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In his memoirs, the eminent historian Fritz Stern forecast: "How Germans themselves would come to understand their past would be a measure of their national health." [1] This collection illustrates once again just how contentious remembering and teaching the past is. If its results are true, then Germany's prognosis is grim.

The ability to think critically about the past is central to the continuation of western culture and its commitment to democratic values, such as tolerance and respect for the law and human rights. History must maintain relevance in a modern and future society; reassessing how history is taught in order to uphold its use to society is the educator's constant task. While this is true for the healthy functioning of any democratic society, the German historical understanding of the Nazi past is a particularly acute topic.

This collection of essays resulted from a 2003 conference in Bonn, "School and the Holocaust," and is divided into three sections. The contributors, who span the disciplines of education, history, and sociology, gathered to interpret the results of a pilot study initiated by the Fritz Bauer Insti-

tute in Frankfurt. This study consisted of classroom observation of the upper-level history courses in two German *Gymnasien* during the 2000-01 school year. Specifically, the editors hope to discover the reasons why the history of the Holocaust and Nazi era is failing to reach the current generation of German secondary students and how new theoretical and methodological improvements to history instruction could alter this distressing state of affairs.

The first three essays, which make up section 1, deal with knowledge gained by students outside of the classroom. This section sets up the context of young Germans' perceptions of the Holocaust that educators must in turn confront in the classroom. While rightly pointing out that teachers must account for outside sources of knowledge apart from the school, these authors, with the exception of Harald Welzer, fail to deliver critical discussions about how teachers can adapt outside media to classroom instruction.

In the first essay, adapted from a previous collection, Norbert Frei explores how Germans have come to understand and talk about the Nazi past

since 1945.[2] Frei, who has written extensively on the commemoration of the Nazi past, expresses great concern about current trends in how the Third Reich is discussed: empathy not with the victims of National Socialism, but with Germans as victims of war and expulsion. He sees a revival of 1950s arguments and the loss of the critical scrutiny learned in the 1960s. His loose periodization of the post-Nazi era illustrates how critical generational shifts since the defeat of Nazism are to the development of public consciousness of the Holocaust. Frei's central contention is that, since the 1960s, but especially during the 1980s, which saw the production of a vast body of research on the subject, public interest in the Holocaust has greatly increased in Germany. As a result, many young Germans are better positioned than ever to acquire information about Germany's crimes between 1933 and 1945. Unfortunately, it seems as though they are failing to think critically with this information.

Harald Welzer's analysis of familial conversations across three generations is the most compelling essay in part 1. The family is a key site in which children learn about the Nazi era, which is why Welzer explores the manner in which the Third Reich is discussed and understood within it. He focuses in particular on how children come to view their own grandparents' behavior in Nazi Germany. Surprisingly, he discovers a phenomenon that he names the "process of cumulative heroization." During interviews with several families, Welzer notes that children separated their own older family members, usually grandparents, from the Nazi past, depicting them as "good" Germans who even resisted the Nazis. This process occurs even among children who possess a great deal of knowledge about Germany under Hitler. Welzer demonstrates how emotionally based conceptions of the role played by relatives distort perceptions of the past and how distant such perceptions are from the historical facts learned in school. Rather than allowing German youths to go on believing in the myth of the "good" Germans

who were manipulated by their Nazi leaders, Welzer suggests that educators historicize the Holocaust within the context of twentieth- and twenty-first-century genocides and ethnic cleansings to make the subject more relevant to today's students. At the same time, the contextualization of genocide will dispel the oversimplified categorization of people as either perpetrators or victims.

The final essay from section 1, by Jochen Kade, deals with representations of the Holocaust in film. The essay delivers an interesting evaluation of several seemingly arbitrarily selected films about the Third Reich and Holocaust, from the early comedies of Charlie Chaplin and Ernst Lubitsch, to the recent film adaptation of the *X-Men* series (2000 and 2003). Kade asserts that films not only recreate past events, but also make them visible to a wide audience. That popular movies, such as *Schindler's List* (1993), have greatly influenced how the public conceives the Holocaust is self-evident. The cinema holds potentially valuable opportunities for educators. But popular films are not inherently beneficial to the classroom, for, like all forms of culture, instructors must use film to create a sense of a given time while seeking to make clear the important lessons contained within the narratives. Kade disappointingly fails to demonstrate how his research is relevant to education beyond a superficial discussion of reception.

Section 2 shifts towards an analysis of five case studies conducted in history classes in the upper level of two *Gymnasien*, comparable to the twelfth grade in U.S. secondary schools. The data are derived from observation of the instructional methods employed in the classroom during the 2000-01 school year. The authors' stated purpose is to gain an understanding of how the history of the Third Reich is currently being taught and how it might be improved.

The editors of the volume collaborate on the section's first essay, where they offer an interpre-

tation of the five case studies after detailing the theoretical underpinnings of their essay and the pilot study. Two of the examples are of more traditional teaching methods utilizing excerpts from *Mein Kampf* (1925) and documentary photographs of Dachau. Two further cases demonstrate the teaching concept "confrontation: cornerstone for the pedagogic approach to the history of the Holocaust," designed by educators at the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt. This method seeks to convey moral lessons and supply examples of civil courage and democratic behavior to students by confronting them with witnesses and survivors. The last case study consists of an open period of discussion surrounding the question of how Hitler's success can be explained and what lessons are to be drawn from the Holocaust. This method differs from the others in that no clear instructional goal exists, while the other techniques aimed at specific messages. In their evaluations of these examples, the authors focus on "pedagogic communication," or the interactions between teachers and students. These exchanges are often fruitful, but also result in misunderstanding and conflict. The authors attempt to ascertain which types of communication and media are most suitable for history instruction. They determine that communication must not be one-sided, with only the instructor speaking. Instead, classroom communication must be a give-and-take process encompassing all participants. Though such spontaneous discussion often leads to deviations from the lesson plan, a skillful teacher should be able to guide the students in an intellectually fruitful direction. The authors also consider how teachers and pupils deal with the moral content of this subject. They point to one discussion as particularly successful because it forced students to consider themselves as individual actors in history who can choose how to behave under given circumstances. Ultimately, however, the authors conclude pessimistically that schools and historical instruction, in particular, are incapable of altering the pre-existing views of the wider society.

Secondary schools are not at the forefront of the existing debates surrounding Germany's National Socialist past.

Horst Rumpf prefaces his contribution with the claim that modern society "pre-packages" everything for people, including knowledge about the past. Experts in the field of education bring order to chaotic events, which, unfortunately, also creates distorting narratives while making learning about a particular topic more manageable. Rumpf argues that education has become "standardized" and that it is necessary to break this trend by allowing greater spontaneity in the classroom. Only then will students begin to test ideas and learn for themselves.

In the third essay of this section, Andreas Gruschka expresses dissatisfaction with the current status of historical instruction in German secondary schools. He calls for a more simplified discussion of the Holocaust, freed from purportedly motivating media, such as film, or moral discipline. Gruschka believes that current methods demand that students affect a certain moral correctness and reverential attitude toward this particular subject matter. He contends that a frank discussion of historical causality is the essence of good history instruction; in contrast, introduction of external media sources and moral judgements can result in unproductive or even forced discourse within the classroom. Based on his own interpretations of the five case studies provided in this collection, Gruschka suggests that inclusion of media distracted students and prevented any meaningful conversation. In some cases, he argues, media utilized in the classroom are unconnected to or fail to reinforce key themes in the lesson plan. Gruschka praises only one discussion conducted by the students observed in the pilot study. The students' conversation involved a debate about the personal behavior of a Jewish woman whose friends abandoned her soon after Hitler came to power. The participants in the debate were able to insert numerous relevant facts

shaping the historical choices of these former friends. But more importantly, according to Gruschka, the sort of issues--friendship and loyalty--facing this woman connect especially well with teenagers. This discussion, he states, helps clarify how humanity sank into barbarity on a small scale by providing an example of the day-to-day human failings that allowed Jews to become isolated and then persecuted.

Mischa Brumlik adds a critique of reform pedagogy and its proponents' approach to teaching history. Unfortunately, Brumlik seems as interested in personally discrediting the chief advocate of reform pedagogy, Martin Wagenshein, as he is in dismissing reformist theory. But the current reform pedagogy, heir to the theories of educators like Alfred Lichtwark, who, at the turn of the twentieth century advocated experiential learning within a scientific framework of contact and observation of objects and subjects, today offers only a critique of existing instructional methods. Brumlik, therefore, has little to contend with in his essay.

In "The Improbability of Morality," Wolfgang Ludwig Schneider discusses the structurally determined problems involved with instructional communication and the Holocaust. Schneider examines the ways in which morality is present in history lessons. He suggests that instruction on this topic must avoid extreme positions, offering neither overly moral judgments nor a sterile presentation of mere facts devoid of any values. Although Schneider recommends that issues of morality should feature less prominently in the lesson plan, he still maintains that teachers should strive to guide their pupils toward the "moral consensus."

The authors of the articles in the final section of the collection discuss the theoretical foundations of current historical teaching of the Holocaust. Gottfried Koessler leads off with an essay titled "Teaching Human Rights, Moral Instruction, and Historical Learning." Koessler, one of the

teachers observed in the pilot study, played a significant role in developing the "confrontations" program at the Fritz Bauer Institute. The aim of the "confrontations" program is to teach students about the Holocaust in a manner that will convey democratic values to the next generation of German citizens. To achieve the goal of promoting democracy and inhibiting extremism, Koessler argues that lessons must personalize history and give the issue of human rights meaning for each individual. Employing a multicultural approach, the "confrontations" method encourages students to envision themselves in the place of historical actors during an open period of discussion. The instructor, according to Koessler, is to be an unimposing moderator who does not superimpose his own judgments upon the students' discussion. Establishing a proper relationship between teacher and students sets the tone for an open dialogue. Koessler concludes that schools cannot be the site for moral instruction when social norms are deemed sacred ideals that should be passively accepted. The purpose of this method is to influence students without denying their individual ability to confirm for themselves the validity of the ideas that are presented to them. The result should be a student capable of historical thinking and applying the lessons of the past to his own behavior.

Field trips to memorial and historical sites, such as concentration camps or the Wannsee Conference House, are the topic of Verena Haug's essay. She writes that, because of their "authenticity," German educators have placed much hope in camps for their potential to inform about the Holocaust and convey a sense of empathy with victims, as well as respect for human rights. But Haug disputes whether an ill-defined *Gedenkstättenpädagogik* should even be considered as distinct from other forms of historical instruction related to the Holocaust. Field trips are intended to balance the purely cognitive learning about Nazism that happens in the classroom, providing pupils with a "concrete" experience. But this is a false dichotomy, according to the author. In the

first place, students generally visit such sites only on mandatory field trips, negating any independent, voluntary, or personal reflection that would hopefully occur at sites of remembering. Moreover, time and financial constraints generally prevent a thorough tour of such locations. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that little scholarly effort has gone into developing the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this educational discipline. Haug demands a more precise set of educational goals and techniques, but offers no alternatives other than to state that more empirical research is needed in this subfield of Holocaust instruction.

Bodo von Borries authors the concluding article in the collection, "Acquisition of Morality and Emotional Identification in Historical Instruction." Borries begins with the comment that the results of the pilot study are not reassuring. Little evidence of deep intellectual or emotional engagement with the subject of Nazism was recognizable among the students observed. He offers an analysis of the educational standards, which, low as they are, remain unmet by an alarming number of students. He focuses on several studies of history textbooks and instructional periods unrelated to the Holocaust, highlighting their inability to convey any real sense of empathy with historical figures to students. Ambivalence best defines the students' attitudes to the plight of their predecessors. Borries concludes that the issue of developing a student's historical identity through courses on history is extremely complicated. Unable to prepare students to make historical judgments based on their own ideas and understanding, history instruction at the secondary level is failing to educate the next generation of German citizens to function in a democratic society.

Despite the distressing conclusions made in this collection, its contributors largely avoid making calls for a radical revision of the manner in which history is taught in German schools. Instead, they remain level-headed, stating that more

empirical research is necessary before a new course can be charted. An area of consensus among the contributors is that the lessons and learning situations must be less rigid to allow for spontaneous discussion. Such open debate, according to many of the authors, is more intellectually fruitful, as the students learn to combine historical contingencies with individual choice. Thus, students will gain the tools that will inform their own actions inside a democratic society.

A general problem with many of the essays in this collection is that the contributors rely only upon five case studies as the basis for their conclusions. Moreover, brief excerpts from transcripts of these periods of class observation make it difficult to assess the writers' interpretations or even why these particular moments were selected for analysis. Indeed, some samples appear to be highly irregular exchanges between teachers and students. These results suggest that better-equipped instructors would be more capable of creating the conditions for the more spontaneous and open form of classroom discussion favored by many of the authors in this collection. Although engaging lesson plans and instructional material are essential, focusing exclusively on this aspect of teaching history unwisely ignores the centrality of the role played by teachers and the need to improve their skills continually through further training.

Notes

[1]. Fritz Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 399.

[2]. Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005). See also Jörg Arnold, "Review of Norbert Frei, 1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen," H-German, H-Net Reviews, April, 2006. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=107361159481644> , and Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996).

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