Visualizing Discipline of the Body in a German Open-Air School (1923–1939): Retrospection and Introspection

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This article considers how historians might use imagery in the context of an open-air school in Germany, Senne I-Bielefeld (1922–1939). In considering the ‘nature’ of such images, issues and problems associated with their interpretation are illuminated and discussed. First, two images selected from the pre-Nazi period of the school are examined within a theoretical discussion. Then, the article explores the question of how historians might understand the ‘discipline’ of the body of the schoolchild through its representation in photographs. The open-air school is thereby considered as a demonstration of the result and possibility of biopower. Through such visual representations an argument is developed to reveal the meaning of the body in the school with reference to children’s experience of the school’s power/knowledge. A third image from the Nazi period of the school is employed to point to changes in the representation of children’s bodies over time. Finally a plea is made for more attention to the emotional engagement of the historian as a valuable source in the history of education.

Introduction

This article has developed from a paper presented at the 2005 European Educational Research Association conference in Dublin, which discussed the body of the schoolchild as represented through imagery produced by an open-air boarding school in Nazi and pre-Nazi Germany (Waldschule Senne I-Bielefeld, 1923–1939). The school had been selected as one of four case studies from countries that played important roles within the so-called open-air movement. Its ‘spiritual founder’, Karl Triebold senior

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2 Germany hosted the third of five international congresses on open-air schools in Bielefeld-Hannover in 1936. The first one took place in France (1922), the second in Belgium (1931), the fourth in Italy (1949), the fifth in Switzerland (1953).
(1888–1970), was to become a leading figure in open-air education, which made this case study particularly interesting. The aforementioned paper was intended to demythologize Triebold and ‘his’ institution, but it was guilty of what Burke ascribed to the work of many historians of education, namely using images merely as illustrations to support textual sources. While it was obvious that the photographic material of this particular school is particularly rich, it was not clear how this richness could be employed. Some theoretical reflection on the nature of imagery was required.

Within history of education, the exploration of the visual received renewed impetus some 15 years ago when it was felt that the visual had remained a ‘blind spot’ of educational history for too long. The work at this stage resulted in several special issues of periodicals and standard works of an international character. This pointed out how images had previously been subject to cultural analysis. Scholars today are aware that interpreting images as ‘ways or memories of seeing’ or as ‘sites of useful encoded data’ is nothing new. Nevertheless, there is a continued demand for the development of a genuine ‘pictorial turn’. While some scholars doubt whether ‘we really need such a dramatic title for an appeal to gain more attention for the visual in the history of education’, others stress that the ‘pictorial turn is not just about the new significance of visual culture’, for it has far-reaching implications. The ‘very concept of culture as a relation between texts and readers’, they state, ‘endures a sea-change when it encounters its “significant other”, the image/spectator as a “resident alien” in its own world’. This is an ongoing debate that up to now has taken place mostly in areas such as visual culture theory, art history, anthropology, sociology and

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3 A distinction must be made between Karl Triebold senior, principal of the open-air school in Senne-Bielefeld from 1923 until 1928 and general secretary of the International Committee of Open-Air Education, and his son Karl Triebold junior (school doctor of the second open-air school his father helped found in Schloss-Haldem in 1948 and head doctor of the Municipal Child Clinic of Dortmund-Derne).


philosophy. Perhaps it is wise, therefore, to interrogate our own work in this wider relevant context and in so doing, as Grosvenor has suggested, avoid the pitfall of ‘parochialism’.11

The image/text is neither a method nor a guarantee of historical discovery; it is more like an aperture or cleavage in representation, a place where history might slip through the cracks.12


It has become a commonplace to say that images in general should be seen as a ‘means of expression’ that ‘render visible’ and function as ‘relationships’—not just materials—‘between communities of producers and consumers’.13 However, should we ‘understand’ and ‘read’ them as ‘texts’ or ‘view’ them as a category of their own? Answers to these questions reveal tensions between what might be described as a realistic turn, a linguistic turn and a pictorial turn.

The linguistic turn could be considered a kind of thesis in this debate, since it has become usual to consider that an image is ‘an actor, bearing messages’.14 As with literary texts, the messages are located ‘between the lines’ in ‘absences’, which can be used as ‘clues to information which the image-makers did not know they knew’.15 In short, the visual material ‘is a product of cultural discourse and as such must be read not as an image but as a text’.16 An antithesis to this textual or linguistic perspective may be termed a realistic turn toward social, cultural or classroom history.17 Adherents of this perspective claim that there are no such things as ‘coded messages written with invisible ink that need candlelight to read’: ‘There’s nothing to decode.’18 At the same

11 Grosvenor, Ian. “On Visualising Past Classrooms.” In Silences & Images, 87. The term has been used before in the context of revisionism.
12 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 24 and 104.
15 Burke, Eyewitnessing, 188.
16 Grosvenor, and Lawn, “Portraying the School”, 88–89.
18 Ibid., 214.
time they consider a pictorial turn ‘only useful in that it draws more attention to visual aspects of the reality of teaching and education’.¹⁹

A further antithesis of both the linguistic and realistic view is the pictorial turn or ‘image–text’ perspective, which reminds historians of education that ‘mediation between the visual and the verbal has always been central to educational endeavours’,²⁰ and demands a ‘discursive science of images with less of a linguistic basis’²¹ although it considers the ‘hope for some master trope or structural model’ as a ‘major stumbling block’.²² Scholars who adhere to this perspective regard image–text not as a ‘template’ for unifying all sign forms but as a ‘lever to pry them open’, not as a ‘concept’ but as a ‘site of dialectical tension, slippage, and transformation’.²³ Furthermore, they do not interpret image–text as something static but as a social and historical figure, ‘characterized by all the complexities and conflicts that plague the relations of individuals, groups, nations, classes, genders, and cultures’.²⁴ Finally, they stress that spectatorship, including aspects such as gaze, practices of observation, visual pleasure and so on are as problematic as the actual interpretation of images.²⁵

One scholar who seems to have changed his understanding of images from considering them a form of ‘discourse’ to recognizing them as ‘forms of saying and seeing’ is Nóvoa. However, paradoxically, his interest has turned to a far less conventionalist representation of an image as ‘literally the negative of the presence’, which he ascribes to Bourdieu.²⁶ The concept of photography as a medium that ‘unrealizes’ precisely what it fixates²⁷ reveals a belief in an a priori reality as opposed to ideology (false consciousness) for which the camera obscura could be a metaphor.²⁸ This paradox seems emblematic for the struggles that many scholars experience in consistently responding to the complexity of the medium.²⁹ I believe one should engage in at least some degree of what has been called a ‘heterology of repre-

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¹⁹ Ibid., 229.
²¹ Mietzner, Ulrike, and Ulrike Pilarczyk. “Methods of Image Analysis in Research in Educational and Social Sciences.” In Visual History, 111.
²³ Mitchell, Picture Theory, 106.
²⁵ Mitchell, Picture Theory, 13.
²⁸ For a more thorough discussion, see: Mitchell, Iconology, 162–63, 171–72, 175 and 180–81.
sentation’: a taking into account of the more than just formal differences between language and imagery.30

If, then, a synthesis is at all to be reached in this complex debate it may be found via cultural histories that concern themselves not only with ‘text and discourse’ but also with ‘knowledge and reason’ and the ‘relation of knowledge and the social’.31 Knowledge need not be ‘a hidden aspect’ of an image but may be ‘part of its surface appearance that goes unnoticed’.32 This makes it possible to ‘see and feel the reality of the ideological field … revealed, not by “unmasking”, but by its strategies of concealment of its own internal flaws’.33 One then could ‘ask of the medium, not what “message” it dictates by virtue of its essential character, but what sort of functional features it employs in a particular context’.34

Photography as such has no identity…. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces.35

The Surface of Things: Representation within the Ripples of Imagery

A ‘Cartography of Vision’ in the Aid of a History of the Present?

In what follows, an attempt will be made to establish a ‘cartography of vision’, that is: to map out a significant part of the field in which some particular photographs received and generated meaning and continue to do so.36 In doing so I hope to elaborate a ‘history of the present’ understood by Popkewitz, Franklin and Pereyra, as a ‘critical engagement of the present’—including present interpretations of the images that have been selected—‘by making its production of collective memories available for scrutiny and revision’.37 It might not constitute a genuine ‘montage’ or

30 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 5. In de Certeau’s words ‘heterology’ is literally ‘discourse on the other’. According to him historiography should be heterology; the word itself reveals a paradox, perhaps even an oxymoron, that is: between history (the real) and writing (discourse). See: de Certeau, Michel. The Writing of History. Translated by Tom Conley. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988: xxvii and 3.
32 Ibid., 29.
33 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 161.
34 Mitchell, Iconology, 69.
35 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 63.
‘dialectical image’ as in the account by Goodman of Benjamin’s method, but it will seem at times as though I “brush” theory and historical data, against each other’ for a ‘spark to ignite my understanding’. 

With the somewhat provocative subscripts to the first two photographs presented here, I wish not only to draw attention to the dialectic constellation of an image–text as an ode to Magritte’s ‘Ceçi n’est pas une pipe’ but also to ‘change the questions’, ‘make the familiar strange’, as advocated by Rousmaniere in another context. Why is it, for instance, that we might be able to see Figure 1 as a snapshot of healthy children who are about to take a refreshing plunge in a swimming pool or that we may recognize the image as a representation of medical school inspection? Is the caption to a picture indeed an ‘influential guide’ in ‘what we are able to see and how we are able to see it’? Apart from this, what could we see and feel from the picture’s own internal flaws?

Figure 1. Ready to take the plunge into shallow water?

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At first sight, one may have the impression that images like these may appear quite ‘natural’—at least in regard to other school photographs of the time—and not too ‘rehearsed’, ‘collective’ or ‘representative’.42 They may not immediately seem like ‘real surveillance photographs’,43 which could be because they stem from a time period in which photographic representation underwent and set in motion a significant inflection, namely the first half of the 1920s.44 In this period not only could a democratization of the medium be observed45 but also a gradual reorganization of the photographic ‘knowledge-structure’ from a ‘rhetoric of evidence’ into an ‘emotionalised drama of experience’.46 This restructuring is said to have been consistent with a renewed environmentalism that would little by little, although in Germany temporarily, overshadow the nineteenth-century organic, biological and eugenic representations.47 Thus, representations of ‘immediacy and truth’ gradually turned into ‘anthropological’ and ‘humanistic’ ones.48

Photographs like the ones selected here can be interpreted as crystallizations of this cultural friction or junction of power–knowledge. With their romanticized ‘emplotment’,49 for instance, at the school’s ‘light and air bath’ and playground, with their seemingly informal compositions disrupted by children in the foreground or background, and their use of light and shadow,50 they reveal a more tender photographic approach towards children than had been the case during the nineteenth century. They associate childhood with innocence, nature and at least some degree of freedom, in conformity with twentieth-century constructions of childhood, healthcare and education.51 Nevertheless, they still seem to bear traces of nineteenth-century photography with its strategies of measurement, classification and isolation. This impression is enhanced by the photographer’s ‘masculine’, ‘disinter-

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43 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 287.
44 Figure 1 belongs to the following file: M I M Nr. 1021. Waldschule in Senne I, Kr. Bielefeld. 1921–1931. [Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staats- und Personenstandsarchiv Detmold]. It was provided by Matthias Schultes. I should like to thank the archive for its kind permission to publish the picture. Figure 2 might have been sent in an envelope that was stamped in Bielefeld on 18 May 1927. It belongs to the personal archive of Hans Schumacher [Museum Osthusschule] whom I should like to thank for his permission to publish the picture.
46 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 12.
48 Ibid., 12–13.
49 I adopt the term from Cohen, Challenging Orthodoxies, 53 and 68. He defines it as the ‘encodation of the facts contained in a chronicle as components of specific kinds of plot structures’.
ested\textsuperscript{52} but at the same time pastoral gaze, which presents ‘feminized’ subjects supposedly ‘lacking’ power and status and frontally subjected to the ‘unreturnable’ and ‘inescapable’ gaze of those who occupy positions of power.\textsuperscript{53}

\textit{Medical School Inspection... or is it?}

If one takes a closer look at the images, inscribed onto the surface of the first photograph are the numbers written over the bodies of certain children. They may or might not arouse a sense of ‘normalization’ at work, as defined by Foucault in terms of strategies of classification, observation and registration\textsuperscript{54} but do not reveal the meaning of the inscription. In this case, it is known to be a representation of a medical topography as described in an associated letter.\textsuperscript{55} We know that this photograph was one of five pictures, commissioned by the Swiss Child Welfare Committee in Bern, 1924.\textsuperscript{56} It circulated between Triebold, a certain Dr Hollmann, the school’s doctor from 1923 until 1926, and Dr Ritter, an administrator and medical councillor of the Minden government. The photograph was not a public document; its purpose was not to serve a narrative of propaganda—at least not directly. Instead, it circulated in circumscribed discursive fields in which specific institutions negotiated meaning and power while they sought to legitimize themselves and their subjects.

The image points by means of numbers to presences and silences. Children’s bodies were labelled to signify a ‘scrofulous-rachitic posture’, in relation to measures of age, height and weight. Special marks were accorded to: ‘a driven out body, curvature of the spinal column, a flat curve of the chest and shoulder blades hanging down’. Claimed to be absent from images like these were signs like: ‘a squared skull, very thickened upper lips, inflammation of the eyelid, scrofulous tooth line and almost ever present eczemas’.\textsuperscript{57} Yet, through locating silences, the image appears to reflect on its own heterogeneity; ‘formal dialectics’ (explicit image–text figure) are connected both to ‘ideological and institutional struggles’ within the medium (regarding the nature and employment of photography) and to the ‘cultural contradictions’ (frictions between discourses) conveyed. The image thus ‘pictures a theory’ of

\textsuperscript{52}Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 9.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{55}The letter is marked and dated as “Waldschule, Senne I, Friedrichsdorf (Westf.) B. Nr. 2221, Senne I, den 15. Juli 1924.” In \textit{file} M I I M Nr. 1021. Waldschule in Senne I, Kr. Bielefeld. 1921–1931. [Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staats- und Personenstandsarchiv Detmold]
\textsuperscript{56}Three of the photographs depicted boys, two of them depicted girls, from the age of 6 to $15\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 to $12\frac{1}{2}$ respectively. This particular photograph was not chosen for dubious reasons such as a gendered preference. It was selected for its potential to mislead the viewer, especially when accompanied by a caption in an explicit image–text constellation. Being the least frontally posed photograph, it is perhaps the least disturbing of all five.
\textsuperscript{57}“Waldschule, Senne I, Friedrichsdorf (Westf.) B. Nr. 2221, Senne I, den 15. Juli 1924.”
Photography: both of the deficiencies of photography and of photography as a preoccupation with deficiencies.58

Photography had already been employed in this way within the discursive fields of anthropology, medicine and criminology, where it was employed to scrutinize the body in search of evidence of degeneration ‘along the axes of race, class or gender’.59 But what can be said about the children ‘subjected’ to this ‘photographic gaze’? What can be speculated about the effect of the experience on the children represented in the images? Some seem to look back at us, a few apparently with embarrassment, others with curiosity, several more or less relaxed; others seem eager to step out of the photographic frame and join their playmates. Who can tell? Perhaps only we could.60

Thus we might ask, were the children numbered precisely those who did not pay enough attention to the photographer and his directions and therefore failed to represent themselves as deficient enough (for example, not featuring hanging shoulders and a curved spine)? Did they not ‘fit into the picture’? If this was the case, does this represent a mark of coincidence rather than of resistance? The same question could be asked about the boy in the bathing suit in the background. The suit sharpens up the contrast with the other children’s nudity and shows just how much they were separated, literally and symbolically, from their healthier, i.e. less abnormal, peers. In each case, some degree of disorder, individuality and freedom of movement seems to have been allowed or negotiated. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we might not necessarily interpret the first photograph as part of a medical school inspection programme.

Swedish Gymnastics in the Open-Air… or is it?

The next photograph belonged to a limited series of images that, judging by the vegetation (and buildings) in the background, stem from the earliest period of the school (1923–1924). These images were poorer in quality and were less formal than later photographs. The ‘emplotment’ of these images could be interpreted as more ‘romantic’ than that found in Figure 1, due to location, lighting and angle. This particular photograph appears to have been sent to a certain Hilda Sopp, a relative of Frieda Sopp who worked as a teacher and educator in the school.61 It may have been taken by anyone, perhaps Triebold himself or a professional photographer who opted for a relaxed composition. This could be the effect of what Burke calls “the rhetoric

58 Compare Mitchell, Picture Theory, 103–06.
61 Either Hilda or Frieda Sopp may have been the wife of Karl Triebold senior. See: “Abschrift. Bielefeld, den 5.10.24” In [file] M 1 I M Nr. 1021. Waldschule in Somme I, Kr. Bielefeld. 1921–1931. [Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staats- und Personenstandsarchiv Detmold].
of the image”, the way in which it [places] the viewer in the position of an eyewitness of the event represented’.  

The photograph, like the first one described, never became a public document. In contrast to images produced later, it never appeared as a ‘complicit’ illustration of the hygienist discourse imparting knowledge that Triebold, for example, helped diffuse through his publications in medico-pedagogical journals. Nor was this photograph printed, as were others, in a booklet handed out to children in the course of an open-air school ‘treatment’. Thus, it is less certain what knowledge the image may have produced for whom, other than Sopp, the recipient of the image. However, the photographs in this series, showing children performing gymnastic exercises or engaging in gardening activities in the open air, bear the mark of many future representations in the context of the open-air school, such as that of a recently discovered propaganda film from 1927, just as much as they employ a format used earlier within the broad field of health education (for instance in sanatoria).

What other presences and absences can the image be encouraged to reveal? If we look at the photographer’s gaze, what seems apparent at first sight is its ‘gendered’ or

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63 This 8 1/2-minute film is called *Waldschule Senne der Landesversicherungsanstalt Westfalen* and has been produced by Firma Ernst Krahn, Münster i. W. in 1927. ([Stadtarchiv Bielefeld])

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Figure 2. A follow-up course: learning how to fly, float or skydive?
at least ‘sex-opposed’ representation in which female—although nevertheless ‘morally worthy’—teachers are subordinated to school inspectors or photographers who were most probably male since, ‘in many countries, the inspection—that is the right to observe—[could] only be carried out by men’. The gendered aspect of the photograph and its paradoxical representation of ‘domesticity’ within an institution could have functioned as a validation of the boarding school’s knowledge and practices within more anti-institutional discourses of the time. However that may be, other than a ‘sex-opposition’, the representation could also elide an ‘age-opposition’, as children are subordinated to adults, in a governance that may be called ‘disciplining’ or ‘schooling’ with regard to the schoolchild’s body and mind. Finally, there is also an issue of class at stake: the photograph represents a scene in which lower middle-class adults operate in respect of working-class children. What could strike the viewer further is the photograph’s apparently little rehearsed composition revealing what looks like less ‘ordered’ activity in both the foreground and the background. The figures located in those spaces may have been arranged in order to give the impression of several open-air lessons happening simultaneously, as indeed was the case in this school. It might have been intended to give this image, like the previous one, a sense of spontaneity and coincidence. But could the disorder in the photograph also reveal something of the possibilities of the negotiated autonomy of schoolchildren who seem impervious to a consistent structuring of their field, both literally and metaphorically?

This image, like the previous one, could be said to be a social construction bearing signs of what Depaepe, building on concepts of Herrmann, Cuban, Tyack and others, has defined as a ‘paradox of educationalization’ whereby the intentions did not always yield the desired effects. Closely related to this, the picture could also represent the very boundaries of a ‘choreography of schooling’ in which rigid temporal and spatial regulation still allowed for a time and space of freedom.

Power in the West, Foucault says, is what displays itself most and hides itself best.

If we want to understand the power of pictures, we need to look at their internal relations of domination and resistance, as well as their external relations with spectators and with the world.

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70 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 62.
71 Mitchell, Picture Theory, 324.
The Order of Things: Beyond Regulation and Manipulation

If we look more closely at the photographs, more can be deduced of their social and political context. By the end of the nineteenth century social welfare and healthcare became part of a governance ‘which sought to establish its rule not primarily through coercion and authoritarian control … but through relations of dependence’.

One could say that by that time, ‘the new will to power [found] a new metaphor in the unobtrusive cells of the photographic frame … in its ever finer scrutiny of bodies in stringent laboratory conditions’. Although the romanticized images from the open-air school selected here may be indicative of a change in regard to that period, they nevertheless seem to express ‘a general organisation of consent’.

Revisionists tend to interpret the ‘doing good’ of actors in the play of ‘progressive’ reform as indicative of manipulation and social control. However, we would not do justice to history if we totally passed over the altruism of hygienists like Triebold, and their ‘generous impulses’, their ‘intention to do good’ (for example; in sending photographs of health supervision), which are claimed to have been ‘a legacy of child-saving movements of the progressive era’. As Tagg sees it, we should avoid defining the problem either as ‘a crude conspiracy’ or as ‘a problem of state intervention, however mediated, in a pre-existent, pre-defined domain of “social problems”’; we must leave behind the concepts of ‘regulation’ and ‘manipulation’ if we are to understand the full complexity of social problems. Institutions like open-air schools could be seen as what some, referring to Foucault, have called the ‘result and possibility of … bio-power’ in which ‘a diffuse and pervasive microphysics of power’ operates unnoticed in the smallest duties and gestures of everyday life.

Body Language and Image in the Open-Air School

Is it possible, then, to recognize features of such a ‘power/knowledge nexus’ in the ‘body language’ of the open-air school as visualized by the images I have selected? From the beginning, the school’s rhetoric had it that open-air education not only

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73 Ibid., 87.
74 Ibid., 60.
78 Kirk, *Schooling Bodies*, 3 and 11–12.
80 Verstraete, “The Taming of Disability”, 122.
encouraged people to adopt a healthy lifestyle but also rendered them economically
and socially useful.81 In the process of negotiating its legitimacy, its status was initially
innocent in that it was more social-hygienic than eugenic, presumably under the
influence of a Protestant representation of individual responsibility towards one’s
own body.82 The body was not conceived of as a ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’, as the
Catholic representation had it,83 nor was it seen as a mere cog in a machine. The body
belonged to oneself, thus care had to be taken in not overdressing it, in keeping it
supple and clean.84

The images presented so far seem to indicate the operationalization and internal-
ization of this rhetoric of discipline and health. Still, one need not conclude from this
that the child’s body in this particular school was represented as ‘a sort of unwilled
speech, an utterance whose code is in the possession of a figure of authority rather
than controlled by its enunciator’.85 For ‘power’ equals ‘relationship’, involving a
continuous paradox of ‘order’ and ‘disorder’.86 Both children and authorities—
educators, commissioners, government administrators—could be understood as
objects and subjects of power/knowledge, as part of the same constructed field of
meanings.

So, if one localizes and specifies forms of power/knowledge, one must ‘reinsert’
them ‘within the specific regime of truth and the regulating institutions of the social
formation which produced them as “true”’87 and also trace forms of resistance.88 In
the regime of truth of the open-air school in Senne-Bielefeld, it was stressed that
correcting the erroneous habits and beliefs parents had passed on to their children
demanded much tact from the female teachers responsible for a group of children.
During the first days of a course of treatment, many children continuously asked
questions of the type: ‘Why do we need to take a shower every day, brush our teeth
regularly and take a nap after lunch?’89 Only such evidence, consistent with the imag-
ery presented thus far, suggests that at least some children showed resistance to the
hygienic regime they had been forced into.

81 See for example: Triebold, Karl. “Pädagogische Beiträge zur Beschäftigungstherapie für
Lungenkrankte.” Zeitschrift für Kinderforschung: Organ der Gesellschaft für Heilpädagogik und des
82 Cf. Labrie, Arnold. Zuiverheid en decadentie. Over de grenzen van de burgerlijke cultuur in West-
Europa 1870–1914. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001: 87. The school was predominantly Protestant
as was Triebold, its main propagator.
84 Cf. Triebold Karl. “Erholungs und Heilstätten”. Sozialpädagogik [Handbuch der Pädagogik
In Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life, edited by L. Charney and V. R. Schwartz. Berkeley:
89 Triebold, Karl. “Waldschule und Tuberkulose.” In Jugendwohlfahrt und Schule, edited by E.
What more, then, can be said of the images above in relation to the experience of the children depicted through them? Did they really act as ‘new marks’, as some claim, ‘which inscribed the deviant body’, whereby the picture ‘remained the imprint of the … body it imaged’?90 This seems far from certain. If cultural history teaches one anything it is that ‘discovering the intention’ and ‘tracing the effects’, and thinking in terms of texts that ‘betray the everyday reality, through the clash’ of intention and effect, is not straightforward. Keeping one’s focus on the ‘intentions’ of educators instead of ‘reality’ casu quo effects91 might still not answer the question if one takes into account the possibility that there might never have existed a ‘reality’ with both intentions and effects in which historical accuracy would be mirrored.

As Mietzner and Pilarczyck have pointed out in another context; it is hardly possible to answer the question of whether photographs like these were formed from the everyday experience of education. It is a mutual process: images (Bilder) are always based on examples (Vorbilder); not only do they transmit culture, they also reconstitute it.92 Resemblance might then be an effect of the photographic process so that the world could start to look like the pictures made of it.93 Applying such a theory to the representations of the school in Senne-Bielefeld, we might propose that the children began to experience what they were represented to experience. Possibly their bodies were gradually disciplined as they were supposed to be, but perhaps they explored all the margins represented in the fringes of the photographs, thereby resisting the imposed discipline.

The Evolution of Things: Rifts in Representation?

In what follows, a third image94 is brought into the discussion in order to reveal certain changes in the open-air school’s representation of children’s bodies as it became part of the Nazi rhetoric regarding healthcare and education. It will also be used to address the question of power of visual sources influencing scholars’ choice and interrogation of images. The image was actually published as one of series of postcards in a booklet given to children at the end of their stay to help disseminate hygienic knowledge and practices into their homes, and to help them remember what kind of institution and which benefactors were legitimately responsible for this. It apparently stems from the period between 1933 and 1945 as it symbolizes the arrival

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90 Gunning, “Tracing the Individual Body”, 34.
93 Mitchell, Iconology, 152.
94 This picture from 1933–1945 was provided by the ‘Stadtarchiv Bielefeld’, which I should like to thank for allowing me to publish it.
of Nazism, whereby a negative eugenic discourse came to be constructed, overshadowing the social hygienic and positive eugenic ones that dominated earlier in the open-air school.

Much of the rhetoric that was especially popular during the Nazi period, for example, concerning Gemeinschaft (community), had long been in use before the Nazis took power. For Triebold and others, it was clear at the very outset that open-air education was not about ‘individualism’. By no means could it end in ‘restless individual freedom’, ‘letting oneself go’, ‘renouncing one’s duties’ or other ‘effeminacies’. Although it was admitted even after 1933, by Triebold among others, that open-air education was unable to alter the child’s hereditary constitution, it became caught up in national-biological and national-political metaphors. It was believed not only that it contributed to more rapid and intensive development of all available hereditary properties, but also that it was an effective means of separating more effectively those ‘elements’ that could still form useful members of the nation, from the

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97 Triebold and Tornow, “Freiluftziehung in Fürsorgeerziehungsheimen”, 102–03.
ones who—as a result of their mental and bodily health and character—were likely to exclude themselves from society.98

Thus this particular open-air school, although like other ‘parascholastic’ initiatives initially closer to social hygiene than to eugenics,99 became a ‘pawn’ in a racist ‘language game’. But how did this affect the approach toward the schoolchild’s body? It could be argued with Villinger, a eugenic physician with whom Triebold was acquainted, that this process went hand in hand with greater stress on the discipline of the body.100 At the same time, however, the body received a different meaning and was represented differently, namely as an element in a greater whole, as national property.101 The image from the Nazi period seems to illustrate this change in the nature and degree of bodily discipline. Evident at first sight is its rehearsed and collective character. All individualism is negated and what appears absent is any kind of margin for resistance.

Retrospection and Introspection: Toward an Emotional Turn?

Our understanding of this image and of the previous ones could be extended and contested for it is at least partly subjective. However, I agree with Burke when she states that:

… often what is problematized is not only the subjective but, in particular, the emotional. This is a universal and complex resource, generally neglected or rejected by scholars…. Telling the story of the photograph in the context of the history of education is not merely a historical but an emotional act: this has to do with individual experience … but it is also to do with taking part in an essentially public universal narrative, the story of the school.102

This is precisely what I will attempt in what follows, starting from the reflection that I selected the last image deliberately so that the school’s dubious engagement in Nazism would be more apparent than it might have been had the postcard been presented merely alongside more innocent postcards depicting open-air education,

98 Ibid.


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informal play and gymnastics. Similarly, I felt an urge to mask the children’s nudity on the first image.

Acknowledging such responses is, I think, related to an important issue raised by Grosvenor, Lawn and Rousmaniere: ‘As historians, we come to our work from our own cultural context and perspective, but so too did those people who took the photograph…. How can we catch ourselves as we choose our sources and our perspective on those sources?’103 The urge to both conceal children’s nudity and to reveal one’s own biases comes from a sense of deontology as well as a desire to control the uncontrollable power–knowledge effects of images. Photographs are, no less than motion pictures, ‘moving images’104 that can arouse all kinds of emotions. Does Figure 1, for example, evoke a ‘uncomfortable physicality’ because photography as such already lends itself to ‘imaginative perversion’ and ‘fetishism’105 and, moreover, because the photograph’s internal structure reveals a merging or colliding of supposed photographic evidence of the body with the ‘motif’ of a ‘sexual vision of medical knowledge’?106

Or is it, as Tagg states, not ‘to the reality … of the past, but of present meanings and of changing discursive systems that we must … turn our attention’?107 Could the images I have selected reveal a transition of discursive systems that might be described as a cultural friction? Might such a transition be realized in the sense that, for example, the medical and scholarly gaze is no longer regarded as inherently innocent and that collective outdoor exercise no longer fits our notion of a ‘home-like educational climate’? Should all photographs then be regarded as ‘objects of manipulation’108 that may serve as evidence but might also incriminate and even be used for sexual purposes? Does every gaze potentially have ‘both passion and perspective’109 and, if so, to what extent are we responsible for our representations? Of course there is our professional responsibility in performing the ‘historical critique’. But, Mitchell suggests, more seems to be at stake. Perhaps we should, first of all, ‘see them as related to one another and to us. Although some of them may go “beyond our control”, they are certainly not outside our field’.110

Conclusion

This is not a call for yet another ‘turn’ in the history of education that might then be called ‘emotional’ and in which ‘emoticons’ could serve as new sign types. Apart from

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108 Ibid., 62.
109 Ibid., 203 and 206.
the fact that an ‘emotional turn’ could already be noted in the 1950s and 1960s within
the tradition of phenomenology, I believe the historian’s emotions need consideration
in so far as they help interpret the past by means of contrast, by being a touchstone
of the present. If there were anything this article wanted to achieve, it would be the
realization of ‘how little we understand about pictures and how little difference mere
“understanding” alone is likely to make’.111

111 Ibid., 6.