

# INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON THE BYSTANDER

Oct 17-18, 2008, Uppsala University, Uppsala

Brief summary of lectures and discussions

*Eskil Franck, Head of the Living History Forum, welcomes all participants to the conference. He also gives a short presentation of the Forum, stressing the mission to initiate research and strengthen democracy.*

*Lars M Andersson, Senior Lecturer at the Department of History, Uppsala University, welcomes the participants to Uppsala and points to the tradition of bystander perspective in the university's research.*

*Christina Gamstorp, Project manager at the Living History Forum, talks about the project "Spelar Roll" ("The bystander project"). The project aims at increasing awareness of the fact that passivity matters.*

*Henrik Edgren, Research coordinator of the project "Spelar Roll", describes results so far in the research project. Four central themes have emerged: the definition of the concept, explaining bystander behaviour, the difficulty of studying inaction and the didactical challenge. These questions serve as themes for the conference.*

## **Theme 1: The definition and use of the concept "bystander". How is it related to the concept "onlooker"?**

*Victoria J. Barnett, Director at Church Relations, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum*

### **The Concept of "Bystander"**

Barnett opens with a description of the complexity surrounding the concept of the "bystander" and the difficulties we face when studying the subject. The bystander shouldn't be understood or portrayed as a static group, but rather as a process. We are facing the challenge of describing a process with social, chronological and geographical dimensions. The research on the bystander is a history of "what didn't happen" and deals, at least on the surface, with a lack of action. Also, studying and describing the bystander is a moral challenge. The results and the theories derived from research must appear reasonable from a human standpoint. This challenge is especially big for studies on the Holocaust. Barnett means that there is a need for a more specific definition of the complex concept of "bystander", e.g. through the relation between bystander and victim.

Barnett discusses three models for studying bystander behaviour. The first one is a vertical model with three levels where *attitudes, behaviour* and *self-understanding* influence each other in both directions. The second model focuses on the relationship between the individual, the institutional and the collective spheres. For instance, identifying with a group could work

as an alibi within the individual sphere. The third model is triangular and contains the positions of the bystander, the victim and the perpetrator. The processes studied are movements within this field. The process is also a story where the actors themselves describe their movements and place themselves in relation to the three positions.

Our interest in the historical bystander comes from our unwillingness to be contemporary bystanders. A condition for our understanding is the possibility of indentifying with the bystander, even if his role seems inhuman. This is the reason why our results have to be reasonable from a human standpoint. It is also a reason, Barnett argues, for the research to focus more on the questions of *how?* and *why?*, and less on *who?*. Finally, she asks how the will to act could result in intervention, also other than military.

### ***Discussion***

The questions and the discussion concern mainly the time aspect linked to Barnett's process perspective. Barnett claims that the bystander is born in the same moment as the crime or deed, but also acknowledges that it might be a more complex issue. The distinguishing feature of the bystander is his possibility of choosing in the actual situation. The conditions for a positive action are the individual's world view, the ability to recognise early signs and positive models and patterns.

If the bystander is a condition for the assaults, should he not be defined as a perpetrator instead? Barnett admits that the bystander through his passivity plays an active role. The definition is complex, but again, the possibility to chose is central. The passivity can also be a challenge for the perpetrators. For instance, the Nazi propaganda aimed at activating the public, at the same time as there was a tendency of adjusting to the public opinion.

The difficulty of separating the bystander from the perpetrator is also evident in the relation bystander – rescuer. Barnett means that even if the rescuers as a group aren't included in the bystander concept, an individual bystander could develop to a rescuer. However, she emphasises that the same development could take place among the perpetrators.

*Paul A. Levine, Senior Lecturer in Holocaust History at Uppsala University and the Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies*

### **Understanding the "On-Looker" in Holocaust History and Historiography**

Levine starts with the seemingly inhuman role of the bystander. How could we understand the unwillingness to aid? The bystander is truly a depressing theme, and for a long time there has been a tendency to condemn rather than to understand. *Who* has been more important than *how*. At the same time this "inhuman" function is interesting. We have to understand this process since only a positive action by the bystander can make the society more human. Moral aspects as part of the education seem essential for a more "human" behaviour.

Levine claims that although the broad concept "bystander" has contributed to our understanding of the bystander, it has simultaneously become useless as a tool for research. He wants to establish a difference between the *on-looker* and the *bystander*. The on-looker is (physically) present at the scene and his presence strengthens the perpetrator, especially if the perpetrator is unsure about his action. The bystander on the other hand is more distant from the action and therefore able to behave more objective.

The Holocaust research was originally focussed on perpetrators and victims and only in a later phase in nations. Early research was more characterised by emotions than was the later. The national story of neutrality that had evolved in for instance Sweden was questioned by later historians. This later research held that Sweden went from being bystander to playing an active part as rescuer only as Scandinavian Jews were affected.

The question of closeness or distance to the crime makes access to information central. How can we estimate the access to information? Levine claims that there was a big access to information during the Holocaust. He also regards it as a challenge to compare different types of states (democratic, totalitarian etc.) and their responses to that information.

### ***Discussion***

The questions mostly concern the access to information and how this influences the closeness to events. Levine's claim is that there was a "choking" consciousness both in Western Europe and in the neutral countries about what took place in Eastern Europe. Thus, claiming that on-lookers or bystanders were only an Eastern European phenomenon would be a simplification. Levine doesn't seem to believe that the risk of genocide decreases with the increasing modern flows of information, since similar information was available also in the 1940's.

A number of questions concern how Levine's definitions handle the issue of guilt and if he overstretches the concept of "guilt". Levine still argues that the bystander is guilty, even if closeness is hard to define. He stresses that propaganda is one thing, but that it is the physical, close reality that the bystander is expected to react to. In reality, the assaults remain a "radical abnormality" regardless of the picture on a more abstract level. This "radical abnormality" is true both if the Holocaust is seen as one major crime or a number of individual assaults.

*Johannes Houwink ten Cate, Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Amsterdam*

### **Law and war diaries as resources in the research on "bystanders"**

Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of crimes has increased, i.e. more and more actions are legally defined as crimes. In effect, the number of bystanders increases. Also in research on the Holocaust there is a tendency to increase the number of perpetrators and widen the concept "bystander". Evidently there are similar tendencies among historians and legal experts.

Could we then learn something from the law when we define the perpetrator and the accomplice? Each national legislation has its own definitions, but there is consensus on one point: the accomplice is someone who willingly and consciously facilitates a crime. The question of knowledge is a crucial point. We can't assert that Eastern Europe saw more of the Holocaust and were more conscious, hence guiltier. Law teaches us that each person must be judged individually and not all can be expected to have had the same knowledge or awareness. Passive participation isn't accepted as a crime by legal experts. When persons who remain passive in spite of being aware that a crime is committed are punished, it is the facilitation of a crime, not the passivity, which is punished.

The second part of the lecture describes research on Dutch diaries from the time of the occupation. Due to requests from the exiled Government in London, there is a large number of such diaries in the Netherlands. The writers are hardly a representative selection of the Dutch population. Farmers and workers are missing. The writers are mostly unmarried women and married men, often with writing professions. Writing diaries could be regarded as an occupation for the elite. Through the diaries we can study how a consciousness about the Holocaust exists, how they suspect that the Jews are being murdered. With the legal reasoning above, one could argue that even if they are aware and possibly even knowing, the intentional requisite is missing. Hence, they can't be defined as accomplices.

Finally, Houwink ten Cate expresses his wish for an international project for comparison of similar diaries.

### ***Discussion***

Although the legal points are interesting, legal precision isn't always essential. Processes like truth commissions and de-nazification are developed to *deal* with genocide rather than to punish. Under such circumstances, the question of ascribing different legal labels to individual action could be less important. It is also remarked that the idea of "he should have known" is present even within the legal system, that the requisite of knowledge isn't absolute. Houwink ten Cate means that such principles, like the "joint criminal enterprise" of the anti-mafia-laws, not only risk convicting innocent, but are also stretching the concept of "crime".

The questions also concern the bystander as a witness. Do the Dutch diary writers see themselves as witnesses for the future? There seem to be such ideas in the diaries, but the fear of the diary being found is also a very strong and certain things are therefore not mentioned. Houwink ten Cate mentions the writers' strong disbelief in the media as an apparent feature of the diaries.

*Thomas Brudholm, Project researcher at the Department of Holocaust and Genocidic studies in Copenhagen*

### **A philosophical perspective on historians' responses to discourses on the "bystanders"**

Brudholm notes that the definition of the bystander resembles Socrates question of virtue. The answer he gets is more a list of examples than one single definition. Sometimes we seem to argue, that "we know them when we see them", which is hardly a *definition*. Sometimes we categorise them into different types of bystanders, which is hardly *a* definition. A third way of approaching the issue would be a more pragmatic, contextual definition, or simply accepting that certain things can't be defined.

Brudholm claims that the relation between historians and philosophers is a tensed one. It is most obvious in the attitude towards normative thinking, something frowned upon by historians in general. The historians are e.g. more reluctant to use categories such as "good" and "evil". Only when the historians find themselves in the outskirts of their discipline are they interested in inviting philosophers. Brudholm starts with three situations where philosophers can contribute to the (historical) research on the bystander.

The first example is Yehuda Bauer's commandment never to be a bystander. In the victim's perspective, the passive bystander seems harder to forget or forgive than the perpetrator. The philosopher can contribute with his knowledge of the moral behind such feelings and

statements. Not to intervene collides with our understanding of humanity; it is regarded not only as inhuman but also as degrading. In *Divina Comedia* the passive bystander is excluded from both heaven and hell, since his presence would have made the souls in hell feel blessed in comparison.

The philosopher can also shed light on the historian's own action. Brudholm mentions how historians, usually at pains to be objective and resenting sentimentality, by e.g. official jubilees surrender to very sentimental expressions. The philosopher can exhibit how this originates in different traditions of ideas. Finally, the philosopher can assist in bridging the gap between historians and the public. Brudholm means that this gap or frustration owes to the historians' reluctance of moralising and sentimentality and that the philosophers could contribute to a discussion on these matters.

Finally, Brudholm adds that he doesn't consider the philosophers to be flawless. The political philosophy could above all be criticised for being too self-centred. It would also gain from cooperating with psychologists and historians. For the philosophers, it could be regarded as a moral obligation.

### ***Discussion***

The discussion returns to the picture of the bystander as excluded from heaven and hell. This could also be seen as an illustration of the concept's ambivalence. Maybe the concept "bystander" is so important, that it would lose on a definition denying that ambivalence.

Two different models for understanding our anger towards the bystander are evident in the discussion. First, it could be explained with our tendency to identify with the normal people rather than with the monsters, and thus feel so unpleasantly affected by their passivity. Brudholm points to an alternative interpretation. Whereas we have problems imagining reasoning with the perpetrators, the anger could serve as a way of communication with the bystander, a person possible to reason with. We have institutions for dealing with the perpetrator, but such institutions for the bystander are missing.

The historians' resentment to feelings isn't universal, but dependent on the culture. Brudholm agrees, and adds that a more "sentimental" historian wouldn't be entirely good, but also pose a risk of moralising etc. When asked where the social scientists fit in in relation to the historians and philosophers, Brudholm says that they as professional bystanders are equally afraid of the normative, at the same time as they are supplying politicians with data for decision making.

## **Theme 2: Different explanatory models of bystander behaviour, for example norm shifting processes**

*Lars Dencik, Professor of Social Psychology, Roskilde University*

### **What makes people become bystanders?**

Dencik opens with some historical examples on how bystanders have turned to active participants. During the *kristallnacht* their participation became so active and excited that it no longer was a resource for the real perpetrators. Examples from the Second World War show how neighbours suddenly see each other as enemies and are capable of committing atrocities on old friends. Dencik present five processes that contribute to this change.

*Perceptual categorisation* is essential to our thinking. Our cognitive and unconscious categories could change even if the objective reality remains the same. As a result, neighbours can suddenly be perceived as enemies.

*The power of group norms.* Experiments in social psychology show just how easy individuals adapt their norms to those working in a group one identifies with. The own identity is primarily a question of group identification, a self categorisation.

*The comfort of conformity.* It is hard to see bystander behaviour as a lack of civil courage since the notion of civil courage presupposes a public opinion of what one should do, something that is missing in these situations. It is a well known fact that we are less likely to act when we are part of larger groups of bystanders. We seem to reason that others know better or develop a feeling of insecurity of proper actions. There is an ease to dwell in ignorance.

*Blaming the victim* is a common strategy to remove guilt and obligations to act from ourselves. It is much easier to attack someone who is already attacked.

*The spiral of de-humanisation* is a development that starts with social segregation. This gradually evolves to marginalisation – radicalisation – rejection – fundamentalisation – lock in and finally de-humanisation, which is often instant.

Dencik emphasises the important role of the bystander in the assaults and crimes. For instance, the kristallnacht illustrates how the passive bystander can serve to confirm the perpetrators opinion and justify his actions. A show needs spectators. The spectators motivate what takes place on the scene, but they aren't supposed to intervene in the play.

### ***Discussion***

Among other things the questions concern if it isn't more logical to assume that the presence of bystanders, witnesses, would prevent crimes. Dencik means that it is possible, and says the crucial factor is whether the violence is perceived as legal, i.e. sanctioned by authorities. There is a clear positive potential in groups, even if they are often portrayed as a negative force.

The other major theme of discussion is the blaming of the victim. There is a general opinion that humans have a problem with accepting weakness and that hate can be secondary to the violence or injury. Dencik sees parallels in biology, where hurt animals are rejected by the group. He also refers to the statement "They will never forget us for being victims".

*Paul Slovic, Professor, Decision Research at the University of Oregon*

### **"If I look at the mass I will never act": Physic numbing and genocide**

Slovic lectures on why large numbers of casualties and victims seem to influence our readiness to intervene in a negative direction.

His explanation is based on two parallel systems in our brain. The older, fundamental system is based on affects and feelings and swiftly transforms impressions to emotions. The younger system is slower and more analytic. In order to inspire to swift action or intervention, the information we receive must convey feelings. Large numbers don't result in action since they don't carry emotions in the same way as pictures or smaller numbers. Since the system based on emotions dominates the analytic system information without feeling doesn't result in action, even if we analytically recognise the need or obligation for action. The slower moral judgement must consciously override the dominant and faster moral intuition.

A way of promoting action would, accordingly, be to fill the communication with feeling through pictures and personal stories. The older system has however some obvious limitations since it was evolved in much smaller social groups. Although we are eager to help or save a single individual, this willingness decreases with each addition individual. Experiments have shown that this “collapse of compassion” is present already when we are facing two victims. The proportion of potentially saved through our action seems more important than the absolute numbers. To sum up, the moral intuition of the older system is insufficient to inspire to action in the situations we are interested in.

So, in order to achieve change in the world’s action on for instance the genocide in Darfur we must turn to the analytic system. Slovic recommends establishing a system of laws and international structures that would be a factor in the analysis. The basis for these would be a reversed burden of proof, i.e. an obligation for countries and organisations to explain why they haven’t intervened.

### ***Discussion***

A central theme of the discussion is whether Slovic places too much trust in the analytic system. Slovic admits that it could lead wrong, for instance through illogic processes or biases. There is also a risk of a stalling strategy.

Slovic doesn’t totally reject the potential of the emotion based system. For instance, there is a need for strengthening the moral intuition. An intellectual process could also awake emotions and thus enhance action. It is also possible to consider other more ugly emotions than empathy and sympathy, for instance fear and anger could also inspire to action. However, Slovic maintains that emotions could only have a limited effect on a global level.

He considers the institutional level to be the most important field for accomplishing change. International laws are defective and the UN is, due to structural flaws like the veto system, impossible to develop in a useful direction. The crucial point remains, that passivity must be more harshly condemned.

### **Theme 3: Methodological aspects of studying the bystander.**

*David Gaunt, Professor at Södertörn University College*

#### **What about bystanders in the genocide on the Armenians during the 1910s?**

As a social historian Gaunt is primarily interested in the concrete human history, in this case concrete actions of violence. In effect, it is problematic to talk about bystanders when larger physical distances are involved. Gaunt introduces an “onion parable” with different layers from the total population through different types of bystanders all the way in to the rescuer. The historian’s interest concerns mainly the bystander who has intervened, since it is his action that has left traces in the archives. However, the lack of material indicates an enormous group of indifferent bystanders.

A conclusion from previous lectures is that it is the conditions that create not only victims and perpetrators but also the bystander. The historian’s mission is to investigate when these conditions occur. Another conclusion is that the bystander has a clear possibility to intervene; in fact it is this possibility that defines the bystander. The historian’s mission is to identify

these possibilities. It is only reasonable to assume that the number of possibilities to intervene decreases with the degree of organisation in the genocide.

Regarding the change of conditions that led to the Armenian genocide and created bystanders, Gaunt mentions the growing nationalism and the inversion of moral rules. The Muslim majority, whose attitude towards Christians had been characterised by acceptance, changes when Christian groups demand more equality and seek support from external Christian groups, something seen as disloyalty. In the case of the Armenian genocide lack of knowledge probably wasn't an issue. In certain areas the losses were 90 % and the geographical spread should also result in a high level of knowledge among the bystanders.

But at the same time, the possibility to intervene was limited. Through examples Gaunt shows how ethnic hostilities, the fact of being a woman or foreign citizen and the low status of the diplomacy effected the possibility to achieve anything through intervention. There were probably a number of concerned bystanders, although circumstances like these prevented them from taking action or from achieving positive results. Gaunt means that these examples demonstrate the difficulties of being a bystander and that this fact must be considered when studying bystanders' action or inaction.

Based on the problems described in his lecture, especially the social historian's interest in concrete human history, Gaunt also comments that the concept of "bystanders" might be less suitable for a social historian. Nevertheless, he sees the search for a method of studying bystanders as an important process, especially since it could result in new ways of approaching available sources. In regard to the specific Armenian case, he notes that the recent development in Turkey indicates a readiness to recognise the concerned bystander.

### ***Discussion***

The primary theme of discussion is the "onion parable" and the different types of bystanders that are included. Some appreciate the introduction of the "worried but powerless" bystander. There are also comments on the limitations of the parable, e.g. the possibility to capture the acting bystander, whose actions could be both positive and negative.

The onion also effects the definition of bystanders. Some point out that the entire population could be seen as bystanders. Gaunt agrees, but claim that such a definition would be too wide, especially for social historians, since their work depends on written sources that result from action. Other disciplines might use a wider definition of the concept. Another effect of the material is that Gaunt's research and lecture focuses on the Non-Turkish bystanders, even if the majority of bystanders were Turks. This is a result of the Turkish unwillingness to discuss the subject, something that possibly could be changing and result in new sources.

*Karin Kvist Geverts, Uppsala University and the Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies*

### **Sweden and the Holocaust. An attempt to make sense of problematic categories and ambivalent actors**

Kvist Geverts brings up some of the problems of defining and categorising the bystander. She states that even if categorising is a complicated process, there is a need for classification and simplification, in order to understand as well as to teach about bystanders. Maybe the "bystander" concept shouldn't be defined in any simple way. Traditionally the bystanders

have often been divided in such simple opposite groups: German vs. democratic, passive vs. active, or those who remain passive vs. those who turn active.

According to Kvist Geverts, there was a certain degree of anti-Semitism before and during World War II, that formed the basis of Sweden's action. Even if the racial issue wasn't explicit in the Aliens Act of 1937, unlike in the previous one, there are still signs of an unofficial anti-Semitism within the administration, something that was noticed already at the time. Kvist Geverts talks about an "anti-Semitic background bustle" that meant discrimination within the administration but not in legislation. The results of this anti-Semitism appear through statistic analysis of resident permit cases. The discrimination through rejections and the practice of postponing cases affected especially the Eastern European Jews.

Previous research has indicated a shift in Swedish behaviour around 1942, a picture that is supported by Kvist Geverts's research. She stresses that it is more of a process than a sudden and clear shift. Due to the problems of defining "bystander", she prefers to talk about bystander behaviour. She sees the Swedish process as a development from passivity to aid, but stresses that the "anti-Semitic background bustle" continued to be present.

### ***Discussion***

The questions concern for example if the material allows for comparisons between different officials, i.e. if their actions could reflect personal anti-Semitism. Such comparisons are hard to conduct, since the officials were responsible for different countries or periods. An important factor on the personal level of individual cases is support from influential Swedes.

When asked if the possibility to help was bigger in the neutral countries than in for instance the US, Kvist Geverts means it would seem so, since they aren't "busy" with fighting. But a bigger possibility also means a bigger responsibility.

Someone comments that the picture of a process from bystander to saviour depends on a generalisation, ignoring the fact that some groups or individuals were still rejected. Kvist Geverts means that it is also a question of time. When the borders were opened for Scandinavian Jews, it also meant an opening for other groups. But through a parallel development, their possibility to use this possibility, i.e. leave Germany, had decreased.

*Dienke Hondius, Associate professor of history at VU University in Amsterdam and Anne Frank House*

### **Dutch bystanders and eyewitnesses of the Shoah in the Netherlands**

The lecture describes the collection of "bystander memories", accounts of experiences during the German occupation of the Netherlands. Professor Hondius has been struck by how "fresh" these memories appear, often as sequences of a film. This is probably due to the fact that interest in bystander experiences has been much smaller than the interest in victim or perpetrator memories. Ideally, similar non-Jewish stories would be gathered in all of Europe to form a new set of sources for research.

Professor Hondius also points to the fact that a new awareness of the bystander's importance and an increasing condemnation of passivity could influence the readiness to tell about one's own role as bystander. Experiences during childhood or youth are however seen as less

shameful, and age is therefore an important factor for telling. That these are stories about relatively young people could also be an advantage in teaching.

Regarding the “bystander” as concept, she thinks it would be easier to study variations *within* the concept than to seek an outer definition. That the bystander isn’t a static role but moves between passivity and activity is an important lesson. At the same time this separation is problematic, since bystander passivity can be an active function in the crimes. This difficulty also influences the limitation of legal processes in these cases.

Professor Hondius informs about some preliminary results and reoccurring themes from the ongoing collection of memories.

- *Powerlessness*. The informants present themselves as powerless on-lookers, often afraid.
- *Age*. Can be used as an alibi for passivity. Seem to be a tendency to portray oneself as younger than they were in the concrete situation. The fear is also evident, often described as large in the specific situation.
- *Gain/loss*. The informants are often unwilling to admit gaining from the deportation of Jews, for instance through jobs, apartments etc. Plundering is ascribed others. The informants described their own sense of loss, a feeling that might be a later construction.
- *Distance/closeness*. The stories tend to emphasise the distance to specific events, even when the closeness is obvious. This perspective is hard to describe.
- *Trust/Betrayal*. The informants sometimes stress the fact that they had the possibility to reveal hidden Jews but chose not to, i.e. they portray themselves as trustworthy and create a feeling of pride.
- *Atmosphere in town*. The stories convey that the deportation took place step by step, not as a mass deportation. How this affects the atmosphere in town must be considered when condemning those who “should have known”.
- *Portraying themselves as victims*. Some portray themselves as traumatised through the assaults they witnessed. These works as strategy to approach the victims and distancing from the perpetrators.

Professor Hondius brings up some themes for further research and education:

- Using the sources for comparative studies.
- Contrasting the bystander behaviour to that of saving, betraying etc.
- Focusing on turn points. What makes people change roles?
- Recognising the complexity of the subject, especially in education.
- To see the bystander as a potential informer, a teacher. There is a clear potential, even if the exact practical form is unclear.
- Including ourselves in bystander research through science’s roll as bystanders in history.

### ***Discussion***

The discussion deals mainly with methodological challenges. An extensive qualitative material as these stories and interviews implicate a need for digitalisation, coding and marking in order to allow analysis on an aggregated level. Then it would be possible not only to conduct the requested comparisons but also observe patterns of action. Professor Hondius stresses that the collecting is only a first step, but funding is a crucial question for the future.

A number of questions concern time aspects, how the informants describe the development before the critical situation. On a personal level there are stories of connections/contact before the interruption. On another level there are chronological stories of public manifestations before the events of 1943. Again, these stories raise the question of digitalisation and the possibility to search for specific names, places etc.

The discussion also touches on some previous subjects, the questions of who counts as a witness and how the bystander is affected by the fact that the crime scene is all of Europe. Professor Hondius believes that this material could be used to study the effect of being a witness. Using eyewitnesses is also an education possibility.

*Mark Levine, Department of Psychology at Lancaster University*

### **Individuals, Groups and Bystander Behaviour: using social identities to promote bystander intervention**

Positive action has traditionally been connected to the individual identity and led to a focus on teaching ethics. The social psychologists' picture of the group has generally been negative. The basic assumption has been, that when we enter a group we leave our individual identity for a non-identity, which means a loss of moral and a potential for "inhuman" action.

Earlier experiments demonstrate how easily the individual deserts his imagined moral. For example, there are experiments where 65% of the participants give what they thought were a lethal dose of electricity. The reason is partly obedience to authorities, partly the step by step development. More recent studies on those individuals who refused, point to the questioning at an early stage of the process as a condition for later refusal. Referring to this early questioning works as a support. An educational challenge to support active behaviour is to create environments where questioning is possible.

Levine wants to change the picture of the group as a negative or pacifying force. Instead of seeing the group as a non-identity he means that it should be seen as a group identity, supplementing the individual identity and activated in group contexts. In the group identity we share group norms and the will to intervene is dependent on the group's categorisations.

That moral and values on a group level can contribute to positive action is shown in the case of the Bulgarian Jews. That the Jews were presented as part of the group (Bulgarians), that the Bulgarians saw themselves as humane and that the deportation would harm the group resulted in a positive action: the Bulgarians opposed deportation.

In conclusion Levine emphasises the limited effect of individual moral education. He stresses the power of social identities, questions about their salience, content and boundaries and the possibility to use group power to support resistance.

### ***Discussion***

The questions about the group as a resource focus on identity construction. Doesn't a group identity presuppose a notion of "the Others"? I.e., is there a limit to how including a group identity could be? Levine argues that even if we intellectually could construct, *one* human group, it doesn't mean that every individual would feel it. The point is that division doesn't have to result in discrimination, but only differentiation. Even if the group has boundaries, e.g. national, its content (self-understanding) can be a will to aid other groups.

A number of cases from World War II are mentioned, where different minority groups were helped thanks to the majority groups understanding of their group identity.

In connection to the idea of supporting questioning it is remarked that organised groups committing genocide first have to kill the idea of questioning. So how create questioning when the genocide is already happening? Levine admits that it is a complicated issue. That is why the culture of questioning has to be constant, a complement to education in values.

#### **Theme 4: Pedagogical/didactical issues. How do we approach the bystander issue from an educational perspective?**

*Magnus Hermansson Adler, Senior Lecturer at the University of Gothenburg*

##### **Teaching About the Indistinct Bystander**

Hermansson Adler starts with the results from a minor survey among Swedish teenagers in upper secondary schools and their relations to and reasoning about the bystander. The main result is that Swedish students, teachers and the Swedish school have problems discussing such a complex and shifting concept as “bystander”. Especially the moral dimension is complicating. The students appear incapable, or unused, to look beyond the obvious categories “perpetrator” and “victim” and have difficulties identifying with the more normal bystander. The teachers seem ill-prepared for the necessary moral discussions.

Hermansson Adler explains these shortcomings with the lingering spirit of Piaget, an assumption that thought, word and action are directly linked to another. Later ideas, for instance Vygotsky’s introduction of the importance of social context, are less traceable in the teachers’ methods.

Further reasons for this inferior education about bystanders are found in the low status of history as a subject in the Swedish educational system. Time pressure makes it difficult to enter deeply into the subject and to introduce moral dimensions. Instead, teaching becomes superficial. Russia is a clear contrast, where the history subject enjoys a higher status and the students are more used to discussing the moral aspects. Hermansson Adler believes that the future changes in the Swedish education system will result in a higher status for the subject and more time for moral discussions.

Finally he mentions the important role of the Forum as channel for research in educational form to the schools. More such institutions would be desirable.

##### ***Discussion***

The questions concern how the students’ ability to discuss the bystander depends on their age. For example, there could be a need to use more everyday examples than used in the study. It is also remarked that the bystander is in fact a very complicated concept, not only in teaching. At the same time it seems a suitable area for cooperation between history and ethics teachers.

In regard to the teacher training, pointed out as insufficient, Lars M Andersson remarks that the historians who train future teachers are often interested in other perspectives than the moral. A changed attitude among teachers would demand a changed teacher training. Hermansson Adler claims that history didactics are special and recommend a moral/emotional education also on university level.

Someone expresses a wish that the museums could be a resource like the Forum.

### **Concluding panel discussion**

In spite of the written questions, this discussion was somewhat straggling and I will only try to sum up some of the central themes here. (The participants were Victoria Barnett, Thomas Brudholm, David Gaunt, Drieke Hondius, Johannes Houwink ten Cate, Mark Levine and Paul Slovic)

#### *The concept “bystander”*

- The difficulty of clearly defining the bystander is addressed by most participants. When asked if it really is a scientifically useful concept, some argue that it must be used in lack of a better one.
- Gaunt and Hondius among others see advantages with the concept. Even without a scientific definition it can create meaning and contrast in an otherwise chaotic material. Maybe it is more of a way of approach. A minimum definition remains to be found.
- Gaunt also stresses that there seems to be a consensus on the process perspective. Understanding these different developments remains a challenge.
- The contextual aspect is also lifted by some debaters. The bystander is a matter of relations to or comparisons with other roles.

#### *Sources for research*

- The difficulty of studying historical passivity is mentioned. For example, Houwink ten Cate means that the lack of sources could be one explanation for the reluctance towards the concept “bystander”.
- Slovic reminds that a large variety of behaviours are called “bystander behaviours”. We must establish which behaviour we are interested in, before we can discuss sources and results.

#### *For the future*

- Houwink ten Cate points out that there is logic general division of labour within the Holocaust research where Germany focuses on the perpetrator and Israel on the victims. In effect it is up to the neutral and occupied countries to research the bystander.
- Both Dutch participants would like to see more comparative research.
- For example Barnett stresses that the bystander in many ways is a question of moral and ethics where history offers new perspectives. Brudholm means that research must be less moralising and more political/ethical.
- Slovic argues that medias development since World War II has meant an increased possibility to be a bystander. That means more possibilities and bigger challenges. Bystander research must contribute in today’s society, which might be complicated by the concept’s narrow geographical reach.
- Slovic also argues that the road to change goes through changing education that is to centred on numbers and figures. Education must focus on handling the reality behind the numbers, on feeling reality. This takes creativity. The Forum hopes to strengthen the interest on these issues that exist among teachers.

*Christina Gamstorp, Project manager at the Living History Forum*

### **Closing remarks and summary of the conference**

It seems wise not even to try summarising this conference, since it truly would be a Sisyphean task. It has been an academic seminar at its best: a free flow of thoughts and exchange of ideas, deepening our understanding of both concept and behaviour. It wouldn't have been possible without the support of Lars M Andersson and Henrik Edgren. Some important contributions have been made. For example, we have learnt that wearing a Liverpool shirt could result in bystanders turning away when we are attacked.

Although the tricky definition of the concept "bystander" remains, discussions like this can contribute to our understanding. Physical closeness and access to information appear to be central. We need to see examine bystander behaviour, but as Paul Slovic remarked, the question remains of what this behaviour actually is. Another theme for further discussion is the distribution of guilt. There seem to be a moral responsibility attached to the concept and an expected responsibility.

In spite of what one would think, there is a consensus that bystander behaviour is very human and becoming a bystander is only a question of circumstances. This everyday, human aspect offers an educational possibility.

The interdisciplinary approach appears both important and fruitful. What Thomas Brudholm has told about cooperation between historians and philosophers is just one example. There is a need for this type of meetings, aiming at establishing contacts between researchers and disciplines. Hopefully, the conference has been successful on this point. The Forum will continue to contribute on the subject, e.g. by publishing an anthology where all participants are invited to contribute. Their contributions to this conference will also be used in the Forum's educational work.

Finally, she expresses her gratefulness to all participants for their contributions to this conference.