



The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930

Michael Hau

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From the 1890s to the 1930s, a growing number of Germans began to scrutinize and discipline their bodies in a utopian search for perfect health and beauty. Some became vegetarians, nudists, or bodybuilders, while others turned to alternative medicine or eugenics. In *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany*, Michael Hau demonstrates why so many men and women were drawn to these life reform movements and examines their tremendous impact on German society and medicine.

Hau argues that the obsession with personal health and fitness was often rooted in anxieties over professional and economic success, as well as fears that modern industrialized civilization was causing Germany and its people to degenerate. He also examines how different social groups gave different meanings to the same hygienic practices and aesthetic ideals. What results is a penetrating look at class formation in pre-Nazi Germany that will interest historians of Europe and medicine and scholars of culture and gender.

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