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*Spørsmålshuset:  
Whitman's "Relational Explanations?"  
The Addition and Inclusion of "Newcomers"  
The Norwegian Case*

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# Substantial or Relational Explanations? The Exclusion and Inclusion of Newcomers: The Norwegian Case

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Some immigrant groups are assimilated into the receiving society; other groups remain as more or less distinct entities. Why is this so? The purpose of this paper is to discuss explanatory approaches—such as comparisons and relational analysis—to this problem. The material will be drawn from Norwegian migration history, particularly the period before the First World War, on which I have worked myself.<sup>1</sup> Before the start of the Second World War the following larger immigrant groups were present in the country: Swedes (ca. 50 000 in 1900, mostly labor migrants), Kvæns (people of Finnish descent in Northern Norway who had come in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 5000-6000 in the early twentieth century), Russians (who mostly came as refugees after the Bolshevik revolution, by 1930 ca. 500), Jews (mainly from the Russian territories, possibly 1600-1700 at the eve of World War I), Danes (at most ca. 6500, mostly artisans), Germans (5000, mainly artisans and skilled workers). To these should be added the Romani, the travelers, probably consisting of both an original immigrant group in the sixteenth century and pauperized people from the Norwegian peasant society, numbering ca. 4000 in 1897 and ca. 2000 in 1927, due not to physical ethnic cleansing but to forced assimilation. My first approach then is comparative, as opposed to what Nancy L. Green calls the linear approach, following a group over time, or the divergent model, investigating the same ethnic or national groups in different host societies.<sup>2</sup>

**A typology of ethnic collectivism**

Most immigrants seem to have kept a sense of being different from Norwegians, to varying degrees. If we imagine a scale from marginalized to assimilated, the Romani and the Swedes may be placed at opposite ends, even if a substantial number of Swedes still identified themselves as such in the between-war period. Don Handelman has suggested a useful typology to describe degrees of ethnic group formation: ethnic categories, networks, ethnic organizations, and ethnic communities.<sup>3</sup>

All immigrant nationalities in Norway in the pre-war period saw themselves as ethnic categories. Individuals within a category defined themselves and others within or outside a collective, and this kind of belonging also called forth ideas of origin and the proper behavior for members of a particular collective. "Look at the Norwegian," a German grandfather used to remark, seeing his grandson with his hands in his pockets.

An ethnic network implied a higher degree of inclusion of members. Belonging to the same category was also the basis for regular interaction and for the allocation of resources based on contact within the network. The role of ethnicity may be seen in the existence of societies for help and self-help. Such fraternal societies existed among Swedes, Danes, Germans, Russians, and Jews. Access to social intercourse and stimulation from everyday culture like food or songs from the old country was also a resource. Such networks, however, did not extend to everyone within the ethnic category: among the Swedes, Danes and even Russians most did not keep in contact with an organized ethnic society.

Members participated ethnic organizations on the basis of perceived common interests and in order to further these interests. Among the immigrant categories in Norway before the Second World War, few formed associations aimed at representing their interests in relation to the majority society and there were no organizations for the expression of a contentious ethno-politics. However, if associations concerned with the wellness and perpetuation of identity of a group may count as ethnic organization, this was developed among nearly every ethnic category. The exceptions are the Romani with their mobile way of life, and the Kvæns whose way of life to a large extent was based on an agrarian self-sufficient mode of produc-

tion, somewhat beside the economy in general. These two groups did not develop formal organizations before the war.<sup>4</sup>

The Kvæns, however, met another important criterion usually counted as a characteristic of the ethnic community. In Handelman's typology this is the most far-reaching inclusion of individuals into an ethnic category, and presupposes that the group in case is geographically concentrated and completely or partly in possession of a territory. The so-called Kvæn towns, the Kvæn areas in Vadsø, meet these criteria. More hesitantly we may say that the Jews in Oslo were on the brink of constituting such a community, with a certain concentration of institutions and dwellings in one part of the city. Before the First World War half of the Oslo Jews lived with a quarter of an hour's walk to the synagogue. However, being less than one thousand, they formed only a small part of the total population.

**Explanations through comparisons**

We may seek explanations for these differences by comparing the various groups. Relevant characteristics or variables may be found both in the countries of origin and in the situation in Norway.

Social class in the country of origin could be a factor. The hypothesis is that migrants with a high social status, one that placed them "above" the resident population (as mostly was the case with career migrants) saw no particular reason to assimilate. Assimilation might imply a lower social standing. The Russians, who to a large extent consisted of high-ranking officers and officials from the reign of the czar, would then be expected to have kept to themselves, while Jewish itinerant peddlers, a socially marginal group, would have tried to shed their background and to approach the majority society. The evidence, however, does not sustain this thesis. Although there are examples of Russians in Norway who expressed their dismay at this peripheral and background country, so different from the world they had learned about through Ibsen's plays, they were not at all exceptional in keeping up their ethnic distinctions in any extraordinary way. The Jews, however, were.

The problem for the Russians in Norway was that their "cultural baggage" was not very useful in their new surroundings. The demand for Russian language or upper class culture was

limited, their cultural capital was not universally convertible and thus became devalued. To hold unto your "baggage" might be important to your self-esteem, but there were weak external inducements to do so and thus it was hard to make a notion of your own "superior" culture a basis for collective organization.

The probability of experiencing such a devaluation was increased by the reason the Russians had for leaving: there had been no time for premeditation, calculation and choice of the right destination, but instantaneous flight. They often became declassées. Some engineer officers might become geodesists; more often colonels became janitors or factory workers, a downward social slide only slightly cushioned by the fact that physical labor more notoriously denoted low status in Russia than in pre-war Norway.

The emigrants' own views on the mother country was also a factor. A positive and active connection worked to keep an ethnic distinctness; such was the case among many Germans, who saw themselves as part of an *Auslandsdeutschum*. The "white" Russians, however, detested the new Soviet Union. Among some of them hatred created dreams of restoring the old regime and the organized Russian milieu understood itself ideologically as part of a greater community, *Ruskoje Zarubezje*, the Russian exile. However, the hope of a white comeback dwindled in the 1930s, and white Russians seem to have resigned to the point of withdrawing from their own organizations.

On these points—devaluation of cultural capital, the reasons for migration and the relations to the country they left—the Jews were different from other groups: they had less to lose in the old country and more to gain socially in the new. Their religion was perhaps no positive asset in Norwegian society, which harbored its share of anti-Semitism. Still, from the point of view of religious freedom they were better off than in Russia. Furthermore, the move to Norway was usually planned. First a member of the family made reconnaissance on business trips, often after having been in Sweden for a while. Then the family followed. Moreover, they had no warm feelings for czarist nor communist Russia; to sever the links seems to have been fairly painless.

So far, a comparative explanatory strategy has been seen to work quite well. A comparison of the background characteristics of Russians and Jews has explained their different degree of

collective ethnic formation. However, the downward social mobility of the Russians due to the devaluation of their cultural capital is a reminder: A quality or property is not inherent or substantial, something existing in itself, it is relational—a point I shall elaborate later on. This complicates a simple comparative strategy, a so-called variable orientated strategy, where one tries to isolate the factors one by one and thereby evaluate their relative importance. The underlying atomistic premise is problematic.<sup>6</sup> The alternative is not necessarily holism, but to think in terms of relations: factors may vary in importance in different contexts.

This comes out more clearly if we turn to the situation of the ethnic groups in Norway, the receiving country, before World War Two and consider some objective factors. One such is the size of the immigrant group: all things being equal one might expect that greater numbers dispose a group to reproduction. This is probably true. However, numbers alone cannot explain the degree of distinctness. Both Kvæns, Jews and Romani were much fewer than the Swedes, who constituted a mass migration, and were also the most assimilated.

*The sex ratio*: exact data have not been processed. However, according to the censuses of 1920 and 1930 most immigrant groups showed a fairly balanced ratio. The Russians are the exception; here males dominated. The intermarriage rate with Norwegians was clearly higher among Russians than among Germans, and in particular than among the Jews, who were religiously orthodox and frowned upon exogamy. This also fits the general picture.

*Geographical concentration*: as already mentioned, the Kvæns and the Jews showed a degree of residential concentration and both were among the more resilient groups. (There is here of course the problem of the chicken and the egg: is ethnic cohesion a cause or a product of such residential concentration?)

*Social and political homogeneity*: the hypothesis is that diversity is a hinder to ethnic unity. While for instance the Kvæns were fairly homogenous, consisting of peasants and ordinary laborers, the Germans were split along class lines. The leader of *Vorwärts*, the German socialist club in Oslo, declared in 1920 that he would not sit down with the "Bürgerpack," who had murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

In this manner one may analyse factor by factor. We may add pluses and minuses with respect to ethnic formation and come up with a kind of sum, purporting to explain how the groups were placed. Once more, this makes sense to a certain point; beyond this point one runs into difficulties. The Jewish society was not large, still it was one of the most internally vital and viable. The overwhelming Swedish numerical superiority did not guarantee a strong ethnic adhesion.

An explanation should therefore take into consideration an aspect that we have not yet touched upon: were there functions or individual needs that were filled by the ethnic collective? All the ethnic groups considered here provided some degree of help to newcomers such as information about work and assistance in the first adjustments to a new life. Most groups also offered social help and some education or schooling in the culture of the home country. In addition there were two needs which were felt more keenly by the Jews than by other groups, primarily because their ethnicity was constituted through religion. They had to develop an external representation of their common interests, to secure ground for cemeteries, to obtain meat from animals slaughtered according to the correct ritual (by *Schächtning*, that was forbidden in 1929), and to combat anti-Semitism. Secondly, a strong community was needed in order to practice as believers in an environment sometimes hostile, always different, and frequently with secular allurements. According to the youth magazine, *Israeliten* in 1922, the young no longer heeded "what they and their forefathers have guarded, as a shrine! They speak the truth who say that the youth of today has slid away from Jewishness into indifference." The ethnic organizations and the ethnic community contributed to secure an identity and stabilize personality in a situation of profound changes.<sup>7</sup> To conclude, ethnic collectives, whether seen as Handelman's ethnic categories or as ethnic communities, persist as long as there is a need for them. When or if these needs are served better by the surrounding society, ethnicity ceases to be relevant. Or, more realistically, ethnicity becomes irrelevant in some respects, but may nevertheless be activated in other fields. Again, the relations are decisive.

### Through the historical microscope: a strategic case

This points to a perception that may be obvious, but is not at all trivial: To what extent a certain group is conceived as a distinct ethnic entity, is neither something permanent nor something inherent in the group itself. To see this more clearly, we shall need to change from the historical telescope, that observes long-term trends, to the historical microscope, that reveals situations and conjunctures where even minute differences became significant and contentious.

There is, for instance, the case of the immigrant group whose members were commonly called "people in rags," "lousy ones," "drifters," "professional gangsters," "bastards," and "devils." Who were they? The Swedes in Norway in the decades around the beginning of the twentieth century. Why bastards? Because you had a Norwegian mother and a Swedish father. In the south-eastern county bordering on Sweden, Østfold, the local branch of the social-liberal labor movement in 1898 sent a letter to parliament demanding action to stop or to put brakes on the influx of what they called "foreign workers":

*Many people who lack honour and respect are streaming in and settle far too easily. They carry evil and they spread evil. And Norwegian-ness is stifled. Some even predict so ill that if a higher bar is not installed to deter needy and bad people from other countries, this will become the rout of the Norwegian people. The intention is not to close the country to good and able workers, but to keep out what is bad and sad will benefit and secure both Norwegian workers and the people of Norway.*

There are also examples of such attitudes directed against other groups such as East-European Jews. As mentioned, there was a considerable, though I will not say general anti-Semitism around 1900. Heuristically, however, Swedes in Norway offer an interesting strategic example if we wish to understand skepticism to strangers. From one point of view they were so similar: their language was easily understood, the dominant religion was Lutheran in both countries, the social structure in the border regions from where most of them came was similar to eastern Norway, and the Swedes looked like Norwegians. Most fac-

tors, then, might be expected to guarantee a smooth process of inclusion and assimilation. To be true, this was mostly the case. Frequent intermarriages are perhaps the most telling evidence. However, their offspring would often be nicknamed devils or bastards, with no jocular ring to it. In some situations, a very clear demarcation line was drawn. To understand the mechanisms at work in these situations may produce general insights.

### Conflicts of interest?

Why were there conflicts between two groups that were so similar in "objective" terms? If ethnicity were an essence, an inherent quality in a group, this conflict between Swedes and Norwegians would have been permanent. However, as the anthropologist Fredrik Barth has taught, ethnicity exists when real and or *imagined features in a group are ascribed meaning or significance, and brought to the forefront of attention. That is: Only in some situations were Swedes Swedes, in other situations they were workers, mates, comrades or just anybody. And further, according to Barth, this underlining of even minute differences, serves to draw a demarcation line between "them" and "us."*<sup>8</sup> Barth further claims that border lines are drawn to somehow further perceived interests, for instance in situations where resources are scarce or seen as scarce. When there is competition, there is a need to find criteria that may we used to decide who are to win, who are the worthy winners, so to speak, or, more radically, who are entitled to enter the game at all. Where will an analysis of attitudes to newcomers from this rationalist interest perspective take us?

Working men in this period had one fundamental shared experience of the labor market. Although in periods there was a strong demand for labor, employment was a scarce and insecure good, underemployment was a chronic ill. This was a pre-Keynesian mental universe. It was, so to speak, important not to "use" or "spend" the jobs that existed, to ensure that demand was stable. One way was to limit access—to women, to the unskilled, to the number of apprentices. The socialist labor movement, as opposed to the social liberal movement, did not want to exclude workers on the basis of nationality. They reasoned from an enlightened self-interest. Their newspaper wrote in 1900: "Today you, tomorrow me. If we close foreign workers

out, we may be struck by the same fate another time." And their leader, Christian Holtermann Knudsen, argued that a law against immigration as suggested by the social liberals was an expression of "a narrow national and fanatic view that we as socialists never have subscribed to." Instead they wanted all workers to unionize and then priority to be given to the organized workers. The problem was that this presupposed a very high level of union membership. As this was the case only in some branches, ethnicity was a possible alternative strategy that might be chosen to decide who was to be included, and who to be excluded.

So far the rationalist paradigm of Barth works. It may also help to understand why Norwegian shopkeepers saw itinerant Jewish peddlers as competitors. And it may to some extent explain why contemporary Norwegian taxpayers were so concerned with "needy and bad people" from other countries as the social liberals of Østfold phrased it. Nevertheless, if one looks at the cool figures, one gets second thoughts. There simply were not that many Jewish peddlers to constitute a serious commercial challenge. And as to needy and bad—yes, there was an overrepresentation of Swedes among men arrested for drunkenness and among those who received poor relief and a slight overrepresentation among convicts. From the hindsight of a historian one may observe that most Swedes were young working class men, and that compared to their Norwegian peers they scored about the same. But this is irrelevant if it was conceived differently by contemporary Norwegians. But it is striking to see how small the financial burdens actually were: figures are available for a slightly later date, the mid 1920s, when expenditures for needy foreigners at most covered 1.7 per thousand of the state budget.

### Immigrants as scapegoats

This may suggest that something else, along with rational self-interest, was at play. Norbert Elias has offered a more general theory: in all societies a power relationship between the established and the outsiders may develop.<sup>9</sup> The established group, which may be constituted on a national or a social basis, tries to further its interests by positioning or ranking itself above another group. These interests may be material and economic,

that is rational, as suggested by Barth. Interests may also concern prestige, pride, and the need of the established to enhance their own experience of having a superior value and the recognition of belonging to the insiders. The outsiders are ascribed negative stereotyped qualities such as disorder, immorality or amorality, lack of cleanliness, cowardice, and lack of learning. The labels vary according to the predominant norms of the social formation in question. External characteristics such as physical appearance, sometimes conceived as "race," do not create stereotypes, but function like a "peg" on which to hang the stereotypes so that they appear as "natural" and indisputable. The derogatory description of others works as a contrast to and bolsters the positive self-image of the established. Thus they become "better." The power relations are maintained both because the established are welded together through a common history and because outsiders may adopt the negative image that is projected upon them. Elias emphasizes that these processes cannot be explained through analyzing individuals; these processes do not spring from bad faith or base morals. The attitudes are not simple "prejudices" that may be dispelled by "enlightenment." They rise from structural societal traits.

#### **Understanding majority-minority relations through broader societal relations**

I have demonstrated that comparative analysis, both of background and present traits, may provide insights into differences of ethnic group tenacity. We may locate and measure certain characteristics of an immigrant group, and we may compare groups on the basis of different variables. We may also describe the receiving society from various analytical points of view and ask whether the social formation is basically agrarian, industrial capitalism or information and service capitalism. The immigration regime-liberal or restrictive-may also be a factor. Umberto Melotti has asked what kind of "global socialso-cialect," what "set of ideas with an overall coherence" informs the immigration policies of a country and its choices "both on the control of incoming flows of migrants and [on] how to handle the stocks of immigrants already present on their territories."<sup>10</sup>

However, such comparisons may be misleading. It is impor-

tant to avoid regarding factors as essentials, as substantial properties. It is essential to understand that an individual never exists as an atom, but always in relations to others, both in the immediate surroundings and for instance through consumption of products coming from afar. These relations may imply interaction, exchanges and transactions. These relations may or may not be recognized by those who enter into them. If one competes in a market, there is a real connection, but the competitors are anonymous to one another. In other words, relations may be direct, from person to person, or transitive, that is mediated through an intervening link. Norbert Elias writes about *Interdependenzketten*, chains of mutual dependence.<sup>11</sup> These chains may have different lengths and include very different numbers of people. Some social relations are limited to the immediate surroundings; some stretch to the macro level, national or transnational. Both the number of chains and the dependence on the chains increase with the division of labor.

Consequently, if we think in terms of relations we see that a person or a collective phenomenon is not a constant in itself, is not an eternal essence or substance. The phenomenon changes as relations change. As Pierre Bourdieu has put it, "The real is relational."<sup>12</sup> An immigrant is not an immigrant; she or he becomes so in relation to the receiving society. An immigrant is not an immigrant; she or he is produced as an immigrant in certain conjunctures. A Swedish worker may be a worker in some or most relations, under certain conditions, the relation changes and he becomes a *Swedish* worker. The same phenomenon changes meaning when the relations differ.

Stressing the relations between the majority and the minorities offers (almost) convincing explanations, particularly if one allows both for rationalist (Barth) and symbolic-social (Elias) explanations of how borders work. However, we are still left with the following problem: Why did the inclination to draw such a border vary from time to time? Some times Swedish workers were mates, at other times scoundrels or devils. The demarcation was not permanent or immanent. My answer is the following: The drawing of borders seems to be activated when groups of insiders experience their social situation as insecure. This insecurity may be linked to fights about the allo-



cation of goods like work or housing. Insecurity may also spring from a more general feeling of societal changes where one's own position, values or even "cosmologies," interpretations of the world, are pushed aside. Such insecurity is not necessarily connected to migration or minorities. Two different groups were publicly most vociferous about the dangers of immigration around 1900: the old educational elite, who in these years were surpassed by and lost their traditional lead to the industrial and business bourgeoisie, and the new counter-elite, academics with a rural background who were on the move upwards but also harbored a lot of frustrated social mobility. To both groups foreigners became a peg on which they could hang their aggression and their explanations. As they were so active in the media of the day, their interpretations were widely spread. These nationalistic or ethnicist interpretations were challenged by class interpretations, but the labor movement was at that time not hegemonic. These writers found the roots of evil in various aspects of the emerging modern society: capital and the market economy, secularism and rationalism, materialism and hedonism, women's liberation and feminism, industrialization and the formation of a proletariat, and urbanisation and the growth of large cities (Oslo at the time had a quarter of a million inhabitants). In all these phenomena foreigners were over-represented, and Jews seemed to represent the quintessence of modern society: capitalism, a proletariat, big cities, mobility, and cosmopolitanism.

Immigrants became a *Sinnbild*, to use a German word, a symbol of the great societal changes that took place in the decades around 1900. People at the time experienced a transformation from a peasant society to an industrial capitalist market society, from a rural society to at least one big city, from traditional and religious legitimizing to a modernity ruled more by instrumental rationality, from a fairly subaltern population to a self-conscious working class, from a local society to a more anonymous mass society. Many people did not like or did not understand these transformations. Immigrants became scapegoats who offered a condensed universal explanation both to real and imagined transformations. In order to understand majority-minority relations we have to locate them within such broader societal relations and axes of tensions as issues of social class.

### Does this have any bearing upon the present situation?

Before going further into possible contemporary lessons from the example of the Swedes in Norway around 1900 we have to raise another and more basic question: Is it possible at all to learn from the past in the sense that historical insights may illuminate or even guide choices one faces today? My tentative answer is—yes. We may discern three ways of thinking about this, learning by use of sequence or by analogy, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, and I would add, by use of contrast.<sup>13</sup>

Any effort to catch the future has to take the past as point of departure, be it the immediate or more distant past. History cannot tell whither humanity is heading; that must be the task of theologians or astrophysicists. History may however help to recognize lines of development to the present day, lines that may continue with a degree of possibility, or even a probability bordering on certainty. We may sketch a register of possible lines of development. In retrospect we may see that a long-term rise in world population is definitely such a trend. More intensive interaction—and migration—between various parts of the globe is probably another such line. Much more uncertain are questions of strength and timing of a trend.

Another possible (but not unproblematic) premise is analogy—parallel or precedent. We claim a similarity in traits or situations at different times, a similarity that makes the past a possible model for understanding the present. Such analogic reasoning, in order to be valid, has to handle instances within the same structural type, for instance "market economy," instances that share some critical features.<sup>14</sup> As long as a structure is not broken, it will tend to generate similar phenomena, for instance split labor markets.

A third and final strategy is to use the past as a deliberate contrast. We use the difference of the past to highlight the specific character or newness of the present in order to determine to what extent there really has been a qualitative change. A historical perspective may make it possible to discern short-term oscillations and conjunctures from more definite structural changes. When considering migration, explanations based on developments in a five year period are not sufficient; fifty years may be needed.

Even though historical comparison may thus be legitimate,

it is still necessary to consider whether a comparison between earlier and present immigration is valid. The differences may be so essential that parallels may not be justified or trends predictable. At best, it has been claimed, the past may serve as a contrast with the present. Several arguments have been made in favor of such a view: the present immigration is much bigger, many immigrants come from areas with "foreign cultures" and their religions, especially Islam, differ more radically from the categories and values of Norwegian society than previous immigrant religions, and the newcomers look different, they do not blend so easily, people conceive them as a different "race." And then there is the impact of information and communication technology: the internet, the telephone and the jet-plane make frequent contact with the homeland easier. Thus people do not settle definitely into the new society but become trans-migrants, not emigrants or immigrants. International commuting between two or more societies (such as Indians in Mumbai, London and Oslo), produces more protracted and ambiguous processes. There is a continuous revitalization of the background culture in the new country. I will briefly consider these arguments.<sup>15</sup>

As for numbers, it is a fact that more people are coming to Norway from abroad today: 5.4% of the population in 2002 were born abroad. However, in 1900 the figure was 2.9%, that is not a totally different size. And while critics see a regrettable proclivity in the immigrant population to bear more children, the evidence points to a rapprochement to the majority population after some time.<sup>16</sup> We may also note that relative to the total world population more people moved between different parts of the world in the nineteenth century than today. Before the First World War migration was even greater within Europe than to the United States.<sup>17</sup> At the apex of mass immigration, in the early 20th century, ca. 15% of the US population were born abroad, today the corresponding figure is ca. 10%. Immigration relative to population was three to four times greater in 1914 than in 1999. On a world basis two or three per cent are estimated to live outside their country of birth.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the puzzle is rather why so few leave.

The cultural distance may be considerable. But distance cannot be measured with a "cultural yardstick." Such "distance" is

primarily a matter of how the relation is conceived, as shown in the case of the Swedes. As for religion, Islam is certainly in some respects different from Christianity. But what is the implication? Catholics were seen with considerable skepticism before the Second World War both by lay people and the leading clergy. In the 1930s Catholics were accused of being the subjects of a foreign head of state and one leading theologian wrote that one had been far too lenient toward these "foreign propagandists." Catholicism was deemed un-Norwegian. The Pope was even seen as Anti-Christ. And the aggression rising from *Schächtning* "on Norwegian animals" were more intense than reactions to *halal* procedures today.

As for appearances, there are more people with a dark complexion among today's immigrants. But around 1900 scholars doing craniometrical studies were elected as members of the Norwegian Academy of Science, thus sanctioning the view that Norwegians were of two races—the dolicocephalic (long skulls) and the brachycephalic (short skulls)—and that most social, cultural and political differences were explained by these racial differences. The implications of "black" and "white" should not be dealt with flippantly. They are ingrained in a history of colonialism, and—more importantly than short skulls and long skulls—racism and a supremacist ideology are part of the Norwegian collective memory. Nevertheless, the crucial point is whether and how appearance is made significant, in the past, the present-and in the future.

Technology is certainly important and improved communications have made it much easier to travel and to keep in contact. On the other hand, letters to and from America provided information in the nineteenth century and, moreover, the real revolution in mass transport was the steam ship. Norwegian Americans commuted several times between Brooklyn and the southernmost part of Norway before World War Two, in fact they were almost more migrant laborers than labor migrants. The known record was, however, held by a Serb, who "crossed the pond" back and forth 15 times.<sup>19</sup>

Numbers, culture, appearance, and even technology may prove not to be decisive. But there is particularly one structural change that may give a different development today. The first labor migrants in the new immigration to Norway came at the

same time as industrial capitalism peaked in the number of employees and in share of the GNP. Thus the Turks, Moroccans and the Pakistani experienced structural conditions not so different from those that the Swedes encountered around 1900: they came with a general ability and will to work, and with no particular skills (at least not skills that were in demand). They had a rural background and they entered the urban, capitalist labor market at the bottom. Due to intra- and intergenerational mobility they might experience social mobility, at least "diagonally," within the working class. However, since the 1970s the demand for common labor has fallen; the demand is now for qualified labor to work in the new information and service capitalism. A refugee or an asylum seeker, as opposed to a labor migrant, does not come to fill a certain niche in the economy and the labor market. And although they may be highly skilled, they often experience the same kind of devaluation of cultural capital as the Russians. The crucial question—the question that makes comparisons with previous immigration doubtful—is: Will there be a place for all of them in the labor market?

#### A final note on politics

In the nineteenth century, the Swedes came at the time of the birth throes of Norwegian industrial capitalism. I think we are today undergoing a similar transformation, from industrial capitalism to information and service capitalism. Although there is much modish exaggeration involved in the discourse of globalization, we are in some respects experiencing a new stage of inter-nationalization. These transformations have brought forth its winners and its losers. There are rising segments linked to the information economy, symbol analysts, technocrats, capital owners. And there are those who are left behind, both pensioners and young men who one generation ago might expect well paid, secure, respected, and socially integrating jobs as industrial workers. Their *habitus* is ill fitted to the demands of the education system and the new kinds of available jobs; they also lose out to women who seem to cope better. While women, particularly those with more than an obligatory school education and with jobs in the public sector, have chosen a kind of left position, unskilled men in the private sector have swung to the right. The data on elections are quite

clear in this respect. This is not an inherent feature of young working men; historically they have been mobilized on quite different agendas. How may this be understood? It seems that many people today have good and fair reasons to be discontent be it because of job insecurity, low wages, fear of violence in the city or bitterness over the social privileges of the elite. Many young men find no satisfactory alternative in the new education system and economy. How may they interpret their situation?

We all need an interpretation or image of the world, an image which may be more or less systematic and explicit, but nevertheless helps us to sort out our impressions and endow them with coherence and meaning. Previously the labor movement, as it rose to ascendancy from the time of the First World War, expressed such an image to their members and followers. It presented to people a world with social differences and a goal: to eradicate or radically diminish these differences. The new social democratic parties of Norway and other European countries have left the image of a world with social classes behind—and in its place there is a void. Or more correctly, many among those who traditionally adhered to the Labor Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) do not feel that there is a place for them in its new, "smart" and "modern" technocratic world view. Neither have leftist groups been able to reach these groups.

Consequently, men, particularly two groups, old and young low-skilled workers, have turned to the extreme right—in Norway to the so called Progressive Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*). Although this party has played down its more blatant racism and anti-immigration agitation, there is always a related subtext in their messages. The previous local chairman in Oslo stated that:

*During the Second World War we were invaded militarily, those we got out of the country by combined efforts. The "invasion" that we experience today we will never get out of the country.... I dream of a Norway for Norwegians once more, a country not flooded by immigration.*

Terms like "nationality," "foreign culture," and even "ethnicity" or "immigrant" serve more or less as a sign, somehow

signifying people who look physically different. They are all used for what once was called "race." Although geneticists tell us that scientifically this is a nonsensical concept, most people still think in these terms. Does this mean that laborers are racists when they vote for such a party? My answer is no, not necessarily. Such views exist. But only a small group are ingrained racists in the sense that they intensely and systemically claim that those who look and speak different are also both different and inferior.

But, in a situation where many have actual problems and reasonable cause to be discontent, a situation where the labor movement has left explanations based on contradictions in society, where the labour movement is no longer able to or desires to give men and women new meaningful interpretations, there is room for new images. "Immigration" and "immigrants" have become a formula-like explanation, a lightning conductor or a scapegoat. As mentioned, Jews and even Swedes have earlier played such a role. The early German socialist leader August Bebel stated this precisely, if somewhat arrogantly: "*Anti-Semitism ist der Sozialismus der dummen Kerle*," anti-Semitism is the socialism of the stupid guys. The anti-Semitism that existed as an under-current was challenged and conquered by a socialist way of thinking. Today immigrants become the target of a similar, real but misplaced social discontent. They are blamed for problems such as unemployment and the housing situation that are created by quite other forces in society.

If the interpretation offered here holds some truth, it will not be sufficient to combat racism or skepticism against strangers through education. What is needed is an interpretation of the world and a policy addressing the interests of those who have been left behind by the now dominant ideology in the labor movement.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Knut Kjeldstadli, ed., *Norwegian Immigration History I-III* (Oslo 2003).

<sup>2</sup>Nancy L. Green, "The Modern Jewish Diaspora: Eastern European Jews in New York, London and Paris" in Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch, eds., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>Don Handelmann, "The Organization of Ethnicity," *Ethnic Groups* 1 (1977).

<sup>4</sup>Both the Romani and the Kvæns have developed ethno-political organizations during the last generation, and obtained in 1999 the legal status of *national minority*, along with the Rom (Gypsies), of which the present group, Koeldarari, originally came from Romania in the late 19th century, the so-called wood Finns (people descending from Finnish immigrants in the 17th and 18th century living in the border areas between Sweden and Norway) and the Jews (coming after the ban against Jews in the constitution was lifted in 1851, in larger numbers from 1881 due to Russian pogroms). Being recognized as a national minority implies grants for cultural purposes and the right to education in the mother tongue (not relevant to the Jews or the wood Finns, as the use of Finnish is extinct in this area, but not among many Kvæns in the north). The status of national minority releases fewer rights than the status of being an *indigenous population*, obtained only on the Sami people, but more rights than new immigrant minorities, who as such have no *particular* institutionalized political or judicial rights, although grants for religious or cultural purposes may be bestowed upon them.

<sup>5</sup>On possible explanatory variables see J. Milton Yinger, "Intersecting Strands in the Theorisation of Race and Ethnic Relations" in John Rex and David Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge, 1994) and Dirk Hoerder, "From Migrants to Ethnics. Acculturation in a Societal Framework" in Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch, eds., *European Migrants. Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), 53.

<sup>7</sup>Friedrich Heckmann, *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation: Soziologie inter-ethnischer Beziehungen* (Stuttgart, 1992), 111.

<sup>8</sup>Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo, 1969).

<sup>9</sup>Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, *Etablierte und Aussenseiter* (1965) (Baden-Baden, 1990).

<sup>10</sup>Umberto Melotti, "International Migration in Europe: Social Projects and Political Cultures" in Tariq Modood and Pnina

Werbner, eds., *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe* (London and New York, 1997).

<sup>11</sup>Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

<sup>12</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason* (Cambridge and Oxford, 1998), 3.

<sup>13</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "What Can History Tell Us about Contemporary Society?" and "Looking Forward: History and the Future" in Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London, 1997).

<sup>14</sup>David Kaplan and Robert A. Manners, *Culture Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972).

<sup>15</sup>There are other traits, that I shall not pursue here: 1) Until 1925 the movement went from Europe, 85 per cent of the migrants of the world came from this part of the world, now the direction is turned. 2) The world economy is more integrated today, although this concerns capital more than labor. 3) There are more states, and thereby possibly more states with a policy that may invite flight. The point which is correct, although we should not forget that imperial states, like the Osman empire or the Habsburg monarchy which harbored several nationalities and religions, not always handled their deviant subjects leniently, particularly if they were poor. 4) Fewer states bar emigration. 5) A development in many countries that have undergone capitalist modernization is the so called "migration hump", first a steep increase in migration up to a point of culmination, then emigration flows more gently downwards. The question is—is there room in today's monopolized world market for new modernizing economies to make the same move. If the economies of the South stagnate, the interest in migration shall hardly diminish.

<sup>16</sup>Kåre Vassenden, ed., *Innvandrere i Norge, Statistical Analyses* No. 20 (Oslo, 1997).

<sup>17</sup>Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, 1990), 26.

<sup>18</sup>Peter Stalker, *The No-Nonsense Guide to International Migration* (Oxford, 2001), 8, 17.

<sup>19</sup>Marc Wyman, *Round-Trip To America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca and London, 1993).