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Notices Recensioni

Jakob Benecke, *Soziale Ungleichheit und Hitler-Jugend. Zur Systematisierung sozialer Differenz in der nationalsozialistischen Jugendorganisation*, Weinheim-Basel, Juventa, 2015, 256 pp.

The author of this valuable work scrutinizes how the *Hitler-Jugend*, behind a facade of treating all its members equally, deployed highly discriminatory policies that gave rise to hierarchies of status and forms of exclusion, including among its own ranks. Nazi propaganda painted the regime's youth organization as a locus of unity, reflecting the Nazi Party's position as the sole political party: it was supposed to be a place where the German youth, irrespective of religious identity and social class, could share experiences, develop a common outlook, and overcome the social inequalities of the past. Benecke draws on his earlier study *Die Hitler-Jugend 1933 bis 1945. Programmatik, Alltag, Erinnerungen. Eine Dokumentation*, Weinheim-Basel, Juventa, 2015, which brought

to light a considerable corpus of documents concerning the HJ's programmes and everyday activities, as well as on memoirs about the organization, to build up a detailed reconstruction of its actual functioning. The regime's effective aim was not to attain equal status for all, but rather to replace previous power structures with new ones conforming to Nazi ideology. The HJ uniform, large-group synchronized movement, and photos showing tens, hundreds, and thousands of youths marching in step with one another, all conceal a more complex reality, which the author unmasks through his analysis of a large body of unpublished documentation. Indeed, Nazi pedagogy promoted exclusion both on ideological racist grounds and based on other discriminants. Its stated purpose was to form the characters and bodies of the youth, securing young Germans' faithfulness to the regime via a process of psychological, emotional, and physical indoctrination. Benecke identifies four stages in the history and

development of the HJ: an initial phase, prior to 1933; the phase of the organization's rise to dominance, between 1933 and 1936; a third phase in which it intensified its educational work, from 1936 to 1939; and the war phase, ending in 1945. Each of the four phases had its own internal dynamics, determining a gradual progression from an initial spirit of adventure to forced regimentation on pain of death during the war, with almost all German youths ultimately entering the HJ. Members who did not comply with the rules faced humiliating penalties and possible demotion. Physical shortcomings or fear were stigmatized and the movement's educational approach made use of violence and coercion: for example, a youth who did not know how to swim and was afraid of deep water would be forced underwater three times, to the point of making him lose consciousness. Such Spartan-like, repressive practices were widely adopted, in a practical application of Darwinist ideology. It was not enough to be Aryan: youths were expected to display strength and courage, and to embrace Hitler's ideological framework. Sports contests were highly competitive and accidents (such as the fracturing of limbs) were far from infrequent. Between 1933 and 1938, 649 young members of the HJ died for their efforts: specifically, in drowning incidents (21%), in road accidents (40%), from sports injuries (6.6 %), during outdoor play (2.2%), from pneumonia (5.5 %), or from gunshot wounds (4%). The scale of punishment ranged from a warning, to detention lasting a few days or a few years, or deportment to a concentration camp. For example, between 1939 and 1941, severe disciplinary penalties were imposed on 2,701 adolescents and youths (in 15% of cases for homosexual behaviours). Bencke examines the documents outlining the disciplinary measures. The youths to

be disciplined fell into three categories: those deemed guilty of moral transgression, those accused of engaging in inappropriate conduct, and those punishable for racial motives. Moral transgression meant sexual crimes, namely abortion in girls, and masturbation and homosexuality in the case of boys. Homosexuality accounted for two-thirds of this category and one-fifth of all offenses. The second category encompassed those found guilty of theft, indiscipline, criticizing Hitler and the regime, or associating with Jews. Those who rejected Nazi ideology were first threatened and then brutally punished. The third category included not only the children of mixed marriages and Jews, but also the weak of mind. All those with mental disabilities, including minors, were initially sterilized and later killed. The words «jew» and «homosexual» became insults. Youths with sensory disabilities were admitted to the HJ and the personal accounts of both men and women indicate that they experienced this as a liberation, because it gave them the opportunity to spend time outside the special boarding schools where they lived in relative isolation. Similarly, girls – whose formation, including their physical education, was designed to prepare them for motherhood and roles of subordination – gained the opportunity to display other skills and qualities with the potential to enhance their self-awareness. Non-Germans were excluded from HJ, but with the hardening of anti-Jewish laws, the children of mixed marriages, who had initially been accepted, were also barred from the movement. Even those who were only one-quarter Jewish were denied admission, yet physical aspect made a difference: a youth with Aryan features might be allowed to join, while a sibling who was somewhat more Semitic in appearance would be humiliated and mocked and immediately refused

entry. Furthermore, the movement had an internal hierarchy of its own, with many youths seeking to rise above the *masses* to occupy positions of command. In any case, most of youths joining the HJ had a strong political allegiance to the organization, especially in the early stages, he minorities who were excluded or excluded themselves because they were opposed to the regime, did not constitute a serious threat, although they were treated as such. Control was enforced by systematic recourse to power and violence. Children were encouraged to report their peers or even their own parents. Youths of low social status could aspire to joining the HJ in order to feel less marginalized and more socially integrated. As previously demonstrated in the work of Heidi Rosenbaum, the social, political or religious affinities of their families could influence how youths experienced the movement. During World War II, especially in 1944 and 1945, minors as young as 14 years were drafted into military service. The bravery of some of these youths was exploited in the regime's propaganda, which presented them as heroes and martyrs. At least 74,000 youths from the HJ lost their lives. In addition, during the war, about two million children were taken from families in cities at risk of bombardment and transported in special trains to camps (Lager) in rural areas, where they underwent indoctrination and strict Spartan training. This book, which is undergirded by meticulous archival research, offers a critical examination of the sources and brings into focus the history of thousands of children who were violated in body and soul. A vast bibliography and a discussion of Luhmann's and Elias' hermeneutical perspective are also provided. The author, a young history of education professor, displays critical acumen and methodological skill, uncovering, via a wealth of doc-

umentary evidence, the multiple impacts of Nazi totalitarianism on the young.

Simonetta Polenghi

Hervé A. Cavallera, *Storia delle dottrine e delle istituzioni educative*, Brescia, La Scuola, 2017, 448 pp.

Une histoire de la pédagogie occidentale depuis ses origines grecques et latines est une tâche immense qui implique l'étude de la pensée de ses principaux représentants, des grandes doctrines d'éducation et des réalisations institutionnelles qui en ont résulté. Hervé A. Cavallera ouvre ainsi une page profondément immergée dans la culture et la civilisation européenne.

Le monde gréco-romain ne connaissait pas les distinctions qui se sont établies au cours de l'évolution des sociétés. Il confondait l'éducation familiale, l'éducation religieuse et l'éducation civique. Les parents, les grands-parents et les prêtres transmettaient les traditions, les usages et les bonnes manières aux enfants. Certes, les modèles éducatifs de Sparte et d'Athènes opposaient le totalitarisme à la démocratie; mais ils étaient tous les deux destinés à une intégration du citoyen dans la société. En sollicitant la recherche intérieure de la vérité et en insistant sur la nécessité d'une vie pleine de droiture, Socrate donnait un sens à la pédagogie. Tout ce que les penseurs entendront plus tard sous le nom de «classique» était déjà présent chez Platon, orienté vers un itinéraire éducatif où confluaient la doctrine pythagoricienne raffinée par l'ironie socratique. Un nouveau monde s'ouvrit avec Aristote dont le discours réaliste était tourné vers l'amélioration sociale plus que vers l'idéal. Les philosophes hellénistiques plaçaient la sagesse au centre d'une vie maîtrisée. On passait ainsi de l'Etat idéal de Platon à une