

Chapter 4 : The master race

The scholars' ink poisons the blood.

The Swedish practice of conflating sociology with race has a long history. I have chosen to depict it as how the Swedish-Gothic history writing was adopted by the outside world & during the 1800s came in return. Since Sweden already had a philosophy of history based on race, interest in the continental copy was weak. However, both Swedes and Norwegians were interested in the new race biology and the Darwinist approach.

I'll take it from the beginning:

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Ancestry, blood & honour

Swedish nobility was a warrior class and there were traditions about a heroic past, the so-called Gothic history writing. The information ultimately came from the Goths themselves, specifically Jordan's chronicle *Getica* from c. 550. According to this, the Goths had in the morning of time emigrated from the island of Scandza in the northern ocean to conquer the world, which they also did. Closer in time was the Spanish chronicle *Historia gothica* from 1243, which was included as the source of Eric Olai's Swedish-Gothic chronicle from c. 1470. However, the Gothic "blood" of the Swedes had then long been the official truth. During the church meeting in Basel (1431-1445), for example, Archbishop Nils Ragvaldsson used King Eric's alleged Gothic lineage to strengthen his negotiating position. The other side was, however, accustomed to such things and mocked him that the Goths who remained in Scandza were perhaps not as prepared for great deeds as their emigrated tribesmen.¹

The Gothic heritage still survives in the Swedish order of regents, which is based on the historical chronicle of Johannes Magnus (1488-1544). According to it, Gustav Vasa is the 143rd in a row of Swedish (=Gothic) regents. The Norwegians, on the other hand, use the historically verified regency order. For example, Charles XIV John is designated Charles III.

During the Empire the Swedish-Gothic history writing culminated with Olof Rudbäck the Elder's *Atlantica* or *Manheim* (1677-1702) whose excesses long brought Swedish research of antiquity into disrepute.² The historian Patrik Hall (2000) describes the "movement" as an extension of the Swedish nobility's desire to acquire a long and glorious pedigree. It was definitely not popular, the publications were written in Latin - nothing indicates that the majority of the people even knew they existed - but the ideas of a common lineage facilitated an alliance between the New nobility and royal power.

The Gothic tradition was further embellished in the Gothic League (1811-1825). The "home-goths" were now described as Vikings & self-owning farmers. Under the influence of German Romanticism, there was much speculation about the Swedish-Gothic *Volksgeist* or National Spirit (see below). There was also a blood mystique that the Goths or at least the noble Goths had blue blood.

¹ Lindroth 1975a: ss. 160-172.

² Lindroth 1975b: ss. 284-296.

There was a not insignificant element of self-interest in the Gothic movement. The members were predominantly so-called upper class commoners, i.e. non-noble industrialists, landlords & intellectuals. They liked to see themselves and their agricultural ancestors as being more pillars of state than the rest of the population. This attitude persisted during the peasant march of 1914, which is thought to at least partly explain the ruckus.

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Racial philosophy

Racial philosophy must be distinguished from racial biology. Racial philosophy is a theory of history based on race. There are three philosophical "race classics": Arthur de Gobineau (1853-1855) "Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines"; Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1899) "Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts" & Alfred Rosenberg (1930) "Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts". The only person possible to link to Sweden & the Bernadotte is the Frenchman Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882). The background is as follows:

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The fallout from the Vienna Congress (1814-15) was that princes and nobility had to compete with the bourgeoisie on more or less equal terms. A noble title was no longer a guarantee to high office, as the diplomat etc. Count Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) experienced. When the legitimists after the February Revolution of 1848 were out of power, he began to despair about both the future of nobility and of his own. In contrast to his bourgeois competitors, he was a development pessimist & opponent of the Enlightenment, which he considered the root of all evil. However, like Marx, he was a materialist, meaning that history in the long run depends on factors that the individual man does not control. Both were interested in class structure. Marx was concerned about the effect on class structure of factors of production. Gobineau was concerned about the effect on class structure of the quality of race. In 1855, after several years of work, he published an "Essay on the inequality of human races". The underlying idea was that all evil could be attributed to the loss of the unique properties of the Aryans by a far gone mixture of race. The ongoing degeneration was moreover inevitable. Humanity gravitated towards - possibly had already gravitated to - an average of the existing races. Any remaining Aryans were too few to assert themselves & lived (as he himself) in isolation. The essay, a thousand pages, exemplified the decay. Gobineau was not alone in such speculation, but the essay was supported by the latest research, and well received.

From 1871 to 1877, Gobineau was stationed in Stockholm. In his essay, he portrayed the Norse (Goths & Vikings) as somewhat pure-bred Aryans, and he had high expectations which the Swedes failed to live up to. Initially, he interpreted the peaceful Swedish political conditions as a congruence between Oscar II's superior race, the commoners inferior ditto & the class structure. Later, he interpreted Oscar II's policy of neutrality and acquiescence before the Parliament as also Oscar II's degeneration having reached an advanced stage. Gobineaus' biographer Biddiss, however, expressed doubts about the interpretation. According to Gobineau's own theories, such a degeneration should lead to democracy or chaos, as no one was more qualified to rule than the other.³

³ Biddiss, 1970: s. 228.

Gobineau's book was not a bestseller, but his readers seem to have appreciated races and tribes as an easy-to-understand way of describing a complex historical reality. However, his cultural pessimism & biological determinism discouraged. The message was popularized by the debater Max Nordau who made himself known for his criticism of the upper class degeneration.⁴ There seems to have been a corresponding Swedish debate about the weakening of the Swedish martial spirit & the princes' inability to accomplish anything except sitting on horseback at parades.

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Racial biology

There are also racial biology classics: The Frenchman Vacher de Lapouge (1899) "L'Aryen: son Rôle Social" & the American Madison Grant (1916) "The Passing of the Great Race: The Racial Basis of European History". In this tradition there are three Swedish researchers: Anders Retzius, Gustaf Retzius & Herman Lundborg.

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The Frenchman Vacher de Lapouge (1854-1936) modernized Gobineau's theories with the latest anthropology & heredity research. Like Gobineau, he referred to his compatriot Henri de Boulainvillier's theory (1658-1722) of French "racial sociology". The upper class was assumed to be descended from the Aryan Franks and the peasant classes from the Celtic Gauls. Like Gobineau, he explained the class struggles of 1848 and 1871 with racial mixing, and wanted to restore harmony by breeding a homogeneous class structure. In particular, he considered the unions "degenerate" (=composed of racially mixed people who did not understand their proper place in society). To identify the breeds, the Swede Anders Retzius' (1796-1860) skull index (Cephalic index $CI = \text{width/length} * 100$) was to be used, that distinguished between dolichocephalic (long-headed; low CI) & brachycephalic (short-headed; high CI). The lower the CI, the more Aryan the blood.

The American Madison Grant (1865-1937) had similar ideas: The world was divided into masters & slaves, leaders & led, subhumans & supermen. However, the white race had been severely weakened by the losses in World War I. Sweden he considered to be one of the few countries besides Germany that not only had a national spirit, but were aware of their history, race & culture. Sweden was the bosom and nursery of the master race, the Aryan Goths' ancestral home.

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Anders Retzius had only a limited number of skulls to his disposal, but he thought he saw a difference between northern Europeans (long-headed) and Slavs (short-headed). His son Gustaf Retzius (1842-1919) conducted three major investigations testing the hypothesis - on Finns, on antiquities (=corpses) & on conscripts - which he believed to confirm his father's theory, that the supposedly homogeneous white race could be divided into subgroups with different degrees of degeneration. According to Retzius, the nowadays proportion of pure-bred Swedes was only 30 per cent, but the proportion of pure-bred Danes was even lower, 12 per cent.

⁴ Nordau 1884.

The last researcher in the field of skull measurement before the topic burned itself out was Herman Lundborg (1868-1943), who made himself known for his measurements of Sami & Tornedal Finns that he considered especially threatening to the purity of the Swedish people. The theory was that mixed races were more prone to crime, malformations, and mental illnesses. It was not until the 1960s that the theory was abandoned. Nowadays, people instead worry about mixed cultures.⁵ The Norwegians were also enthusiastic skull meters, but that is outside the focus of this book.⁶

Lundborg's involuntary verification of Gobineaus' theories - what was left of the Aryan masterrace was now an unimpressive mixed race - was redacted in his own publications, but in 1933 a younger colleague Gunnar Dahlberg (1893-1956) published an article about the matter, which aroused great anger in racial biology circles.⁷

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A flattering description of the Swedish tribe has never been opposed by Bernadotte, but has never had any political function other than to feed the self-image. The monarchic attitude has always been that your people you get from God & you have to make do. It has always been in the royal family's own interest to support integration.

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National spirit (*Volksgeist*)

Since the National spirit like the race had both a mythical, philosophical & biological aspect, it is difficult to know what was meant. For example, there were reports that forcibly recruited soldiers could suffer such homesickness (probably depression) that they became unfit for duty & had to be demobilized. The main theme, however, was National Romanticism which in various ways praised nature, countryside & a heroic past.

The research (or rather the speculation) on the subject concerned the formation of a National *Weltanschauung* (=stereotypes in national thinking; concept learning; mentalities) according to Montesquieu's climate theory, folklore research & social psychology, especially Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920).⁸ Later in the 20th century there was also research on national biologically conditioned race psychology. In Sweden, speculation seems to have started during the Age of Liberty (1718-1772). I quote the historian Jonas Nordin:

”The Swedish virtues and heroic deeds had a great place in literature. Various theories were debated as to why the Swedes were superior to all other peoples. The answer to that was an unshakable Lutheran faith, respect for a person's social position, patriotism, courage, honesty, longing for freedom and tough perseverance. However, the success was constantly threatened by the Swedish national sins of envy, greed, complicity, pettiness and weakness for the foreign that threatened to poison a fundamentally decent and undemanding people.”⁹

⁵ Ljungström 2004.

⁶ Kyllingstad 2014.

⁷ Ericsson 2019.

⁸ Völkerpsychologie, <en.wikipedia.org> (2019-01-01).

⁹ Nordin 2000: s. 463.

Earlier remains of the Nordic people's spirit would be to be found in ancient monuments & in the peasant society. This took the form of an interest in rune stones, burial mounds, ethnography & translations of Eddan and other Old Norse works, as well as pure mythology. The portal figure for the latter was Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783-1847) who had the ambition to resurrect "the dormant Nordic spirit". Poems such as *Vikingen*, *Odalbonden* & *Manhem* praised law, order, derring-do and a harmonious relationship between king & self-owning farmers. Esaias Tegnér (1782-1846) had a similar circle of motives with poems like *Svea* & *Frithiofs saga*. Various authors, however, think that both can trace an influence of Charles XIV John's political agenda in that the Gothicists downplayed the importance of Finland. This continued. The Swedish-Finnish folk soul became Swedish-Norwegian.¹⁰ The Finns cultivated their own mythology.

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National character

After the dissolution of the union, attempts were made to assert a specific Swedish national character distinct from the Danish and the Norwegian. First out was the statistician Gustav Sundbärg who after his work with the 1911 emigration investigation felt called to explain the emigration with Swedish folklore rather than with "the Swedish society's facilities and condition".¹¹ Sundbärg began with the Swedes' lack of psychology: "We Swedes love nature but not people. We lack national sentiment." The naive Swedes were exploited by cunning Danish businessmen. The Swedes' lack of confidence led to the loss of Norway. The Scandinavian people were born jealous. Etc. Since Sundbärg without specifying sources exemplifies with history, fiction, newspaper clippings & personal experiences, it is difficult to comment on his conclusions, but they were widely adopted. The criticism of Denmark and Norway led to counter books - just as difficult to assess.

In 1933, 1941 and 1969, political scientist Herbert Tingsten published reviews of this literature, which he found extremely difficult to handle. All nations ascribed themselves the same good qualities.¹²

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Cultural differences

Sweden was for a long time ethnically very homogeneous, but after World War II immigration increased. Cultural clashes were legion. The Swedish Discrimination Investigation (1979-1984) hired researchers, among them ethnologists Åke Daun & Billy Ehn, to study the Swedish mentality & how it differed from other countries' mentality. The meaning of searching with light & lantern for differences between Swedes & fairly loosely defined immigrant groups was lively discussed. Daun defended his research field by:

"Sweden as a nation [stands] for a geographically and administratively limited unit, which has a certain historical past, a language, a constitution, laws, social institutions etc. as common prerequisites for its inhabitants. In addition, it must be said that the

¹⁰ Hagerman 2006; Sandström 2008; Edgren 2010

¹¹ Sundbärg 1911.

¹² Herbert Tingsten. Nationalism och nationell psykolog. *Dagens Nyheter*, 1933-08-25, s. 4; Herbert Tingsten. Nationalkaraktärer. *Dagens Nyheter*, 1933-08-29, s. 5; Tingsten 1941; Tingsten 1969.

Swedish culture is unusually homogeneous, as is the case in the other Scandinavian countries, compared with many other countries.”¹³

In his book "Swedish mentality" (1989), Daun reports a variety of anecdotal information about Swedes & Swedishness that I here skip. The properties that appear reasonably verifiable are: The Swedes were the Nordic's most "Lutheran" people (=the work ethic & the 10 commandments). They were also more independent (=lived alone, reserved & unsociable), more modest, not so conflict-prone (=compromising), more uncertain about their values (=less assertive) & had more depressions than their Nordic neighbours.¹⁴ The immigrants agreed. The Swedes (especially the officials at the Immigration Service) were overbearing, hostile, reserved & spiritually barren.¹⁵

Later, Daun was criticized both for having overinterpreted his data & for the very concept of National spirit, character, mentality etc. not being of this world world but a bourgeois invention to avoid discussing highly real class conflicts. A national Swedish community above all conflicts did simply not exist.¹⁶

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State individualism

Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland belong to Protestant Europe and according to the World Value Survey (1981-2015) share certain features¹⁷. All the Nordic countries have modern values (Sweden most) in the sense of secular-rational values & that they value self-realization. Self-realization in the Swedish version, however, is said to be possible only by releasing the individual from his or her social context. Berggren & Trädgårdh (2006) has a lot to say about how this should be done. Their reasoning can be described as: On the one hand, the oppressive structures. On the other side the liberal state as the guarantor of individual freedom. An alternative way, more in line with this book, is to express it as the feudal society, based on personal loyalties, has been replaced by "the cash nexus". This is a Marxist term describing the monetary economy of bourgeois society. When half the income goes to the state, it is probably inevitable that the relationship with the state itself takes precedence. You want something back for your money.

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Summary

Protect Sweden from inbreeding!

As immigrants, the Bernadotte have never been recognized as "Swedes of the Blood". Several of them have, however, taken an interest in Swedish mythology and history. Charles XV in the Viking Age. Gustaf in antiquities. Prince Eugèn in the Swedish "soul". In the interpretation of art historian Hans Brummer, Eugèn's motives implied a form of aesthetic nationalism (to distinguish it from Charles XV's more openly political national romanticism or cultural patriotism):

¹³ Daun 1989; ss. 11-12.

¹⁴ Daun 1989.

¹⁵ Ehn & Daun red. 1988.

¹⁶ Karlsson 1994; Rätzel 1999.

¹⁷ Inglehart & Welzel 2010; Inglehart 2015.

”A classless people stands in reverence for the nature revealed by the all-seeing artist. Gone is the kingdom's facade, the hierarchies, the symbols. Gone is the notion of the nation as a ruler, representing mass, number and strength, but not a collection of free people, where individuals derive their value from themselves. The vision was an expression of the belief in a national self-esteem free from patriotism, of a community prompted by an ancient earth spirit.”¹⁸

Magdalena Zmuda-Trzebiatowska (2003) has summarized the 19th century Swedish identity debate. There is also a literature about the 20th century ”Swedish reputation” based on foreign debate books & the Swedish Institute's surveys. The American interest seems to have arisen in connection with Roosevelt's New Deal policy, in which Sweden was seen as a role model. It has resulted in an extensive literature on Sweden's distinctive character that I will get back to.

¹⁸ Brummer 1998: s. 94.

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