gleichzeitig hatten in allen Kulturländern Europas die **Naturwissenschaften** einen riesigen Aufschwung genommen. Durch experimentelle Erfolge sicher und kühn gemacht, glaubte man das Rätsel des Lebens aus der vorhandenen Materie restlos erklären zu können. Die Folge davon war eine Verabsolutierung dieser Materie, eine Abkehr von der Metaphysik, die auch auf die Philosophie übergriff (Positivismus, Monismus). In Deutschland wurden die sog. Naturphilosophen wie H a e c k e l, D u b o i s - R e y m o n d zu Trägern dieses auf naturwissenschaftlicher Grundlage basierenden Materialismus." Erika Jenny, "Die Heimatkunstbewegung: ein Beitr. zur neueren dt. Literaturgeschichte (Basel: Philograph. Verlag, 1935): 27.

<sup>52</sup> Correspondence. Francé to an editor. March 20, 1910. München Literaturarchiv.

<sup>53</sup> See: Raoul Francé, *Das Leben der Pflanze Vol. 1–8* and *Das Leben in Ackerboden*.

Accusations of dilettantism notwithstanding, Francé was active in so many scientific, cultural, and philosophical discourses in turn-of-the-century Germany, that it is difficult to distill his life, character, and work into a few words. An attempt, however, yields the image of an eccentric, yet dedicated natural scientist who saw the metaphysical offerings of his day, particularly realism, materialism, and Darwinian evolution as insufficient for explaining the great similarities and correspondences in the functioning of all modes of life, be they vegetal, microbial, animal, human, or even spiritual. One of Francé's first intellectual projects was to develop a "comparative biology," which was to replace the "out-dated" concepts of botany and zoology, and sought to analyze all life in terms of its cellular plasma.<sup>54</sup> The desire to unify and simplify the scientific world could perhaps be considered the primary Leitmotiv running throughout all of Francé's scientific works. Looking at the intellectual inspirations Francé frequently cites and lists, it becomes apparent that he was deeply influenced by the type of natural mysticism practiced by Humboldt, who saw all facets of nature intertwined in one unitary fabric, which he called a *Kosmos*. Following this monistic line of thought, he sought to unite the various scientific disciplines of his time under the banner of biology, the science of life. He saw in ecology an opportunity to explain the complex interactions of life with its environment in biological, natural-scientific terms, thereby bringing the study of geological and meteorological conditions under the biologist's microscope as well.

In his first book, *Der Wert der Wissenschaft*, Francé makes the case that science should not be conducted for its own sake, or for the sake of gathering empirical

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<sup>54</sup> See: Raoul Francé, *Grundriß einer vergleichenden Biologie* (Leipzig: Thomas Th. Verlag, 1924).

knowledge, but should rather be done in the service of human life. Indeed, throughout all of his philosophical and cultural philosophical works, Francé repeated quotes the pre-socratic Protagoras, who said: "Der Mensch ist der Maß aller Dinge."<sup>55</sup> This phrase is central to the purpose of Francé's biocentric philosophy, which seeks to discover the laws according to which the world functions, so that the human can live in accordance to them, and thus achieve better life.

Of all of the scientists working and writing in the German-speaking world in the early 20th century, it is perhaps Francé who was most attracted to the idea of a unified conception of the laws of nature and their universal articulation in every possible sphere of life. This idea became the guiding thread of his work, and is perhaps most formally encapsulated in his 1921 two-volume work *BIOS: Die Gesetze der Welt*. Planned as the core of a never-fully-completed ten-volume series whose task it was to elucidate the various aspects of Francé's so-called "Doctrine of Life (*Lebenslehre*)," these two volumes explained the unified workings of life according to seven universal laws (*Weltgesetze*) with names like "The Law of Harmony," "The Law of the Optimum," and "The Law of Least Energy." Placing life and 'the living' at the center of his philosophy, he worked to transformed Humboldt's Cosmos into a Bios.<sup>56</sup> The motivations for the creation of a rigid philosophical grounding of life in a fixed number of universal laws was not lost to its contemporary readers, as evidenced by this selection from a book review:

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<sup>55</sup> Raoul Francé, *BIOS: Die Gesetze der Welt*. Vol. 1 (Munich: Franz Hanfstaengl, 1921): 37. For more on Francé's intellectual relationship to the pre-socratic philosophers, see *Der Wert der Wissenschaft*.

<sup>56</sup> Francé does credit Humboldt for having presented an entire generation with an image of the world which is controlled by "unverbrüchliche Gesetze," but also found his that, "so sehr sein Werk auch von dem edlen Schwung des Idealismus getragen wird, hat es gerade dadurch, wie kein zweites, seine Zeit daran gewöhnt, die Welt nicht so sehr als Organismus, sondern als einen weigen und von Größten bis ins Kleinste wirkenden Mechanismus anzusehen." Francé, *Bios*, 8.

"Francé weiß, wie jedem Gebildeten geradezu schwindelt, wenn die unendliche Fülle der Ereignisse menschlichen Forschens und Denkens auf ihn einstürmt und er der Widersprüche Herr werden soll, die es verhindern, eine sich gefestigte Weltanschauung zu gewinnen. Darum macht er sich an die Aufgabe, Naturwissenschaft und Philosophie zu verschmelzen und die großen Weltgesetze aufzuzeigen, um einen Einblick in die Grundgesetze zu geben, die alles Weltgeschehen beherrschen, die überall wirken, von unsichtbar Kleinsten angefangen, bis zu den Weltkörpern und Sonnensystemen und in die sich alles einfügen muss."<sup>57</sup>

Francé called his project an ‘objective philosophy,’ which is a rather unfortunate name<sup>58</sup> due its unambiguous rejection of an ‘objective truth’ in favor of a ‘biologically’ grounded epistemology which places the living subject at the center. The sense that the name is meant to convey is similar to that we adopted in elucidating the ‘objective’ mode of inquiry with respect to the Heimat discourse in the 19th century: Francé’s philosophy is an object-oriented science whose sense is

"not to find ‘the Truth.’ There exists ‘the truth’ just as little as there exists the matter, the space, the time, the world, or ‘the Good,’ ‘the Beautiful.’ To whom should ‘the truth’ even apply? We are searching only for *our* truth, namely, for the best life through perception of and integration in the universal chain of relationships between ‘Objects’—that means, in the universal laws."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted from Franz Pichler’s annotated bibliography. *Raoul Francé- Botaniker, Naturforscher, Philosoph und Volksbildner*. Entwurf August 2015. Thank you to Dr. Erna Aescht and Dr. Franz Pichler for sharing this invaluable document with me.

<sup>58</sup> Rene Roth notes that Francé’s followers were also dissatisfied with this confusing name, and preferred to refer to his philosophy as Francé’s ‘biocentric philosophy.’

<sup>59</sup> BIOS, 37. "Sinn einer so orientierten Wissenschaft ist es nicht, "die Wahrheit" zu finden. Eine solche gibt es ebensowenig, wie es die Materie, den Raum, die Zeit, die Welt, oder "das Gute, "das Schöne" gibt. Für wen sollte denn "die Wahrheit" gelten? Nur *unsere* Wahrheit suchen wir, nämlich bestes Leben durch Erkenntnis und Einordnung in die gemeingültigen Beziehungsverkettungen der "Objekte", das heißt in die Weltgesetzte."

As a *Lebenslehre*, Francé's philosophy finds itself primarily interested in life and the effects that these relationships between objects have on either promoting or securing it. In order to evaluate these relationships, Francé posits the Law of Harmony.<sup>60</sup> In researching natural systems, such as forest and humus ecosystems, he noted that they function so as to always seek a kind of harmonious equilibrium with their environment and among the various members of their internal *Lebensgemeinschaften*. In explaining the harmony concept to his readers in *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, Francé explicitly cites the work of Karl Möbius, his discovery of the *Oyster-Lebensgemeinschaft*, and the harmony the oyster-communities establish with the communities of other animals.<sup>61</sup> Between all of these parts of the larger community formed by intersecting dependent relationships, harmony is assured by a biological 'selection process.' Francé explains that that which does not harmoniously adapt to a system will be rejected, and thus, the system secures for itself and its constituents a kind of *Dauer* and strives towards every greater *Vollkommenheit*. Those relationships which enter into a community and find harmonious balance can be said to 'belong' to the community, according to the functioning of the natural laws. As an example of the most harmonious of the natural systems he had observed over the course of his research career, Francé extolls the harmonious functioning of the German forest. Through its establishing of harmonious relationships, it is shown to attain "eine unbeschränkte Dauer" and thereby to secure for every member of

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<sup>60</sup> Francé, *Bios* Vol. 2., 255.

<sup>61</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (1982), 56. In his popular writings, Francé prefers the standard German word *Lebensgemeinschaft*, but adopts Möbius's neologism (*Biocoenosis*) in his writings aimed at a more scientifically sophisticated audience.

its community a “*vollkommene Art von Daseinsrecht*.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, the logic of Francé’s theory runs: Harmony begets belonging, and belonging begets *Heimat*.

In this, we find reflection of the dichotomous discourses which took place surrounding the word *Heimat* in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Francé’s choice of the *Heimat* idea in transmitting his Doctrine of Life to readers in the popular-science writings, in books like *Die Entdeckung der Heimat*, then, seems to be facilitated by the *Heimat* concept’s flexibility to be understood simultaneously genetically and compositionally. The popular cultural conception of the *Heimat* idea after the 1871 unification of Germany paved the way for this understanding. By the time Francé took interest in the *Heimat* concept, it was already ambiguous in its ability to represent local, sentimental notions of belonging, while simultaneously being a dynamic, relational concept allowing for imaginations of a national ‘German’ *Heimat*. Having been educated in the natural sciences, Francé was aware of the competing notions of *Heimat* which appeared in the botanical and zoological journals, which also reflected this ambiguity. Even in his first published work, which he published in 1900 at the age of 26, Francé saw the value in reconciling what he saw as two competing more general discourses in the natural sciences:

"Die Tätigkeit des Naturforschers umschliesst für mich zwei streng geschiedene Sphären: die Zerlegung der "Welt als Erscheinung" in Erfahrung als niederste Stufe und die logische Weberarbeit des Denkers, welche die Naturerkenntnis schafft. Wenn beide sich vereinigen, sich

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<sup>62</sup> Francé, *Die Entdeckung der Heimat* (1982), 81.

harmonisch durchdringen, dann entsteht das Höchste, was ein Naturgelehrter anstreben kann: das Naturverstehen."<sup>63</sup>

*Naturverstehen*, as Francé considered it in this work, differentiates itself from *Naturkenntnis* and *Naturwissen* in that it primarily has to do with practical living; it is the concept that will eventually evolve into his Doctrine of Life. As a concept whose cultural history featured the same fault lines and possibility of reconciliation that Francé saw in the natural sciences more generally, the Heimat idea then appeared to Francé as a useful tool for transmitting his philosophy—one which was simultaneously universalizing, yet worked to maintain difference with regard to questions of ‘belonging’—to a broader readership.

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<sup>63</sup> Francé, *Der Wert der Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Th. Schröter’s Verlag, 1908), 25.

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