

Ronny Ambjörnsson

The Honest and Diligent Worker

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## Foreword

Ronny Ambjörnsson, historian of ideas at the university of Umeå, has coined the expression "den skötsamme arbetaren" to cover a main ingredient in the ethos of the early Swedish labour and temperance movements.

"Den skötsamme arbetaren" depicted by Ambjörnsson was the honest and diligent, well-behaved and industrious, tidy and orderly worker, a man who mastered the art of self-control, who eschewed futile idleness or alcohol and devoted himself to organizational and educative efforts that served to ameliorate the conditions for himself, his family, his class, and the whole society. In Ambjörnsson's eyes it was less a factual life-style than an ideal embraced by labour and temperance movement activists, as well as a project aiming at the creation of citizens in a future democratic society.

This, hitherto unpublished, English translation of Ambjörnsson's seminal paper<sup>1</sup> on the subject was produced in connection with the preparations for a seminar in Stockholm in May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1987. The seminar was sponsored by UHÄ (The National Board for the Universities) and HSFR (The Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences). Its main objective was to give the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who paid his first visit to Sweden, an opportunity to discuss with invited scholars from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland.

The ethos or ideal described by Ambjörnsson seem to some extent to have been a Swedish or Scandinavian speciality, which is why a translation of his paper was prepared to the seminar. It might even be that these specific features of the early Swedish popular movements have some bearings for today's sociology of power. When comparing the recruitment of the Swedish power elites with, e.g., that in France, one of the most striking distinguishing traits is the significance of the trajectories through the popular movements, the labour unions, or the Social Democratic party. Therefore, it might be fruitful to study a specific kind of resources -- a "species of capital", to use Bourdieu's terminology -- accumulated by certain Swedish families, social groups and institutions, resources which give access to certain regions of the Swedish field of power and might be converted to other species of capital (economic, political, etc). Tentatively, we might label this kind of resources "organizational capital". A hypothesis worth further investigations is that the development so well analyzed by Ambjörnsson, i.e. the genesis of the ethos of diligence in the popular movements of the early twentieth century, might be regarded as the "primitive accumulation" of today's organizational capital.

Donald Broady

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<sup>1</sup> The original swedish version of this paper, "Den skötsamme arbetaren", was read at the colloquium "Komponenter i en nationell kultur -- 'Den svenska modellens' kulturella ansikte" (Components of a national culture -- the cultural physiognomy of 'the Swedish Model'), arranged at the university of Umeå, Sweden, 14-16 January 1987, and sponsored by UHÄ and HSFR. A different English version of the paper was published in *History of European Ideas*, X, No. 1, 1989, pp. 59-67. A French version was published in *Ethnologie française*, XXI, n° 1, 1991, pp. 67-78. Cf. also the comprehensive discussion in R. Ambjörnsson, *Den skötsamme arbetaren. Idéer och ideal i ett norrländskt sågverkssamhälle 1880-1930*. Carlssons Bokförlag, Stockholm 1988.



# The Honest and Diligent Worker

Ronny Ambjörnsson

We are treading water. We get at times so fed up with the problem of alcohol abuse, says Olle Angenäs in an interview in *Dagens Nyheter* on 3.9 1986. Olle Angenäs is the trade union's social representative for the state-employed workers at the head-quarters of the General Post-Office in Gothenburg. He is tired of continually having to rush out after the event has happened and save people who, in one way or another, have got into difficulties. What are needed, he maintains, are preventative measures. And he is seeking a reconquering of what he calls the working class' way of seeing humanity. "We need a belief, a Utopian dream of a society built on worthier human values... The question is what development we shall have. What shall we live for? What is the meaning of life?"

Here abuse and diligence are coupled to the way of seeing ones fellow man, Utopia and the great questions of humanity. What is the meaning of life? The question was also asked at the beginning of the century by people who wanted to deal with problems of abuse. To abuse alcohol was, for these people, to abuse life. Thus diligence acquired -- in the extension of the reasoning around humanity's great questions -- a Utopian dimension.

I shall try in the following essay to determine some of the components that are integral parts of the Swedish diligence, as it finds expression in the temperance and workers' movements of the early nineteen hundreds. My material is taken from the sawmill Community of Holmsund which is situated at the mouth of Umeälven river in Bottenviken. The material consists of minutes from ordinary meetings of the Good Templar lodges, Skärgårdsblomman and Skärgårdsklippan, the meetings in the lodges' study-circles, articles from a handwritten newspaper of one of the study-circle members, acquirement and lending journals from the library of one of the lodges, minutes of meetings from two of Holmsund's trade unions, Section 84 of The Sawmill's and Industrial Workers' Union and Section 80 of The Transport Workers' Union (dockworkers) as well as a lesser number of interviews with people who were active in this area during the nineteen twenties and thirties.

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But first a few words about the environment. Holmsund is a young community. It springs into existence in the middle of the eighteen hundreds round a loading place and port for the shipment of timber sawn in Baggböle, about five kilometers upstream of Umeå. In 1885 the sawmill in Baggböle is moved to Holmsund and the community expands with the port, the new sawmill as well as an older sawmill in the nearby Sandvik as it's center. The workers are recruited from Baggböle and from small works in the coastal districts around the mouth of the Umeälven river as well as, to a lesser extent, from the inland parishes towards Lapland. Office staff and qualified workers came from farther afield, in the case of Holmsund's sawmill usually from Western Sweden -- the owner of the mill was the firm James Dickson and Co, Gothenburg. Even among the growing number of craftsmen that settled in the port area of Djupvik, the southern element was very noticeable, as was the case also with the dockers. Mobility among these workers was also greater than among those of the sawmill: people came, but moved on after a few years. This is a difference which is even more accentuated by the

port's openness: Vessels sailing in and out, foreign languages and foreign habits, contrasts and novelties, all of which would probably have led both to temptation and repudiation.

As a place of work the port turned the old norms upside down. Men and women, for example, met each other here in a new way. As well as female coffee-makers and beer-sellers there were also female stevedores, who loaded kindling, the so called kindling-girls. They worked in teams on the boats among foreign sailors, the men ashore had no control over them and from the county administration office came agitated reports: it was said that the girls stayed behind on board an unduly long time, sometimes even overnight. But even those who only occasionally stayed in the port found themselves in a moral risk-zone. There were unlicensed gin-shops. And above all there were a substantial number of beer-houses at which, according to the priests' official accounts and the district-police superintendent's reports, everything was "not as it should be". Amongst other things that were mentioned were fights and "nightly dance pleasures". What the authorities are afraid of is a lack of control of the impulses with regards to sexuality and aggression. In the extension of this fear lie these expanding festivities which carry with them not only the disorderly but also the well behaved, those who are only passing through the port on their way to one of the sawmills.

The managements of the various companies in Holmsund and Sandvik associate themselves with the authorities and already in the 1870s they prohibit the selling of beer during the weekends, a prohibition which was ultimately evaded and restated again and again. The companies however develop a special form of control of a paternalistic nature which is characteristic of different areas of the pre-modern Swedish society. The company in Holmsund built church and school and paid both priest and teacher, supplied accommodation for the permanent workers in barracks as well as firewood and medical care, saw to it that the sick received a certain amount of financial assistance and that in the case of death the children of the deceased could survive. In return for this it was insisted on that the workers should follow a "quiet and a proper way of life", a demand that was written into the work contract and which applied both at work and elsewhere. A similar work relationship existed in Sandvik.

Care and control coincide. The companies saw to it that the children went to school and the companies' schools were, to judge by the school inspectors' report, no worse than those of the municipality, probably better. But insubordinate and refractory pupils were sent to the company office to be reprimanded and warned. Characteristic of this paternalistic pattern are, apart from care and control, the verticality and differentiation: the flood of measures starts at the top and travels downwards and the care is aimed, primarily, not at the group but at the private individuals who have, in one way or another, drawn attention to themselves. It is after individual investigation that the sick receive their pay and the fatherless children their pension. The workers are often handpicked to do more specialized tasks. Nor is it just anyone who gets work during the winter, when the port lies frozen and the greater part of the productive activity is going at half pace. So in different ways the work-force is differentiated and this differentiation can be regarded as a part of the paternalistic pattern. The work-force is seen and treated not as a collective and has therefor difficulty in behaving as one.

The church and school were included in that pattern. Even if qualified teachers were being used in increasing numbers the greater part of teaching at the end of the nineteenth century was carried out by the priest -- in Holmsund's case a chapel preacher. The teaching of the catechism was of course an important feature of school life, as was Bible history. As home examinations in these subjects remained the practice until 1915 the church has here a double mission. It had both to plant and control knowledge. The totality was guaranteed by The Company which, as we have seen, took the responsibility for the material base: buildings, wages and taxes.

Thus company, church and school formed a Trinity that strived to form the whole gamut of life that was lived in that little community in the Umeå archipelago, which at the turn of the century was made up of just under 2.800 people.

But the continual complaints about the wild living in the port shows that it was not always successful. And it is not only in the port that people live it up. Even in the actual workplace the norms of the catechism and work-contract are obstructed. On many occasions the sawmill workers stop work in protest at what they see as unreasonable conditions. These protests seem to have been spontaneous -- simple sit-down strikes -- and, to judge by written recollections, words were not minced in the resultant settlements. It is also the tone in these demands and not the demands as such that agitate the company management. Moreover "wild" features were already present in the actual culture that was developing especially among the planklayers: different types of initiation rites, parties and celebrations all of which were a break of work discipline.

Thus control and spontaneous protest, discipline and wildness meet in the sawmill community, that grows up in Holmsund during the second half of the nineteenth century. A certain amount of wildness seems to have been tolerated by the company management, for example the celebrating of newcomers. (Paternalism may presuppose a somewhat demarcated measure of wildness and vice versa.) But aggressive actions, wildcat strikes and working to rule could not of course be accepted.

But even for the workers spontaneous action was problematic. That which started spontaneously could also end spontaneously. It was enough that a few people tired of working to rule for the action to lose its effect. The workers' spontaneity and the company management's paternalistic differentiation could work together to create a situation where everything remained as it was. Injustice was dismissed with a laugh, not a demand. In order for a demand to gain credence organized behavior is required. And organization demands discipline and control of the impulses both individually and collectively. The workers can be said to have their own genuine need of discipline that grows out of their work situations. At the same time the actual industrial working life also demands a discipline when it comes to such things as time keeping and work intensity. Both the employers and the workers have a need of temperance. So in the disciplining process conflicting interests could meet and work together. And it is in this weave of conflicting interests that the temperance and workers' movements grow up.

We shall here follow at first hand the temperance movement and those ideals of diligence which are developed within it. We shall see how diligence contains the seeds of a questioning of the accepted, established reality as it is expressed in both working and living conditions. It is a question of a drawn out process, where one thought gives birth to another, a sort of realization of a half-conscious project, let us call it the project of radical diligence. The aim is to try and reconstruct this project. What thoughts were thought in the lodges of the Good Templars and in the early workers' movement in Holmsund, what questions were discussed? In other words: what was the discourse like and why did it change? We have already intimated a change from a moralistic to a more political standpoint and a general source of inspiration in my work has been some words of Antonio Gramsci: "The critical understanding of a person comes about through a struggle between political 'hegemonies' and conflicting tendencies first in the moral and then the political field, eventually giving rise to a higher understanding of reality."

The political struggle can, in such a perspective be seen as a culture struggle where different social groups and classes set up different morals and descriptions of reality and test these through the powers of reasoning and in their life. These tests are elements in an awareness process, a heightened insight into the world and one's own place in it. Gramsci speaks about different hegemonies: "Awareness of the fact that one is part of a fixed hegemonic power ... is the first phase of a proceeding consciousness of one's self."

What is drinking too much? It is of course possible to give many answers to that question. Drunkenness can be a protest, a person's way of behaving against the rules, when someone else wants to rule him. Drunkenness helps the unruly maintain his integrity, that ounce of human

value that social circumstances threaten to deprive him of. Such a form of excessive drinking can not be seen only as an early, pre-political form of protest. Ethnologist Birgitta Frykman has shown in an essay how a politically aware worker in Gothenburg in the 1880s demonstrates his disobedience by drinking. And he was certainly not alone. A group within the early social democratic movement, most eloquently represented by August Palm, were sceptical not only to the temperance movement as such but also to its aim and ideal, which was total abstinence.

Getting drunk can also be a way of mitigating an extremely pressing situation. The contours of reality are blurred, the lines in the social landscape appear softer. Drunkenness offers a way out, but a political movement that wants to deal with reality can not at the same time leave it. A control of ones surroundings presupposes in that perspective a control of ones own self. Such a self-control can be achieved by a division of the ego into on the one side instinct and desire -- "the animal" as it was called -- and on the other awareness, will, spirit, greatness which together make up what is understood as human value.

Paradoxically both excessive drinking and temperance can lead to an awareness of human value. However it is human value as seen by the temperance movement that we shall examine here. It is namely temperance that permeates more strongly the political movements that wish to change and modernize our country, and particularly here the workers' movement. It is enough to point out that in 1917 of the 64 % of the members of parliament who were organized teetotallers the greatest number were members of the Social Democratic Party, the liberals also being well represented. Diligence, in other words, is an important ingredient in the creation of modern Sweden.

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Of all the various peoples' movements temperance is the first to appear in Holmsund. In 1884 the Good Templar lodge Skärgårdsblomman is founded, in 1900 another lodge in Sandvik and in 1901 a blue-band association is started in Djupvik, as the port area was called. (The whole community of Holmsund, Sandvik and Djupvik is called by the common name of Holmsund.) The temperance movement after a somewhat slow start grew quickly and at the end of the century consisted of about 600 people of a population of about 2.800. The Revivalist movement is next on the scene after the Good Templars.

In 1891 a mission parish is founded, Umeå Skärgårds Brödraförsamling, one year later a corpse of the Salvation Army is started and in 1905 a mission society affiliated to EFS. The latter has however existed *in nuce* long before this in the form of "village prayers", spontaneous pietist meetings and Christian sewing-circles; the mentality is well established when in 1905 it becomes organized. The workers' movement comes later. It is first in 1905 that the first trade union is built, Section 80 of The Transport Workers' Union. This inspired the sawmill workers in Sandvik to start an association one year later, Section 84 of The Sawmill's and Industrial Workers' union. This however was dissolved during the hard times in connection with the general strike of 1909 and is not revived until 1919. The same year the sawmill workers in Holmsund organize themselves and form Section 127 of The Sawmill Industry Workers' Union; the paternalistic pattern was strongest in this place.

Of those who in 1884 founded the Skärgårdsblomman lodge the majority were sawmill workers from Holmsund and Sandvik and craftsmen from Djupvik as well as their wives and daughters. The greatest number of members was reached in 1899, just before the branch-lodge Skärgårdsklippan was started. Then there were about 240 members, of which roughly half were women. Some of these went to Skärgårdsklippan, which from the start had nearly 200 members, a number which increased to about 340 in the 1920s. At the same time Skärgårdsblomman had a little under 200 members while the blue-band association Enighet had

about 50. All the temperance associations involved themselves in trying to stop the selling of beer in Djupvik and on the boats to Umeå and they succeeded in doing this by the early 1900s.

But it is not this activity which takes the biggest place in temperance work. It is mentioned occasionally, but mostly in passing, in the minutes. It is the life of the association that is put in the center. The primary tasks are to gain new members to the cause of temperance and by different means to keep them so that they can become an example for the rest of the population. This last point is important: the men and women of the temperance movement should conduct themselves as if a thousand eyes were continually watching them and in all of life's vicissitudes consider their responsibility.

We shall however return to this later. With regard to the first aim, to gain and keep supporters, different models were developed. The first lays great emphasis on different kinds of ceremonies and rituals. As far as the Good Templars are concerned, and it is they I am concentrating on here, these ceremonies were from the beginning extremely complicated. Complication has, it seems, two functions. The ritual brings about an atmosphere of specialness which gives the initiated the feeling of being chosen. At the same time the ritual has a pseudo-religious function: the initiated are bound by an individual promise to a new life -- new in many ways. The ceremony is a form of initiation rite. There is a parallel here with the revivalist movement's individually understood existential chosen path and we are reminded that it is in a revivalist district that Holmsund's temperance lodges grew up. Västerbotten is one of the areas in Sweden where the temperance as well as the revivalist movement has been most successful.

This feeling of being chosen was not just a fiction. It was watched over carefully by the initiated, partly in the form of self-control and partly through collective control practiced within the group. The conduct of the members was scrutinized in detail. The number of excluded members is very high up until the first years of the twentieth century and moreover there were countless examples of rebukes and accusations. Moreover a large part of the associations' meetings during the nineteen eighties and nineties were taken up with discussing morality and diligence. The members are very occupied with the problem of setting the limits. How shall a member behave who finds himself unintentionally in "bad company"? And what is diligence? Is it only temperance? Can a lodge member swear? What shall the lodge member do who is suddenly seized by aggressive impulses? Can a lodge member dance? All of these questions are discussed thoroughly and profoundly. And the results of these discussions are not always foregone conclusions. Many believe for example that it is possible to dance, provided it is not done in a public place. It is the unexpected meeting one is afraid of, that which we have described earlier as the expanding festivity.

Thus it was a question, in all of life's changing patterns, of being aware of ones actions: Awareness, concentration on the control of the instinct appear to be the A and Z in the life of a lodge member. Awareness and control of the instinct is also seen as the genuine human expression whereas deficient control is often interpreted as signifying "the animal". In other words, total abstinence means for the people of the temperance movement not only abstinence from alcohol but also in other respects a controlled and aware life: Spirits and their negation can be described as the center of gravity around which ever widening rings of diligence spread concentrically outwards.

The reduction in the number of exclusions and reproofs around the turn of the century coincide with a criticism of ceremonies and rituals. The ceremonies come more frequently to be seen as empty. They are even sometimes ridiculed. The criticism is also directed at the pseudo-religious features. It was emphasized more and more often that the IOGT-order is neutral as far as religion is concerned. Some of this criticism is delivered by a new generation of Good Templars, but a remarkable number of the old members support the new tendencies. It

is easy to interpret this process by thinking that the outer disciplining has been successful; the lodge members have integrated prohibition and taboo in their personalities.

One can also see the change as a shift in tactics, in a world where despite everything secularization increases and all forms of outer-control appear more and more to be obsolete. The new tactics require more positive approaches. The lodge shall become a home, where people can have a meaningful leisure-time. The meetings are intensified. A programme is planned for every meeting. This programme is characterized by a mixture of diversion and education. They sing, discuss, declaim, lecture; by this is meant that they read aloud from some text, usually taken from IOGT's journal *Reformatorn* but also increasingly from other so called more profane texts. They arrange parties, trips, early morning nature rambles. Even at these events a similar programme is found.

The songs that are sung are usually taken from a song-book issued by IOGT. An analysis of the songs found in the book show that certain subjects come up again and again. There are five of them: the subject of struggle, belief in progress, brotherhood, internationalism and the subject of freedom. The temperance people conduct a perpetually existing battle against a barbarism, characterized not only by different forms of vice but also by an indifference and apathy to life. The struggle is a way of life and the struggle concerns the future. Great hopes are held for that. From the darkness the temperance people will rise up towards the light and from the few shall they become all when the new-age dawns. In the struggle a solidarity is developed whose different elements are described by terms taken from the home. One is brother and sister, firstly with the other lodge members, but also in a wider sense with that part of humanity still wandering in the darkness. Brotherhood, it is often pointed out, is international. The subject of freedom finally, lays great emphasis on awareness and choice. The drinker has no freedom of action, steered as he is by his desires and instincts. His spiritual horizon is obscured and he wanders about like a blind man, now here, now there, but never really getting anywhere.

The general ideological background to this subject is the idealism of the nineteenth century, especially in the form that in Sweden is given poetic expression by Viktor Rydberg. Many of the songs seem consciously or unconsciously, to be copied from Rydberg's often quoted cantata about mankind's wandering in the desert striving towards the right, the good and the beautiful. But another well-known song also springs to mind, The Internationale, and the association is of course no coincidence: both Rydberg and the writer of The Internationale found their inspiration in the same ideological tradition, the belief in progress that is almost an obligatory feature in that modern project for society, in which both the temperance and the workers' movement are important elements.

The discussions that take place at meetings and parties are limited at the beginning to the problems of temperance; one is, as we have pointed out, primarily occupied in setting the limits with regards to habits and morals. Taken together however all these small details, which are laboriously discussed backwards and forwards, form a pattern that can be formulated in the question: How shall the good life be lived? Even in the nineteen eighties and nineties the concept of the good life is colored greatly by a moralistic unimpeachability. The question that the pattern creates is rhetorical. But around the turn of the century the question is more concrete and at the same time more problematic. And it is not just implied, it is also worded directly. At the meetings these sorts of existential questions are raised more and more often: What is it that makes life worth living? What is a good person? What is real happiness?

These discussions have evidently had from the beginning the aim of educating people who in debates and discussions can speak for the cause of temperance. They are a form of practical exercise which is seen amongst other things in the fact that one chooses the people to introduce the subjects as well as the opponents. But once raised these discussion questions take on their own life and insist upon authentic answers. The debates become successively more lively. And

in the extension of the questions that are exemplified political consequences can be dimly seen: What shall society that allows good people to live a good life look like?

We shall however wait a little with these consequences and return to the party programme of the association. Reading aloud and declamation were, we pointed out, usual ingredients of meetings and parties. Just Viktor Rydberg's poems were often well-used numbers. It is the poet's concentration on the great existential questions that attracts: *where from* and *where to*. From reading aloud the step is not long to a more regular, educational activity and already by the middle of the 1890s the ground has been laid for a library that not only comprises of temperance literature but also books of a more general, culture-historical interest. One has also discussed in the nineties the forming of a study-circle. By 1900 it is the general opinion that "the people" need their own school because the existing school did not teach "anything of worth", only "long catechism and psalm verses".

One is generally sceptical to the spiritual authorities. The priest is not permitted to perform as a lecturer -- he is seen as hostile not only to the lodge but also to associations in general. The suspicions are justified, which can be seen by the chapel preacher's official report, where he admittedly regards drunkenness as *the mother of vices*. but at the same time he repudiates the building of associations.

This is symptomatic: The association was a threat to the paternalistic order of the society for which the priest was an important representative. The association was built horizontally not vertically. One had, on the other hand, in the beginning, a more benevolent attitude to the company management. The company had helped the lodge economically. It had paid the rent for the first few years and when the order's house was built in 1900 the company gave the association a free plot of land plus timber. However this benevolence is later replaced to some, as yet mild, extent by an attitude of distrust. The members of the lodge feel it is degrading to have to ask for help at times of sickness and they decide to build a sick fund as well as a pension fund. (These never actually get off the ground.)

One can *definitely* see in the minutes taken during the first two decades of the twentieth century an increasing political awareness. It is pointed out, especially from within Skärgårdsklippan, that even political questions were a part of the lodge discussions. But the tone of these discussions is still quite careful and the lodge as such strives to keep itself politically neutral.

The diligence that the lodges cultivated finds its expression even in the early trade union movement in the place. Of the statutes for the Dock Workers' Union five of twentythree are about behavior and moral conduct. The workers shall show self-discipline both at their place of work and outside, keep good time, ensure that they are at the right place at the start of work, not behave in an un-ruly fashion in public places and of course conduct themselves soberly.

Formal resolutions are taken on repeated occasions concerning total abstinence, which suggest that it can have been a little uncertain, with regards to the diligence of the dockworkers. Committees are set up that shall reprimand members who have not carried out their obligations at work and in this context the word honor is used: it is a question of honor to do a good job. But it is also part of the worker's honor to not fawn to the employer. The same applies for the Sawmill Workers' Union in Sandvik. "Improper ways" are criticized and the moral conduct of individual workers is often discussed at the meetings. It can even be the case that they appeal to the company management to have a "trouble-maker" dismissed. But as in the lodges, discussions about abstract subjects are also arranged as well as readings and recitals. And at the demonstrations on the first of May the importance of education is inculcated.

With so great similarities it is not therefore strange that lodge and union have a good relationship with each other. The board of the Dock Workers' Union encouraged its members to join the lodge. Joint parties and trips were often arranged and the union hold their meetings in the order's house.

Enthusiasm for education is also high within the union. One reads aloud articles from the papers *Socialdemokraten* and *Västerbottenskuriren* and also recommends the studying of different books. Ignorance is seen to be as great an enemy as drunkenness; one speaks sometimes of "the intoxication of ignorance": As with intoxication so ignorance makes the worker a slave of circumstances when he could be their master.

This is the decisive point. Intoxication anesthetizes and makes the drunken man almost merge with his surroundings. Temperance gives distance and all the different forms of diligence must be seen in this perspective. The discussions about all the various subjects which the diligent continually embark on can be seen as exercises in looking at reality from different angles so as to in that way, give distance to it, the distance that is needed to distinguish the contours in ones own surroundings and to relate to them.

Reading has a similar function. Here we must stop briefly and ask one of those naive questions as we did earlier with reference to drinking.

What is reading? Reading places a text between reality and the reader and by doing that it distances the subject from the object. The text, which is another consciousness, structures experience and enables the reader to compare this experience with the more spontaneous one that he himself has. This comparison creates a distance and space for a more considered evaluation.

But there is also another side to the whole idea which, in this context, is worth bearing in mind. The text also structures the thought process. The American pedagogue Neil Postman has considered this point. He sees learning to read as a very long process, where those that learn to read learn also to master a particular way of thinking, a particular logic of the text with an elaborate system of primary and subordinate clauses, sentences, sections and chapters. This way of thinking is much more regulated than that which the spontaneous -- or perhaps better: the non-textual (is there such a word?) -- experience gives rise to.

It is my hypothesis, which I have not space to develop fully here, that we can historically speak of two different types of reading, a traditional reading as imposed by church and school where the learning of the catechism and the reciting of other texts by heart form a kind of pedagogic norm and later, initiated by the revivalist movement, a reading where meditation on the read text is an important element, often expressed in the idea that he who reads shall "hide in his heart" that which is read. It is no coincidence that the revivalist people are called "läsare" in everyday Swedish ("läsare" is the Swedish word for both reader and pietist): One of the most conspicuous features common to these people was that they read in a different and thus more striking way than the usual.

It is another of my hypotheses that the diligent people within the temperance and workers' movements inherit this way of reading, not least because of the fact that the pioneers of these movements have a common enemy, the paternalistic social pattern for which The State Church together with the school is the mutual ideological guarantor. It is revealing that reading is made something of a problem at the turn of the century. Many books are published on this subject and it is just the meditative form of reading that they recommend. Such ideologists in the field of extended education (folkbildning) as Oscar Olsson and Ellen Key returns continually to this subject. This is especially true of Oscar Olsson, who develops what can most closely be described as a programme for meditative reading.

Characteristic for this way of looking at reading is that less emphasis is placed on *what* one reads. What is more important is *to* read, whatever the book or text is, and *how* one reads. Within the temperance movement there are very few books on the subject of temperance compared to other specialist literature and works of fiction. A similar situation exists in the workers' movement where political literature is not so conspicuous. It is reading as an activity that is important or rather perhaps reading as a form of conduct. Because reading is an

important element in just that form of conduct that we have called diligence. Other such elements are sobriety and discussion.

And now we are ready in this roughly outlined essay to go on to the next section, which is about the reading-worker, such as he appears during the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. We shall concentrate on the lodges as the trade unions, after the introductory period in the beginning of the 1900s, concern themselves less and less with moral- and educational questions.

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The building of a study-circle is already discussed, as we have seen, in the Skärgårdsblomman lodge in the 1890s. The circle however does not start until 1912 and then mainly as an organization for the acquiring of books for a library. In other words it is the book that takes a central position. And one discusses within the circle *how* books shall be read, namely with "reflection and cogitation" as books are "companions for life" from which one can seek advice in all of life's changing situations.

It is also pointed out how important it is to discuss around books. With literature as a starting point people are more inclined to go into their own personal concerns and by making them public show that which they have in common with everyone else. This idea takes on a visionary dimension in the study-circle: one images a net of study-circles all over the country where in the end everybody sit and discuss, by what means "the spiritual physiognomy of the Swedish people" can be totally changed.

With such an attitude it is natural that works of fiction come to the foreground. It is also mostly fiction that is borrowed from the ever-growing lodge library Skärgårdsblomman. There are especially two types of book that are most popular: worker-stories and stories from the wilds. The authors that are most often read are Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Karl Östman, Martin Koch and Olof Högberg.

It is not however the collective that plays the main role in the worker-stories. On the contrary this is often described in a negative way. It can be shown, as with the people in the hell of London, as a barbaric mass drowning in drunkenness, ignorance and barbarism. Against the mass is contrasted the worker thirsty for education who, through chance reading in literature, can see the structural injustice in society. And the stories from the wilds have a similar tendency: the wilderness is the background against which the endeavor of the individual is best depicted. The wilds can, in other words, be expressed both by the forest and the mob.

But the individual/collective relationship appears also in the discussions within the study-circle. It is also taken up, in a far more complicated fashion than in the borrowed literature, in the essays that were produced for the hand-written magazine *Satir och allvar*. The study-circle is, firstly, itself a collective and one is very insistent that the circle-leader shall not come from the outside and that he -- it is always a he -- shall not dominate the group. It is collectively gathered knowledge one is out after and not, as in school, knowledge given from a teacher's desk. This is often pointed out.

Secondly the individual's relationship to the collective is a subject which is often discussed, sometimes with a starting point in literature, for example Krapotkin and MacDougall. One distinguishes in the discussions between the non-differentiated collective and the organized group. Only in the latter, it is maintained, can the individual best find his place. Individualism and collectivism presuppose one another, provided the collective is organized. Or in other words: the study-circle, the lodge, the trade union are the environments that best foster a richly-developed individual.

Now we have almost arrived at one of the political consequences we held out the prospect of at the beginning of this essay. Within the study-circle, the lodge and the early trade union

movements something is developed which we can call citizen-thinking, namely the idea that it is a person's duty as an individual to take part in the discussions that, alone, lead to a better world. By reading books the individual is given the separate perspectives which, when they are confronted with each other, create insight, which can in turn lead to a political action. It is pointed out again and again that knowledge gained in the study-circles -- even Skärgårdsklippan had a study-circle in 1920 -- shall be used neither for gain nor personal embellishment. It shall create mature individuals able to assess problems and come to mature decisions with social consequences. All the time, parallel to the courses in history of culture and history of literature, other courses are held in local-government knowledge, often with an imaginary municipality as a training example.

And the constant discussions have the same aim: debating people, citizens. During the 1920s the discussions take on a more and more clearly defined political character. The representative democracy is criticized. It creates only election-cattle, it is said, that can be driven anywhere. This is a typical animal metaphor of the period, we are reminded of the temperance peoples' -- drowning people behaving like animals -- which we noted earlier, but now the animal metaphor has acquired a political significance. Democracy must activate people. For those in the study-circles the solution is obvious: Knowledge -- or more correctly education -- shall guarantee democracy.

The insertion between the dashes is important. This, it is said, is the difference between knowledge and education. The good citizen has not only technical knowledge, that makes it possible for him to undertake different tasks in the machinery of society, but also what is called "an education of the spirit" where not only works of fiction but also philosophy, psychology and religion have a place. It is pointed out that it is important to acquire a "philosophy of life". It is above all important to make a choice and not to just go with the stream, to build one's own understanding of the situation and then follow it. It is, in short, a mentality that greatly emphasizes the role of the individual, but within the collective environment of the organized group.

Opposed to education and insight is, in the reasoning of the circles and lodges and in the literature criticism conducted in *Satir och allvar*, the lie of society. It is, we understand from the minutes of the various meetings, a structural lie that is alluded to, a lie that is directed especially at the workingclass such as it is exploited by the forest-owning sawmill companies. These are only interested in robbery and lining their own pockets at the expense of the worker. They are driven by materialism. On the other hand the educationthirsting worker is driven by non-material, spiritual interests.

Here we see the connection with the Rydbergian idealism that we have pointed out earlier. Viktor Rydberg is still during the 1920s one of the most recited authors in the lodge. Mankind's wandering in the desert that earlier was identified with the emigration of The Good Templars from Djupvik's beerhouse is seen more and more during the 1920s as the historic development of the working-class. Sometimes this belief in the future can be expressed in an almost visionary way as when one of the writers in *Satir och allvar* sees the future society as one great cooperative or another who in 1925 imagines a future Holmsund in the year 1950 where everyone has his own little patch of garden but also a voice in the decision-making process in the company, as good a socialdemocratic utopia as any other. In other words it is still a question of a development-optimism but of a more concrete sort than that of the 1800s. One is anxious to be modern, which is seen as something positive. In the vision of Holmsund in 1950 we find central-heating, own bathrooms as well as an increased production in the company as a result of technical innovations. The modern society is characterized, if we put together all the utterances about the dreamt-future, by a combination of citizenship, technical development and increased production.

One can notice, especially within the study-circles but also in the lodges during the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s an increased radicalism. This is particularly obvious in the debates, where both the formulation of the questions and the following discussions express a questioning of the established society. It can for example be asked if "the unequal living conditions that exist between the social classes can be justified", a question which leads to comments on "the wrongness" of a situation where some people can possess a fortune "without producing the slightest thing". The perspective is still seen in moral terms -- one talks about right and wrong -- but the morality has acquired a political content. Such debates are often finished by stressing the importance of everyone going into the trade union organization.

Towards the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the question of war and peace comes up more and more often in the debates. It is pointed out that peace is impossible as long as the present social situation remains. A democratically governed industry however would be able to cure the "armament madness". The concept of socialism is not far away in the discussions and in the beginning of the 1930s courses in socialism are also arranged within Skärgårdsblomman and in the study-circles of Skärgårdsklippan the form of address 'brother' and 'sister' is changed to 'comrade'.

A common figure of thought in debates, lectures and circles is progress-optimism. This is only doubted once, in 1933, when Nazism is gaining ground. Nazism negates everything the lodges stand for: education, spirituality, individualism. With Nazism we once again become animals, the way seems to lead backwards, not forwards. But for our country there is, according to the writer of the article, a deliverance from this threatening barbarism and we can guess from what has been said earlier what this is: self-tuition, education, study-circles. High-flown, but perhaps true to a certain extent.

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The development that has been described here seems to be spontaneous, decided by local factors and an inner-dynamic in idea-development and mentality. Nevertheless a similar picture can surely be drawn of many lodges, trade unions and study-circles throughout the country. Holmsund is certainly by no means unique.

Much of that which appears to be spontaneous is also directed by centrally placed, often academically-educated ideologists. We have named such one, Oscar Olsson, study-director for IOGT during a large part of the period covered here. Olsson took the initiative in the forming of this country's first study-circle. He directed through student's guide-books the buying of books for the lodges' libraries as well as the way in which the study-circles should be formed. He presented in many works his way of seeing education. These were read and quoted time and time again in the study-circles of both the lodges.

But the influence is not one-sided. Olsson builds his study-circle in 1902 but already in 1896 plans for an educational organization of a circle character are being discussed in Skärgårdsblomman. And Skärgårdsblomman is not alone with such plans. What Olsson does can best be described by saying that he collects and articulates a development, which as time goes on he also influences and forms. He both describes and prescribes. Carlo Ginzberg and Peter Burke have characterized the relationship between the conscious and the spontaneous -- perhaps better stated as the learned and the popular -- as cyclic. The educated borrow threads of thought from the popular way of seeing the world and after having spun these threads together can repay the loan with a certain interest. Ideas and attitudes travel in both directions, both downwards and upwards. The learned and the popular enrich each other, as do the elite and the foot-soldiers.

But even this model is a little too simple for Holmsund. The situation here seems more complicated. In reality there does also exist a form of local elite. This is quite easily

distinguished in Holmsund. In lodges, circles and trade unions a group gradually forms which takes the most initiative, makes the longest contributions in the debates, delivers the most speeches, borrows the most books, recites, acts and plays music. In the case of Skärgårdsblomman it is a question of about ten people. These stamp their personality on the life of the associations during the whole of the lively 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. They were all born a few years after the turn of the twentieth century and became members of the lodge around 1920. They give new life to the study-circle and themselves form it's nucleus. They make up the editorial staff of *Satir och allvar* and write most of the articles. They take the initiative in forming the lecture-society that is started at the end of the 1920s. They are, with a few exceptions, social democrats and many are active in local politics. Several of them acquire their own houses during the 1930s and 1940s and they live very near each other. They could be described as Holmsund's nomenclature if it were not for the fact of their unselfish attitude. They are association-people, their only personal gain is the status which education and involvement has given them.

But nearly all of their children have risen above their parents' social level. This group functions as a sort of local idea-disseminator. Members of the group take on the task of reporting, introducing and commenting on newlypublished literature. It is through David Johansson's agency that Oscar Olsson's ideas are brought to the lodge-people and it is through Henry Lindgren that the moral passion of Ibsen is introduced. But it would be wrong to see these people merely as the spreader of ideas. They have themselves formulated philosophies of life, according to the morality that characterizes the lodge-people.

They do not however contribute an elite in the meaning that they have strived to cut themselves off from the people. Their ambitions are in fact the opposite: to win, through their own involvement, the people over to the cause of education and in this way expand their own group.

But in actual fact, they have cut themselves off from the majority of the lodgepeople, to say nothing of the rest of the local population. Many times during the 1920s the complaint is made in the lodge that it's activities are being dominated by a phalanx. But it is symptomatic that the accusations are not repudiated by the criticized group. It becomes instead, with the odd exception, worried by the criticism and double it's efforts to reach out to the people, with the result that the gap becomes even greater.

The crux of the matter is they want to do so much and that this great desire manifests itself in a new paternalism nevertheless. Just as social democracy at the national level takes on the role of the country's father so the local-elites develop into kinds of municipal fathers. Their involvement, enthusiasm for education and their experience in the activities of the associations have clearly given them the status that has made it possible for them to hold positions of trust in the local government. It is a development which seems to have happened without anyone having actually exerted himself to win influence. In one case it is actually against the wishes of the person involved, Josef Hansson, one of Skärgårdsblomman's most diligent reciters, amateur actor and lecturer is voted on to The School Board without having stood for elections.

The term municipal fathers has also another significance apart from paternalism. All the people in the leading group are men. In the early history of the lodges the women played quite an important part. They were elected as officials, they had a certain say in the running of things and in the discussions. But as time goes on they find themselves more and more in the background, despite the fact that all this time they make up half the membership. Their role is reduced to being on the party-committees making coffee, laying the table, clearing up and having opinions about what sort of curtains to put up. And when around the middle of the 1920s the new generation start more and more to dominate in the associations this situation becomes even worse. Few women take part in the study-circle. It is as if the increasing concentration on educational activities, the literary, in itself excluded women. Those women who borrow books

from the library are easily counted. In the increasingly political debates that now take place few female voices are heard. The writers in *Satir och allvar* are almost without exception men.

This leading group are aware of the problem and it is taken up for discussion many times. But here opinion is divided. Some think efforts should be made to get women into the educational activity. But others are doubtful, even negative to such an idea. It is maintained that the sisters are not at all interested in studying and that if they were encouraged to participate more in the educational work, the interest of the brothers would decline.

When the lodge was a home for sheep that had gone astray the women had an important role to play. But as the lodge, through increased lecture-activity, the lending of books and political debate becomes an increasingly more important part of the local general public so the woman's role is correspondingly reduced to that of a prompter: She seems to know the play and the lines but sits for the most part silent, filling in very occasionally with an only too obvious platitude or slip of the tongue.

In this respect the lodges are hardly avant-garde. They reflect only an established structure and have no visions of anything radically different. But it is a part of the picture.

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I myself have grown up in a diligent, social democratic worker family. Diligence was certainly the word that was used most in descriptions of people or groups of people. Diligent had a very definite meaning comprising many elements which all of us in the family, amongst the relatives and in the block knew and were very familiar with. But I remember when I was at secondary grammar school that for my colleagues diligence did not play the same central role and the word for them had nothing like the rich content that it had for me. It was then I became aware of the concept, which meant later on that I came to dissociate myself from it, finding it far too puritanical and restricting. I simply found diligent people boring. And when I as a student in the 1960s was carried away by the winds of the left I reacted in the same way, since the 1960s left contained strong hedonistic elements. Now in some way I am back at my starting-point. But in any case I want, as everyone nowadays, to seek my roots and because I am an historian of ideas these become my idea-historical roots. That is the background to this project. Another background is the aspiration to describe the origins of a mentality, which has stamped its mark on Sweden. If that is now the case?

Translation by Ralph Carrigan



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