

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: A Comparison of Imposed Group Identities *af Cora Alexa Døving*

Abstract.

Do similarities exist among stereotypical portrayals of minority groups, regardless of social and historical context? Can some of the linguistic mechanisms that underlay the stereotypical portrayals of ‘the collective Jew’ at the beginning of the 20th century be found in the stereotyping of ‘the Muslim’ at the beginning of 21st? Is it at all relevant to see anti-Semitism in line with other forms of intolerance, discrimination and racism? These questions make up part of a comparative analysis of anti-Semitic texts from the beginning of the 20th century and anti-Islamic debates going on in Norway today. While this article argues against a fundamental analogy between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and against an analogy between the structural position of Jews in the nineteenth century and Muslims today, it argues for the relevance of a comparative semantic analysis of negative stereotypes of “the Muslims” and “the Jews”.

The Norwegian debate on integration and immigration is characterised by a value-oriented polarisation. Whereas debates of the 1970s and 1980s were dominated by the view of immigration as a resource and of a plural society as something positive,¹ those from the end of the 1990s up to the present day have been marked by a problem-oriented debate on immigration. The focus on religious identities in the public debate is primarily expressed by way of metaphors of threat in which ‘democratic values’ are pitted against ‘Muslim values’.

The notion of a value-based polarisation hangs together with an intensification of identity politics. This article looks at the use of stereotyped representations of a minority group within the context of identity politics. Can our knowledge of anti-Semitism provide new insights into the politicisation of group identity?

Identity threatens identity

Some common traits can be found in most forms of ascription of collective identities in terms of either nationality, culture, religion or other broad categories. One of these mechanisms is *self-righteousness* (Vetlesen 2006). By stereotyping others, one also stereotypes oneself, and the traits one ascribes to one’s own collective mentality are always viewed in a positive light when compared to that of others. Because the other group possesses distinctly negative traits, all references to them as inferior become a form of self-righteousness. This self-righteousness legitimises the exclusion of ‘the others’. When such exclusion is performed on behalf of one’s own group and the values one believes it to represent, it gives rise to a form of morality and loyalty that is part and parcel of the discrimination of others. There is, quite simply, nothing really wrong in excluding those who hold ‘bad’ values.

When related to self-righteousness, the *assignment of blame* is an important mechanism in the formation of group identity. The other group is to blame for society having changed, for unemployment, for insecurity, etc. By virtue of its guilt, the other group poses a threat to the established order. A third mechanism in polarising group stereotypification is the selection of certain *key identity markers*, i.e. symbolic issues that are effective in the group formation process (Ibid). Key identity markers are used to emphasise the group's core identity. The mechanisms of *self-righteousness*, *assignment of blame* and the use of *key identity markers* will clearly emerge from comparisons between stereotypes in the anti-Semitism of the last century and those in today's anti-Islamic debate.

When portrayals of other groups become identity politics, this is often based on the idea that cultural or religious differences constitute a threat. Identity politics therefore becomes a part of a *security narrative*, to borrow a term from Jef Huysmans (1995). Huysmans believes that immigration and migration as phenomena have to a large extent become security issues. In this threat situation, portrayals of identity play a significant role. Identity will then be perceived as something stable, something that is given. It is precisely because identity is defined as a core or stable entity with little flexibility that it is perceived to be vulnerable. An important aspect of the phenomenon of identity becomes, in fact, that it is under threat, that it is vulnerable. And it is always someone else's identity that is turned into the cause of such vulnerability. The threat to one's own identity is posed, therefore, by that of the others.

To uncover how and why a focus on security arises poses a challenge. One possibility would be to analyse discourses taking place in a society in the light of empiricism: do our notions of the others tally with factual data? Knowledge such as statistics which indicate that "they do not actually take our jobs" or "they are not all Islamists" will rarely alter established notions, but this type of knowledge would at least to some degree challenge any group ideology.

Another strategy for preventing polarising identity politics could be to analyse traits in the social construction of 'the others' in the light of history. If one were to increase awareness of how stereotypical notions come to life—how they have their basis in fantasy and projections—it is possible that polarisation would lose some of its force. Making use of history—or rather the

diversity of histories—to point out a common repertoire in the portrayal of ‘the other’ may be a way to deconstruct the validity of such notions.

‘The collective Jew’ as a point of reference – a historical comparison of texts

The transference of a popular anti-Semitic animus from a Jewish to an Arab target was made smoothly, since the figure was essentially the same. (Said 1978)

“We must learn from history” is a statement often associated with learning about anti-Semitism. But can “history” serve to rectify the present? A historical event is, after all, always unique. It occurs in a certain place at a certain time and is experienced by living people there and then. To use history as a lesson it must be interpreted and used actively. Here is an attempt: Can today’s notions about the existence of a collective Muslim mentality be interpreted in the light of the stereotypical ‘collective Jew’ from the last century? Can our knowledge of anti-Semitism provide new insights into the politicisation of group identity?

Edward Said writes in the introduction to *Orientalism* that anti-Semitism and Orientalism resemble each other very closely in both a historical, cultural and political way. Said also writes that he found himself “writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism” (1978:27,28). In his article ‘Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The Formation of a Secret’, Davidson Kalmar (2008) refers to Said’s formulation and asks why the term anti-Semitism does not refer to all Semites and not only the Jew.

The term ‘Semite’ did originally refer to a language family of both Hebrew and Arabic, and from the middle ages to the mid-twentieth century both Jews and Muslims were looked upon as Semites (Kalmar & Penslar 2005). But the term Semitism also referred to a type of human being and a type of culture: the Christian West regarded Jews and Muslims as related species of the same religious genre. Kalmar writes that after the Renaissance “the tendency was ... to imagine the Jews on the pattern of what was becoming known of the Muslims,” and Judaism was defined by many as “part of ‘overall Arab religion” (2008:2). When used in anti-Semitism, the Arabisation of the Jew gave support to the image of the Jew as something inassimilable to Christian Europe.

After centuries of dual constructions of Jew and Muslim, the nineteenth century made it possible to “hate or love them separately” as Kalmar puts it (2008: 2). The main reason behind this separation is of course the Nazi radicalization of the Jews. As Aidjar writes:

Whereas in keeping with the racial discourse that had been elaborated by the nineteenth century, the Nazis thoroughly racialized and detheologized the Jew, and they can also be credited with having completely deracialized Islam. (Aidjar 2008:19)

In the anti-Semitism of the Nazis the Jews got detheologized and racialized, a process Muslims was left outside.² In addition to this change, Kalmar points to the effect of liberal Jews in USA who after World War II distanced themselves from the connection to the Semitic and put forward the prophetic aspect of Judaism which stresses the relationship between a Jewish and Christian tradition. According to Kalmar this process succeeds in establishing the connection between Christian Europe and the Jews. This de-demonization of the Judaic led to a projection of the demonic aspect of the Semitic image to the Arab (Kalmar 2008:2).

Seeing anti-Semitism in line with other forms of intolerance or racism can of course be problematic for historical reasons. As Matti Bunzl has pointed out in his book *Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Hatred Old and New in Europe*, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia need to be understood in their right context, being time and place specific phenomena (2007). Bunzl's main argument is that anti-Semitism as it originated in the late nineteenth century was directly connected to the project of nationalism: anti-Semitism was a racist ideology with a specific political purpose, namely that of securing the ethnic purity of the nation-state. Islamophobia, on the other hand, being a result of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, is not concerned with the nation-state but with the civilization of Europe. According to Bunzl:

Islamophobic claims are actually quite different from those of modern anti-Semitism. Whereas anti-Semites questioned Jews' fitness for inclusion in the national community, Islamophobes are not particularly worried whether Muslims can be good Germans, Italians or Danes. Rather they question whether Muslims can be good Europeans. Islamophobia in other words function less in the interest of national purification than as a means of fortifying Europe. (Bunzl 2007:13)

Bunzl's points might be right when it comes to some of the authors in anti-Islamic debates, namely the one who see themselves as leftist liberal defenders of a European universal humanism. On the other hand, most of the anti-Islamic debates in Norway tell another story, as they clearly refer to an

Islamic threat to the nation-state, and to the impossibility of Muslims ever becoming good Norwegians.

Bunzl also points to another difference between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, namely the anchoring of anti-Semitism in the notion of race. The idea of race gave the Jews an immutable biological destiny, as Bunzl formulates it. The biological kind of racism is not part of Islamophobia of today, but Bunzl misses the importance of the mechanisms of exclusion that operate on religious and cultural grounds both in modern anti-Semitism and in Islamophobia. The thematic complex within anti-Semitism comprises *race*, *mentality* and *religion*. Today the reference to race has to a large extent disappeared, but the ideas about the connection between religion, culture and mentality are still very much in place. Because the racial/biological argument was made out to be the most powerful aspect of anti-Semitism, anti-Semitism is often neglected as an important source of learning about group hatred on a general level. When one reads anti-Semitic literature, however, it is striking how arguments concerning religion and culture are extremely prominent. It is this direct correlation that has been established between culture, religion and mentality which links together the examples below.

The main reason why it is difficult to use anti-Semitism as a basis for comparison is, first and foremost, due to the gruesome consequences it had. Using anti-Semitism as a point of reference, however, is not the same as using the Holocaust for the same purpose. Neither Hitler's politics nor the Holocaust was a given consequence of many years of anti-Semitism. Holders and disseminators of anti-Semitic attitudes in the early 1900s would most probably have viewed Hitler's extermination plans as barbaric and frightening. Nevertheless, historians believe that the dehumanising and negative stereotypical perception of Jews which anti-Semitism had established was a reason for the lack of opposition to the growth of Nazi ideology (Eriksen, Harket, Lorenz 2005). It is therefore the anti-Semitism of former times and not Nazi society or ideology that serves as the basis for my comparison. The Holocaust is a unique event, but that does not mean that anti-Semitism, i.e. the hate of Jews because they are Jews, should be turned into something that is totally incomparable. By turning the stigmatisation of Jews into something set apart, one renders Jews different from everyone else—and that, ironically enough, is the essence of anti-Semitism.

Using anti-Semitism as a source in a comparative semantic analysis of stereotypes of a minority inside Europe is not the same as analogizing the historical situation of Jews and contemporary situations of Muslims. But I will argue—as does professor of Jewish history Esther Benbassa—that the exclusionary mechanisms in both cases can give insight into European collective engineering.

As Esther Benbassa points out in her comment on Bunzl's essay, even if neither the instigators nor the causes are identical, both anti-Semitism then and Islamophobia today function in essentially similar ways, and include common themes of exclusion (2007:87). I see our knowledge of centuries-long discrimination against Jews as a way to add seriousness to research done on the mechanisms that come into play when negative stereotypes of new groups are created.

In the foreword to the book entitled *Jødehat* (Anti-Semitism) it is stated that it is "the transformation of actual Jews into imagined 'Jews' which represents the high point of anti-Semitic achievement" (Eriksen, Harket, Lorenz 2005). To be ascribed collective qualities that have little to do with the living, individual Jew is a process not unlike that directed at the individual Muslim today. So, regardless of nationality, personality, profession or other relevant factors, both the Jew and the Muslim are given particular traits which then become characteristic of a common mentality. It is in this form of collectivism that I find grounds for comparison.

The reason to compare "the Muslim" and "the Jew" has of course nothing to do with either Muslims or Jews but it might tell us something of the cultural repertoire for stereotyping minorities. Because anti-Semitism is a product of Western thinking (the Jew has always been the essential 'other' in European history), I believe that it can offer insights into a cultural dynamic that transgresses time. I am not suggesting an "eternal anti-Semitism" that has kept its stereotypes alive and suddenly changes target groups. My hypothesis is rather that the use of anti-Semitism as a means to strengthen the nation state³ in some aspects is similar to the identity politics of Islamophobia. As the anti-Semitic propagandists in my material clearly see themselves as guardians of the pure nation-state, so do the Islamophobic propagandists. By presenting Islam and Muslims as incompatible with Norwegian culture, they operate to strengthen the identity of the majority population. I believe that a nationalistically-based identity politics especially concerned with representations of "threat" and "fear" partly has its linguistic source in the history of anti-Semitism.⁴ This source, or repertoires of representation, is to a large extent built up through the use of binary oppositions (they are what we are not). I therefore suggest that it is relevant to use anti-Semitic stereotypes as a source for understanding – and spotting – stereotypification of both Muslims and Jews in the 21st century.

Text material

The material on contemporary debates on Islam is taken from Norwegian debates on immigration conducted in the internet editions of daily newspapers during the period September 2006 to February 2007, debates on immigration in the paper editions of the same newspapers, and books on Islam and integration published in Norway or translated into Norwegian in the period 2005 to 2007. The opinions I have selected are, to a large degree, explicitly anti-Islamic (Bat Ye`or 2005, Bawer 2006, Steyn 2006, Phillips 2006, Storhaug 2006, Laqueur 2007, Berg 2007). The authors of these books warn their readers of the potential – almost certain – disturbing social consequences and dangers of Islam. This literature forms an Islamophobic discourse whose themes are reflected and used in the internet debates.

While the text material is not marginal, neither is it representative of all immigration debates conducted in Norway, which are far from identical in content and form. The selected texts are, in other words, not representative of immigration discourses in general, but rather of aspects of a form of debate which clearly reflect some established notions held by the Norwegian general public. A media survey for 2009 shows that the terms “Islam” and “Muslims” were used more often than the word “swine flu”, which relates to the biggest news of 2009, and the word “Muslims” is used almost as many times as the name of Norway’s prime minister. This does not by itself indicate an Islamophobic press, but it does illustrate a public or society with a certain obsession with the issue of the Muslim presence. The relevance of monitoring and analysing material for Islamophobic expressions is clearly stated in the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI):

Civil society actors agree that Islamophobia has been on the rise. Political, and more generally public debate has been characterised by frequent associations made between Muslims on the one hand, and terrorism and violence on the other, and by generalisations and stereotypes concerning perceived cultural features of persons of Muslim background. (ECRI report on Norway 2009: 29)

The report clearly recommends that the Norwegian authorities should monitor the situation and address manifestations of Islamophobia also on the Internet.

The material from the last century is taken from Norwegian newspaper articles, periodicals and anti-Semitic books from the beginning of the 1900s through to the 1930s (the journals *Nationalt*

Tidsskrift, volumes 1921-1935, and *Fronton. Organ for politisk nyorientering*, volumes 1933-1935. Both periodicals place a heavy emphasis on racial theories behind anti-Semitism, but are also full of references to the relationship between religion, culture and the Jewish mentality). Before the Second World War, anti-Semitism, in its ideological and organised form, was a relatively marginal phenomenon in Norway, and was mainly of literary character. According to the historian Terje Emberland, anti-Semitism in Norway was expressed through xenophobic nationalism rather than through race ideology (2005:401-402). From 1910 to 1916, Norway experienced its first anti-Semitic propagandists; the clearest example of this is a book written by the lawyer Eivind Saxlund, entitled *Jøden og Gojim* (The Jew and the Goy), first published in 1910, and followed by a revised edition in 1922. Saxlund warns against a “Semitic Lifeview” as a threat to the Norwegian national character. The book received considerable attention in both local and regional newspapers in the form of reviews and ‘debate’ contributions. It was generally very well received. In 1916, the first issue of *Nationalt Tidsskrift* (The National Newspaper) was published, and continued until 1945. This journal consisted mostly of the editors’ own articles and copies of material from international anti-Semitic journals (Emberland 2005:411). *Fronten*, another anti-Jewish journal, was first published 1932 by the founder of an anti-Semitic political party, Eugene Nilsen (Ibid). These journals clearly describe the Jewish population as a fifth column within Norwegian society.

The following comparison between elements from anti-Semitic literature and various contemporary immigration debates is a semantic analysis rather than a broad discursive analysis. By this I mean that a discursive analysis should include effects and consequences of the representations established by the discourse, and should demonstrate a correspondence, or lack of correspondence, between the content of anti-Islamic debates and public attitudes (Ibid). A discourse analysis, at least according to Foucault, also entails a focus on power, which defines the boundaries of the discourse, who the active participants are, which discourse boundaries must be observed, who could benefit from the identification created in the discourses, and how the discourse acquires an authority of truth (Foucault 1999). A semantic analysis of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Muslim’ key identity markers involves only an analysis of how representations (forms of expression) generate notions about minority groups. As pointed out above, the comparison has shown how many of the stereotypes carry messages through the differences between oppositions.

A typology of notions

The takeover

The fear of one's distinctiveness being undermined and the call to do one's duty to protect that distinctiveness are recurring themes in the debates on Muslims as well as those on Jews. In the foreword to his book *Jøden og Gojim*, Saxlund wrote concerning his personal motive for writing the book:

What gives me the courage to present this little work to readers is the belief that I thereby contribute something towards the ancient and upright Norwegian national character, the undermining of which by the Semitic view of life I am unwilling to witness. (Saxlund 1922:9)

Conspiracy myths were central to anti-Semitism. Since the 1700s, ideas have existed about how the Jews would achieve world supremacy by introducing liberalism and democracy and by undermining both the monarchy and the Church.⁵ Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory gained momentum due to anti-revolutionary propaganda in which the Revolution was attributed to an international Jewish conspiracy. Communism lay in the hands of the Jews. Norwegian anti-Semitic periodicals had "Judea's world supremacy" as a recurring theme in several editions (For example *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, September 1922). A parallel can be drawn between this takeover myth in anti-Semitism and that directed at Europe's Muslims, particularly after the terror attacks of recent years. References are constantly being made to 9/11 as the date that changed discourses on immigration (although different researchers has pointed out that the growth of Islamophobia started during the 1990s. The concept of Islamophobia was for example launched by the English think tank The Runnymede Trust in 1997). One change in particular emerged from and since that date: the *weak* immigrant became the *strong* Muslim. Previous immigrant hostility in Europe regarded immigrants as weak, as those at the bottom of society's social ladder. The majority population viewed them either as people who needed help or as people who should go back home. Today, ethnic Moroccans or Turks have become 'the Muslim' who is no longer weak but strong by virtue of representing an alternative system of values. The 'collective Muslim' is *strong*; a threat by virtue of representing an *alternative* social system and morality.

Books have been published in a number of European countries warning of a major upheaval to which the rest of society seems to be blind (Bawer 2006, Berg 2007, Storhaug 2006, Falachi 2004).

The causes of the upheaval are said to originate in the following notions:

- Several millions of Muslims in Europe do not share European values.
- Europe, naïve about a growing Muslim minority, is on the verge of committing suicide.
- Muslims are, first and foremost, loyal towards Islamic laws and are therefore disloyal towards European values.
- Through high birth rates and migration, European Muslims are part of a plan to take over Europe.
- Instead of Islam being Europeanised, it is now Europe that is being Islamised.

The notion of international networks working underground with an eye to taking over is a central aspect of ‘the collective Muslim’ as much as it is of ‘the Jew’. The most obvious example of ‘the strong Muslim’ is expressed in the conspiracy to take over power, either through high birth rates or by implementing *Shariah* (Islamic Law). Within anti-Semitism, too, a growing Jewish population was one of the reasons for the notion of a takeover threat. Norwegian anti-Semitic periodicals translated German and Austrian articles that showed that the official number of Jews was far lower than the actual figures (See for example *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, April 1926, where the Jews’ “quantitative side” is the main story). And warnings about the coming generations’ takeover were common, then as now. Below is one quote that refers to Jews and three referring to Muslims:

High positions would, after a mercilessly shorter or longer period of time, perhaps after one or two generations, be occupied by that foreign, immigrant people, and our country’s own sons would sink down to servile, subservient positions... This is no fictional horror story—it is pure reality.... Tthe Jews strive to gain world dominion. (*Nationalt Tidsskrift*, Jubilee edition, 1926:7)

They have an exceedingly simple plan: spread out and take over. (*Aftenposten’s* discussion forum, 22.01.07)

Integration or underhand tactics? If you still have some sense remaining, one should not fail to see that this could be underhand tactics (infiltration). *Dar al-Harb* shall be conquered, step by step. (Ibid)

Islam has at least five powerful weapons: religion, emigration, childbirth, oil and the patience of centuries. All these factors, alone and combined, point in the direction of expansion and predominance. (Berg 2007:27)

The “Muslim demographic catastrophe” is especially emphasized by the authors Mark Steyn (2007) and Bruce Bawer (2006). Due to high birth rate, the *Muslim body* is the main instrument for the takeover (Steyn 2007, Bawer 2006).

Anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic texts both contain descriptions of how the new country’s hospitality is exploited. Bruce Bawer (2006) describes how the Norwegian welfare state is exploited by Muslims, while Eivind Saxlund criticises the freedom the Jews were given to spend time practising their religion: they “have managed to obtain permission for ‘free practice of religion’, with synagogues and their own schools, in reality creating a state within the State” (1922:35). This quotation is not that different from the assertions made in the anti-Islamic debates that the free practice of religion should be restricted so that houses of worship do not become hotbeds for a takeover of power.

Anti-Semitism emphasised that the Jews represented a particular threat because they were already *within* (Saxlund 1922:129. *Nationalt Tidsskrift* also places an emphasis on the Jew as parasite within Europe’s boundaries). Similarly, the Muslims who are *in* Europe are, by comparison, those that are most feared. The fear of a European Islamification is comparable to the expression ‘Jewification of Europe’, a recurring theme in anti-Semitic literature (*Nationalt Tidsskrift*, January and February 1921).

The notion that an inner solidarity was more powerful among the Jews than among the majority population in general holds parallels with notions about the Muslims. ‘Their’ loyalty to the Islamic *Ummah* is often underlined in the discussion forums on the internet. By virtue of their religiously-determined fellowship, the Muslims are defined as being anti-democrats, anti-individualists and coup planners.

A part of the takeover myth is the assertion that Muslim countries are driving themselves into a ditch and that the Muslims are therefore seeking out new territories. Similarly, some anti-Semitic voices refused to believe that any Jews really wanted to return home to Israel. An example of this is Saxlund, who wrote that the Jews, who had neither farm labourers nor factory workers, would not be capable of creating their own society. Taking over existing territory seemed to be the solution for both the Jew and the Muslim.

The takeover fear comes very much to light in final quotations, taken from two books, one from 1910 and one from 2006, both of which have the downfall of authority as their theme. The first quote refers to the Jews, the second one to the Muslims:

They are active, we are passive; they are contemplative, we are naïve. God forbid that we should ever have to witness Parliament afire. (Saxlund 1922:12)

The present government, a majority coalition of the Labour Party, the Centre Party and the Socialist Left Party, holds office in a country that is coming to resemble the *Titanic*. While the orchestra plays louder and louder and the politicians on the dance floor spin faster and faster around in a multicultural dance, the ship is in danger of sinking one foggy, dark, Arctic winter night. (Storhaug 2006:276)

Institutions at risk

Closely linked to the takeover myth is the notion that one's own institutions are at risk. According to anti-Semitic logic, the Jew was an underminer of the legitimacy of institutions that ensured security: the Church, the family, the monarchy, the rural community and the estate society. The Jew was associated with modernity and liberalism. In Norwegian periodicals their alleged takeover of central institutions was described as an attempt to wipe out Norwegian culture (*Fronten*, July 1933).

Correspondingly reversed, the Muslim poses a threat to modernity (which 'we' gradually made 'ours'): secularisation, freedom of the individual and gender equality within the family. To be a Muslim is regarded as being in direct opposition to the norm of secularism that dominates most West European countries (Jose Casanova 2006:76,77). Basic democratic principles are also perceived to be vulnerable. Here are two contemporary examples:

The new immigration and religiopolitical force's growing influence could lead to a watering down of the ideological base of our democracy. (Storhaug 2006:15)

Immigration is on the verge of changing fundamental traits particular to Norway without the individual citizen having any powers of influence. (Storhaug 2006:11)

The naïve left

One day, hopefully in the not too distant future, the ice-cold reality will hit those so-called 'politically correct' people in the face, full force. They will be so shocked at realising that they were wrong all this time and that there is no such thing as 'moderate' Muslims in this world, after all. (*Dagbladet's* discussion forum, 17.01.07)

Another trait in anti-Semitic literature which resembles modern debates is the assertion that a critical voice requires courage. Once again, we can refer to Saxlund, who defined an anti-Semite as one who dared to voice the truth about the Jews. To dare to speak out about the unpopular truth has therefore long been a feature of active stigmatisation of other groups. In line with the argument about being a spokesperson for 'the uncomfortable truth' is the assertion that the majority population is naïve: "They are active, we are passive," as Saxlund put it in his book. In several places it is reiterated how European countries suffer from a national weakness in the face of the threat which the Jews represented, not unlike the criticism directed at the so-called *snillistisk* (overly, excessively kind) left wing today. In the name of cultural relativism, they are allowing Europe to fall into the hands of the Muslims. The left wing is incapable of protecting our values against the threat which Islam represents, as the argument goes. Within anti-Semitism, too, liberal and leftist-oriented forces were labelled as "defenders of the Jews" and "naïve self-deniers".

Hate commanded by God

Both the Jew of the first half of the 20th century and the Muslim of today are described as devoutly religious people. 'Their' religions are perceived as something essential and universal. Where 'we' are capable of drawing distinctions between what belongs to the domain of religion and what belongs to that of the secular world, 'they' combine the two. And their religious identity is always the most prominent feature. Here is a quote from an anti-Semitic text:

Matters which, for us, are considered to pertain to the secular, civic domain are by the Jews considered to be ones of religion. (Saxlund 1922:35)

Both the collective mentality and the religion in which they are raised are described as being characterised by authoritarian structures. Within anti-Semitism, Jewish society was described as a theocracy in which all power is concentrated around the synagogue. Correspondingly, the imams and the mosques are referred to today with great suspicion. The imams' visits to the sick or dying, for example, are never mentioned in the media, whereas the imams' power and conservative strictness often is. Religion as a source of group stereotypification is, then, as evident today as it was then. Saxlund placed a heavy emphasis on Judaism as a political religion:

The Jewish religion is not a religion in our understanding of the word; it could perhaps be more accurately described as a law. The quintessence of it is at any rate politics; the politics of isolation. (Saxlund quotes Professor W. Sombart. 1922:12)

The emphasis Saxlund placed on religious identity as being political and segregationist is strikingly similar to the homogenization of Islam. In today's writings on Islam it is barely possible to discern that this is a religion which is also about forgiveness, the soul, salvation and the metaphysical, all of which most religions are concerned with. Islam is described, as Saxlund described Judaism, as a religion of politics, and as an isolationist form at that.

Whenever a religion is used as a source to describe minority groups in a negative light, a common feature is the focus on the *exclusiveness* of its religious teachings. When contrasted with Christianity's universalism, minority religions are transformed into something reserved for a chosen few. The first quote is an example of anti-Semitism, the second of Islamophobia:

According to that, Yahweh is the God of the Jews only, the God of their race, and the Jews are his people whom he, in return for their worship, has promised world dominion (see, among others, the Book of Deuteronomy, chapters 27-28). In other words, other peoples, other races, must be the enemies of the Jews. (Saxlund 1922)

As citizens of the West, we are impure and are therefore commonly referred to by Muslims as “disbelievers” and “dogs”. (Berg 2007:44)

The ‘proof’ that ‘they’ by virtue of their religion regard themselves as superior to ‘us’ seems to be a recurrent one in this form of identity politics. A typical feature of anti-Semitic texts is to pick out quotations from the Jewish Holy Scriptures to demonstrate that the morals imposed by God on the Jews applied exclusively to them. To do an injustice to a ‘goy’ (a non-Jew) is permitted for Jews, wrote Saxlund (1922:52). In the debates on Islam and Muslims, the Koran is used in a similar manner. Quotations illustrating that Muslims are not instructed to treat non-Muslims with the same respect are very popular in the discussion forums on the internet.

The traits of the gods themselves are also a popular theme. Whereas Allah and Yahweh are strict and full of hate, Jesus is compassionate and gentle. Saxlund expressed it thus: “The God of the Christians is an almighty God, the God of love and compassion, the God of all peoples.”

When delivering a lecture recently to the Missionary Association at Majorstua in Oslo, I was asked questions about why the Muslim God was not compassionate or forgiving (Allah’s two most common names in the Koran, of course, are “the merciful” and “the compassionate”).

In all forms of identity politics it is usual to attribute to the other group motives that represent a threat to oneself. In anti-Semitic literature it was constantly reiterated that “the Jews harbour a deep hatred of the Christians”. Excerpts from the Torah are used very similarly to those from the Koran; the quotations are selected to demonstrate the god-given and, therefore, fatalistic determination of their hostility towards Christians.

The sexualised man

For fuck’s sake that shithead should be sent back to where he came from.

What a bastard. That poor girl, I say.

She’s probably ruined for the rest of her life.

But things like that are probably everyday occurrences where that pig comes from.

That's what happens when uncivilised animals come to civilised countries where women actually count as much as men. (VG's discussion forum, 26.01.07)

The quotes above are typical for Islamophobic web-debates. The use of gender in stereotypes of 'the others' is a commonplace phenomenon (Stuart Hall shows, for example, how sexual fantasies about black people characterised the stereotypes (Hall 1995). Whereas the Jew was portrayed as ridiculously feminine, vain and refined, the Muslim is made out to be overly masculine. This is interesting because, once again, it reveals something about the logic of dualism: today, the prevailing image of man is far less macho than it was at the beginning of the 20th century. In line with the emergence of the ideal of 'the new man', the conception of the Muslim has become unrealistically masculine.

Whether it is a case of feminising or masculinising, both the Jew and the Muslim are associated with a sexuality that goes unchecked. The Jews were portrayed as horny, as pimps or sexual assailants, particularly in caricature format (Eriksen, Harket, and Lorenz 2005:319). A common assumption (which I often encounter at lectures on Islam) is that the reason for the women's dress code in Islam is because Muslim men become dangerously horny at the sight of a woman's hair, or knee or upper arm.

Treatment of women and children

Polygamy is permitted among the Jews and is still practised in Muhammadan countries. The women are permitted access to the synagogue once a year only. Once they are married, their hair is cut off and they wear with hats or wigs. (Saxlund 1922:55)

Polygamy, the women's right of access to the place of worship and the covering of women's hair are three main themes which, from the above quotation, we see were not invented in the course of contemporary debates on Islam. Women's position among Muslim immigrants is the most-discussed theme in integration debates conducted in various European countries (Bikhu Parekh 2000). How 'the other' women are treated is a distinctive feature in the construction of group identity. And both the Jew and the Muslim are associated with the oppression of women.

The treatment of children and their upbringing/education are themes that were brought up in anti-Semitic literature and also, of course, in integration debates concerning Muslims. The notion of ‘the others’ schools’ is a good example of this, and the following quotation is similar to statements made concerning the Koran schools’ negative influence on educational progression:

The Jewish boy receives his education in the cheder (school), where the Talmud and nothing else is studied. Here the boy will gradually learn the many commandments and prohibitions that regulate a pious Jew’s life from the cradle to the grave. (Saxlund 1922:145)

I have seen it on TV. They sit in groups in the mosques and some of them sway back and forth while they read and recite from the Koran. I hope they’re allowed to play a bit and play some football after all that Koran reading, because if not I’m afraid it will go wrong. It isn’t natural for children to sit absolutely still for long periods of time. (*Aftenposten*’s discussion forum)

Both the child and the woman are often portrayed as relatively passive figures. They are portrayed as victims of a culture that belongs to the man.

What is particularly interesting about negative stereotypes is that it seems as though ideals from the majority culture can be employed negatively. *The family* is a positively loaded concept and an ideal, a fundamental entity in Norwegian society. A powerful sense of family is something positive. Nevertheless, within anti-Semitism the phenomenon of *sense of family* was transformed into a threatening form of nepotism when it took place in a Jewish home (Eriksen, Harket, and Lorenz 2005:295). The myth about Jewish spiritual superiority was rejected by showing that the Jews’ success had solely to do with their family networks (*Nationalt Tidsskrift*, February 1922). Similarly, concepts such as “tight-knit extended family”, “nepotism”, or “spider’s net” are frequently used in discussions about the Muslim family.

Using history

Rhetorical use of history is a central element when establishing group ideologies. It is, for example, usual to bring up negative incidents from the others’ history in order to explain their mentality and to justify stigmatisation of them. Correspondingly reversed, one’s own country’s history becomes

filled with positive references. One such example is to use antiquity and the Age of Enlightenment to serve as historical references for the Norwegian 'we'. In a similar way, the link between Greek antiquity and the Nordic race was an important historical self-reference among the voices of anti-Semitism (for example *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, January 1929).

Another feature is to portray one's own group values through national heroes. When, for example, contemporary writer and immigration debater Hege Storhaug describes women's worth in Norway, she cites the great 19th century national poets who criticised bourgeois marriage (Amalie Skram, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Henrik Ibsen and Camilla Collet), but not the far more effective but – nationally speaking – less high-grade feminist activists, the *rødstrømpene* (bluestockings, literally 'red stockings'). The fact that today's gender equality is a result of political struggle *against* Norwegian tradition rather than a *result* of that culture is one that is concealed and forgotten.

Both anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic texts make use of history as 'evidence' of the other's mentality. The long Jewish history was actively used to show ostracism to be a feature associated with the Jews. In Norwegian anti-Semitic periodicals the image of the Jew as a parasite living off other nations was repeatedly corroborated by means of examples from history. Accountability for the 'murder of Christ' was, as is known, a central element in early anti-Semitism. References to the time of Muhammad are frequent in anti-Islamic texts. Epochs from Islamic history are cited to support Islam's connections with war and the oppression of women. In one of the central books in the debate, published in Norway in 2006, it is – astonishingly – claimed that the Arabian Peninsula was characterised by a liberal view of women and with powerful, independent women until Muhammad came to power (Storhaug 2006).

Lack of will to integrate

The question of whether 'the others' can be considered citizens loyal to the national state is not only linked to the takeover conspiracy but also to the question of whether it is at all possible for them to be truly integrated. Saxlund stressed that the identity of a Jew would always be first and foremost that of a Jew rather than that of an Englishman, Norwegian or Frenchman. And this was because they *did not want it* any other way.

Marriage practice is seen as an anti-integration strategy. “They keep their race pure,” wrote Saxlund, “by not mixing with others through marriage.” Saxlund was also preoccupied by the fact that the Jews would not eat at the table of a heathen. The Jew was someone who considered himself to be better than us others and who had no interest in becoming part of the national ‘we’.

The lack of will to integrate was often underlined by referring to the voluntary ghetto. Moving in together was accounted for by a wish to live among one’s own and to live isolated from the rest of the population. With words resembling those of Saxlund, one of today’s debating voices writes about the Muslims who wish to live “outside the majority society” and about “new citizens who isolate themselves within their own society within Society” (Storhaug 2006:11/13). Without reference to one single survey, the writer establishes that:

broad classes of Muslim groups are against integration into a secularised democracy in which the individual’s rights are fundamental.... Our assessment of the will of new groups to ‘become like us’ was wrong. (Storhaug 2006:219)

The absence of humanism

In anti-Semitic texts the Jew’s morality was said to be governed by respect for the law. In other words, a Jew’s morality consisted of complying with the Law of Moses and no other. A personally evolved and universally oriented morality also seems to be lacking in descriptions of the Muslims. Humanism and existential spirituality are quite simply said not to exist for ‘the others’. On the Hebrew language, Saxlund wrote that:

it manages to express neither a philosophical thought, a mythological idea nor a sense of infinity. The affections of the inner self nor the simple contemplation of nature. (Saxlund 1922:69)

“The word ‘freedom’ does not exist,” wrote Saxlund (1922:34, 35). The Jews were said to be influenced by intellect, not emotions. Similarly, Muslims are said to be influenced by indoctrination and relationships of authority that do not take feelings into account. This is however quite the opposite when it comes to “the sexualised man” whom is uncontrollable, and – interestingly – also the opposite of what Said describes as part of Orientalism’s picture of the Muslim as controlled by

impulses and emotions. It seems likely that the fear of terror has changed the stereotypes from emphasizing the ‘irrational’ to the ‘rational’

The notion of the absence of true art is a recurring subject in the two characterisations of mentality. The Jews were, admittedly, actors and musicians, but anti-Semitism emphasises that they were never composers or creators of anything completely genuine. A text in the periodical *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, for example, dealt with the relationship between “the Jews and Film”. The text discusses how the Jew’s contact with the world of film was driven by a hunger for profit and that, while they owned the productions financially, they had to hire directors to perform the artistic side of the work (*Nationalt Tidsskrift*”, Volume 6, 1921). The lack of Muslim participation in both art and popular culture is often pointed out in anti-Islamic debates.

Nor did ‘the Jew’ have the same appreciation of nature as did the Germanic peoples. The lack of a love of nature is something which is also charged against the Muslim. The mark of a well-integrated Muslim is to go skiing or light open fires in the forests of Norway.

In his book entitled *Jødehat* (Anti-Semitism), Trond Berg Eriksen (2005) describes how rationalism evolved its own form of anti-Semitism. Voltaire and Kant viewed the Jewish religion as a threat to human reason. Voltaire, for example, formulated the following assertion:

It is with regret that I realise that the deplorable Jewish people who, of course, should not serve as an example for anyone, and who (and this is without linking them to religion) are no more than a race of ignorant and fanatical bloodsuckers. (Quotation cited in Kopperud 2005)

Quotations from Voltaire were frequently made use of for the purposes of anti-Semitism (See for example *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, May 1922). Voltaire is also quoted in many of the anti-Islamic debates:⁶ There exists today a group of intellectuals who clearly view their heritage in terms of the ideals of the European Age of Enlightenment but who, in the same manner as Voltaire, manage to unite the ideals of equal rights and tolerance as a virtue with a very one-sided and oversimplified criticism of minorities. What is interesting here is that the basis for the criticism has remained the same, whether applied to the Jews then or the Muslims now; they stand in the way of modernisation

and development of the rational. Voltaire and Kant were of the opinion that it was impossible to reconcile Judaism with modernity, in the same way that Islam is portrayed by some of today's 'liberal' voices.

Something must be done

Within both anti-Semitism and the risk-focused debate on immigration the theme of "regaining control" is a central element. Arguments have been made for introducing laws and regulations that should apply solely to a specific group rather than to the majority population. Restrictions on individual rights are considered to be a solution (despite the fact that these groups are the very ones being accused of being products of cultures that threaten individual liberties). Special age limits for entering into marriages outside the Western world, requirements for equality in religious communities, statutory obligations to teach children Norwegian, a ban on religious schools, a ban on the wearing of the hijab in public places, ten years' valid residence before citizenship may be granted, and a language test conducted in the home country before admittance into Norway are some concrete examples of such measures. And these legislative proposals are uttered in the same breath as the assertion that we in Norway should protect freedom of action, expression, religion – and equality among people. Anti-Semitic measures taken against the Jews consisted, as is known, of restricting their civil rights in a number of areas.

Why the comparison?

An important reason for exposing stereotypes is the importance they hold for identity politics. The greater the prejudice against Muslims, the greater the likelihood becomes of them withdrawing and cultivating a strong collective identity. Once again, we can draw a comparison with anti-Semitism. In response to the growth of anti-Semitism in medieval Europe, Jews became more 'Jewish':

The Jews curse their Christian enemies and pour terms of abuse upon the rival religion. But their rage does not alter the world about them. It alters first and foremost they themselves. The Jews turn with replenished energy to their religious traditions and seek counsel about their fate in their holy scriptures... Hostility from the outside world strengthens the inner one. (Eriksen, Harket, and Lorenz 2005:49)

Stereotypes entail an individual being attributed traits by virtue of belonging to a group or a category (your group becomes your destiny). Nuances and variations are wiped out. Regardless of whom they are associated with, stereotypes will always lead to a reduction of a person to essentialities (Hall 1995:249). In other words, stereotypes reduce people to some essential traits that give the impression of being almost nature-given. Stereotypes are a means to creating representations of differentness. Stuart Hall writes that stereotypes *reduce, essentialize, naturalise* and *fix* differences (Ibid, 258).

Stereotypes play an important role in identity politics because they are divisive or, as Hall puts it, essentially divisive because they are always about separating the acceptable, the normal and the preferable from the unacceptable and the abnormal. The consequence of this is that stereotypes have an exclusive effect. In other words, stereotypes underpin discrimination. Hall defines one of the stereotypes' specific areas as, in fact, to be exclusive. On a symbolic level, stereotypes freeze borders and exclude whatever does not belong inside, writes Hall (Ibid).

Stereotypes are almost always constructed by a dominant group in order to describe the members of a group with lower status (Schul and Zukier 1999:36). Stereotypes originate most markedly wherever there is inequality of access to power. Migration processes from poor or war-ridden countries have provided Norway with many different minority groups who, for natural reasons, have smaller networks, poorer finances, less education and, consequently, less access to power than the majority population. When stereotypes gain a foothold within such an inequality of power between the majority and the minorities, where a majority will always have what Hall calls the "regime of representation" (1995:259), then discrimination easily becomes systematised. Focusing on the connection between power and stereotypes does not mean that the minority population does not have stereotyped conceptions about others, but rather that stereotypes result in completely different outcomes when they have hegemony. The majority's stereotypes become a form of power that should be faced with effective opposition. The examples we have seen from areas of the Norwegian immigration debate ought not to attain power of representation in the same way as did the prejudices against the Jews in their time.

Whereas anti-Semitism has not played a role on a contemporary political level for decades, the question of Islam and Muslim immigrants dominates the political discourses in all of Western

Europe. Islamophobia is, as Bunzl also argues, a serious problem in Europe and a problem also on the political level. After the Holocaust there is no longer any place for anti-Semitic ideology on a political level, whereas the use of anti-Islamic opinions and negative portrayals of Muslims are not only politically legitimate but also openly used for collecting votes during elections. To illuminate the overlapping of clichés used in the anti-Semitism of earlier times and in today's anti-Islamic discourses might give Islamophobia less breeding ground.

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¹ Illustrative for this period is the slogan "ja til et fargerikt fellesskap" (say yes to a colourful community) launched by the Norwegian Labour Party.

² The process of detheologizing and racializing the Jew started, as Aidjar points out, in the nineteenth century. See for example De Lange and Freud-Kandel (2005) and Wistrich (1992).

³ The connection between anti-Semitism and nationalism is well documented by historians (Bunzel 2005).

⁴ Stuart Hall argues for the possibility of finding universal representational practices that can be called stereotyping and that "the spectacle of the other" works in some similar fashion across time (Hall 1995:239).

⁵ Conspiracy myths played an important part in initiating the pogroms in the Russian empire. See for example Bronner (2003).

⁶ This brings to mind Hirsi Ali, who believed that salvation would come when Islam got its Voltaire (Ali 2006).

Cora Alexa Døving, PhD, is senior researcher at Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, Oslo, Norway.