# Open The Gates!


**A closer look at the integration of Christianity in the Extreme Metal Community.**


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## 1.0. Gratitude

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## 2.0. Prelude.

**About the researcher, or author, if you will.**

I have an extensive mileage within the Rock Community of Oslo and Vestfold, Norway myself, having been brought up with the intention of my parents to become a promising violinist, attending the sought after Barratt-Due's musical institute in Oslo. I abandoned that life at the age of fourteen to enter the Rock scene, much to my later annoyance, but also my blessing. My hand-weld experience with different expressions of Rock and Metal, presented me with an intriguing desire, as I started out on my socio-cultural and science of religions master two-year course at the Norwegian School of Theology, to write about how the Rock and Metal community, has interacted with the rising number of Christian metal bands, and hence if the world view and written lyrics, amongst other things, has met any uprising therein, and if so, how has this affected the individual experience of the Christians involved.

Discussing with my mentor on several aspects from average christian habits, to Japanese shinto-buddhism, We ran across *The White Band* (anonymized) a band, whom I had heard of but not listened to, and their Christianly soiled Death Metal, and the choice of theme was an easy one, as my first prejudice thought was "bligh me - Christian death metal!", and an upcoming moment of

clarity made me think that I'd just proved to myself why writing about them was exactly right. If I was prejudice, after several years of studying religious and cultural science, then what about all the rest?

So, I chose to write a socio-cultural, and somewhat religion-sociological, thesis on the Christian Death-metal band - that will remain anonymous throughout this thesis - and their cultural interrelation with the Rock and Metal Community in Norway (hereafter referred to as the Extreme Metal Community); *Socio-cultural*, because that says something about an alleged given *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 2007) within the community, regarding religious preferences, i.e. Satanism, Anti-Christianity (and possibly Militant Atheism), Individualism et cetera, and also an alleged mafia-like structure inside the community, where I suspect it is possible to imagine an opening for buying/fighting oneself upwards by gaining a certain position, built on the musical skills, but also the correct lead life and ideology.

The years that have passed since the breakthrough of Rock n` Roll in the mid fifties, has demonstrated the Rock culture´s eagerness to stay as an opposite to the established norms and *come-il-faut* of the state, its government, its law enforcement and until recently, its religious dogma. It is therefore possible to imagine that Christianity has not been a very welcome asset to those clinging to the individualism and autonomism of old school Rock culture.

I have, intentionally, chosen to use the phrase *Extreme Metal* instead of *Death* or *Black Metal*, as the band has pointed out to me that the reactions they have encountered not necessarily came from the Death or Black Metal community, but rather from the whole Metal scene, and also, on some occasions, from the mainstream Rock scene.

## 2.1. Research Question.

Exactly how narrow, or broad minded, is the Extreme Metal culture of Norway? Have they, the culture, themselves become the very conservative group that they have seemingly battled, through the last 50 years, roughly, sticking to rules, unwritten codes and keeping unwanted infiltration on the outside? Is there any truth to the quote from the band's documentary on themselves, where a former rock vocalist, provocatively states that the band are the true punks of Rock n` Roll, because Rock n´ Roll itself is narrow minded and conservative towards religion?

My quest is to try and answer some of these statements, or questions, and to help me, I have interviewed the two members, hereafter referred to as Elijah and Ezekiel, of the object of research, hereafter referred to as "The White Band" and an alleged "contender", hereafter referred to as Julius, from a Black Metal band, hereafter referred to as "The Black Band", a subculture-esque project that made it big enough to travel Europe and Russia.

The research question in this thesis will accordingly formulate;

"*What were the socio-cultural dynamics of the interaction between the Christian metal-band "The White Band" and the rest of the metal scene?*"

From this research question, it will be possible to craft a thesis, emphasizing what I believe is a central and valid issue, regarding the analysis of what you could call a *plural-monocultural community*, and how the different monocultures absorbs or rejects new impulses.

It seems clear that a *qualitative interview* with the two lasting head members of The White Band, has to be the base to a map of their experiences as a band.

For a comment from the so-called secular side of the Extreme Metal table, I decided to contact he who became interviewee number three, Julius, the head of a The Black Band, one of several other projects he leads within the genre. That move has proven to be a clever one, since I also found him to operate close to the center core of the metal trade, as his relentless loyalty to the genre has lasted, without the help of the enchantment that stardom could bring, and has seemingly been based on a true and deep interest as an individual artist, and as a person highly interested in how to *philosophize* the ongoing evolvement of his music.

## 3.0. Material.

The material for this thesis will embrace the research interviews, adding an extensive badge of theory on *subcultures*, on *social* and *cultural capital*, and on *identity theory* and *integration theory* (Thornthon 1997, Bourdieu 2007, Jenkins 2014, Engen 1989)*.* All these theories will lie at the foundation of how I interpret my findings, and how I conclude on their interactive relationship. Thus, I can construct a thesis giving a broad and hopefully thorough perspective on the dynamics within the community, what is seen as "legit" and "forbidden", according to who we, in case, are talking about, and if they are going through, or have been going through, any changes.

## 3.1. Theory.

Through interviewing the two alleged head-members in the Christian Death-metal band The White Band, and the somewhat opposing Black Metal artist, Julius, I hope to build my thesis on finding out, how the Extreme Metal community has, either welcomed them, or shut them out - on grounds of their Christian beliefs that arguably contrasts the very essence of early Norwegian Extreme Metal, especially the genre known as Black or Death Metal.

In order to do this, I am going to need to build up a suitable theory as to how an entity (The White Band), either adapts (*integrates*), reforms (*assimilates*), coexists (are *pluralized*) or is left outside (are *segregated*) a resembling, and, to the band, musically otherwise inviting, bigger group (the Extreme Metal scene).

In my discussion I must uncover if the musicians has undergone any form of *assimilation, integration, pluralization* or *segregation*, conscious or sub-conscious, during their many years of exercise of the Death-Metal genre. I have therefore looked up different theorists´ ways of interpreting the adaptiveness or *segregation*, *assimilation* or *integration*, of smaller entities, into larger, resembling ones.

**The original integration theory?**
At the foundation of the theory I am looking for, lies Thor Ola Engen´s, somewhat outdated, but somehow fundamental to the subject, socio-theory, on what he calls *double-qualification* within a *multicultural* society, an attempt to lay out a map of what happens when an individual from a minority culture is exposed and adapts to the local, to her new, and surrounding, majority culture. This would, nevertheless, need to be modernized, due to it´s coming of age, for instance by Sociologist Sarah Thornton (Thornton,1997), on

*subcultures* and how they constantly develop into ever new expressions, and her associate, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu,1992), on *social and cultural capital*, and how a person is able to move through the, earlier believed, seemingly unbreakable walls separating the establishments of the *social classes*.

The Norwegian sociologist Thor Ola Engen wrote his book on how the contemporary kindergartens should include integration and adaptiveness to changing cultural scenes in society, "*Double qualification and Cultural Comparison*" in 1989 (Engen, 1989). His theory is exemplified in his book, where he points out that any individual, in any given society/community, is given a sort of core integrity, from birth on, as to who they are and where they come from, so that in relating to the local society outside the family-sphere, and the national society outside the local community-sphere, an onward in mirroring this against their core integrity, they will make up their own individual behavioral and morally adult reaction pattern, all relying on the interaction between what the national society sees as customary, what the local community sees as local customs, sometimes clashing with the national customs, and finally what the family, or significant others, conducts within the privacy of home, or within a closed network. Arguably, this equips the individual, given its somewhat normal psychological capacity, with sufficient social skills to navigate averagely through social and professional spheres.

Further, underlining this emphasis, Engen writes about *double-qualification* and *cultural comparison*, that it requires three conditions; the over-arching *limited culture of the state*, the closer *central-culture* of the local community and the family/significant others, in addition to the *personally focused content.*

I understand this as a way of defining an individual's *recapitulated sense of self*, as who the person is *in herself*, her beliefs, her personal world-view, etc, through her upbringing locally, the local *savoir-faire*, the religious/anti-religious and political customs, the family, to the over-arching national sense of what it is to *be*, to the individual sense of self.

So Engen´s integration-theory, as I read it, largely concerns itself with the impact of your upbringing, your local community´s social standards and the limited National standards, and how these three factors work together, or against each other.

This is interesting, as it says something about the individual's impression of itself, leading us to understand the cultural foundation (here; Christianity) on which our entity (here; The White Band) stands on in entering new grounds (here; The Extreme Metal scene).

The usefulness of this theory, towards whether The White Band has integrated into the Extreme Metal community, the manner in which they allegedly has managed to do so (or not), and the manner in which the community has included or excluded them, is yet to be proven, lest we compare the theory to other sociological ones, but it may serve as a fitting (if somewhat outdated) pillar for the forthcoming work.

In trying to further the work of Engen, *Peder Gravem*, sums up a set of theories on individual *pluralistic integration, assimilation* and *segregation* (Gravem, 2004). On *pluralistic integration*, Gravem turns to Engen, in emphasizing that his earlier work (Engen 1989), shows a turn in general Norwegian societal *adaptive inclusion,* so to speak, from *assimilation*, to *pluralistic integration*. He explains *assimilation* as a set of predestined

behavioral and ethical *worldviews*, being forced upon the eventual newcomer, on approaching the realm of an already existing and restricted social entity (ibid).

Further, he divides the term into *soft* and *hard* assimilation, explaining the first as a way for the social entity to welcome the newcomer inside, without necessarily demanding an abolishment of her individual culture, and the latter as a total expectation of commitment by the newcomer to the new rules, utterly abandoning her individual previous culture. In emphasizing *soft assimilation* as his chosen method, Gravem then turns logically towards *pluralistic integration*, as a way of developing an already existing social entity, from the *monoculturalism* of *segregation* - the intent to keep things as they are, and adapt newcomers to the old rules - to the *multicultural pluralism* of diverse pre-culturalized forces of smaller entities within the overarching larger, into a capable entity, adapting to the general development of the outside world.

Ultimately, the phrase *segregation* is explained, as the way, say, a *natively pre-destined* community, breaks down its society into the (so called) native majority, and the smaller minority groups, relieving the latter of the same rights, duties and opportunity as the supposed natives. An example of this is what he calls *apartheid-pluralism*, historically and commonly known from Nazi Germany, 1950s Southern U.S.A. and former South Africa.

I can use this theory, as it might say a great deal about what happens, to an arguably rigid society (e.g. the Extreme metal community) in a cultural meeting with a smaller entity (e.g. The White Band) that bends the boundaries

of ethics and worldview in bringing along new spiritual material. Is it viewed as a threat, or as an interesting development of the art form?

**Pierre Bourdieu, on Capital and Habitus.**

It would be a very *aparte* thing to do, if I were to enlist sociologists with an impact on *social* and *cultural* behavior, and still leave out Pierre Bourdieu. His schema on how we, as individuals, fall into different taste-oriented classes, specially suited to communicate where we belong, socially, but also how it is possible to maneuver from one class to another, is essential to any social study, but distinctively to this one, as the social class-journey is exactly what the members of The Band allegedly has done.

In his (subjectively speaking) admirable work, *Outline of a theory of practice* (Bourdieu; 1995), Bourdieu pinpoints a somewhat exacting thesis on the way *know how*, or, more correctly, *social* and *cultural capital*, has a fundamental bearing on how we, as distinctively human, grow into a predisposed power position in society. His definition of *capital* draws it beyond the older, exclusively economical term, and sets new standards of *ownership* within the world of comprehension/miscomprehension of taste when it comes to art, food/eating, sports, and other factors of lead life, that extinguishes the aristocracy from the bourgeoisie, and furthermore the bourgeoisie from the working class.

The *habitus* term, speaks about the way we have stored, if you will, a sort of *bodily absorbed* conduct heritage, a memory of the corpus, planted in our genes and actual limbs, and additionally taught to us through speech, movement, gesture and information on how things are done within the familiar entity, about all aspects of correct human behavior, according to our social network, or our significant others (Bourdieu is most occupied with

parental guidance), and how we socially control our *cognitive*, *physical* and *psycho motoric* skills, in order to maintain our social and cultural position in the societal power struggle, especially visible amongst the upper classes.

His occupation with class was a somewhat political one, and, having performed a class travel himself, he wanted to break down the boundaries between the classes, but his distinction on how all *habitus*, from beer to wine to champagne drinking, from chosen car brands, to preferred musical expressions, and musical ability/disability, *quantitatively* gave meaning, as to their, more or less, homogenous belonging within the different social spheres, when mapped out in a survey on roughly 1200 individuals in the sixties´, has, *pro facto*, had a huge impact on how sociology is executed to this day.

Bourdieu claimed that *habitus* is the sole provider of the cognitive tools that we use to accomplish new knowledge about any part of life. Given our *habitus* - our predisposed precedents - we are able to automatically obtain the necessary social and cultural capital we need to survive within our social sphere (Bourdieu 2007).

Somewhat needless to mention in academic surroundings, Bourdieu`s work holds a key issue in all research concerning itself with *social adaptiveness*, and thus it does for my thesis as well. Drawing out a map of The White Band's experiences as individuals, and as a group, I am reliant on the basics of the Bourdieu social theory, on how the *social* and *cultural capital* of my interviewees - and the opposing community -  has approached each other.

**Thornton on subcultural power.**

Sarah Thornton (Thornton 1997) writes about subcultural capital in the *club cultures* of Great Britain in the Nineteen-Nineties, and how the shared knowledge within the exclusive groups, creating a conglomerate of variations of the latter, creates a sort of power that binds individuals (preferably youth) to a common understanding of what it is to be "hip", or on the inside, as opposed to "mainstream" or on the outside, or even more complex, what it is to be not so much "mainstream", but rather in an opposing and somewhat competing group, but still earning the right to be a member of "hipness". The theory could be read as an attempt to understand the factors of *know-how*, or *social* and *cultural capital* within the different subcultures, and what drives individuals to exit the comfort of *mainstream-ism*, so to speak, and seek meaning and comfort in new surroundings.

Thornton leans heavily on french sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's famous schema, on how *social and cultural capital* sometimes follows *economical capital*, but not so rarely does not, and how, for instance, the *nouveau riches* (understood as people coming to money sometime in life, without being born into it) often come from lesser cultural upbringing, and arguably, contrary to the "old money" hierarchy of Great Britain (who´s main distinction has been to maintain a correct amount of *cultural*, and most certainly *social capital*) cannot be said to uphold the same standards, though the ability to purchase material wealth is the same (Bourdieu 1984, in Thornton 1997).

This theory of cultural knowledge will come in handy when I distinguish my theory. The aspect of the Metal scene's *cultural* and *social capital*, in light of Thornton and Bourdieu, has a huge significance in understanding what it is the unraveling of The White Band as a Christian band amidst the *inner circle*

of Extreme Metal, so to speak, made on the community, and thus may have underscored the community's reactions towards the band.

**Jenkins on Social Identity.**

I have additionally chosen to bring into the mix, so to speak, an author not automatically linked to the theoretical core of social strategy. Nevertheless, I've found that his theories on how our identity is shaped through the interaction of other individuals surrounding us, is highly significant, *precisely* to my thesis, on account of the elegancy of his manner in which he manages to map out the chaos of our highly complex *persona*, into a somewhat understandable picture on how our souls, or minds, are sown together by impacts of characteristics, of how other people see you. Ergo, on the question of *integration* versus *assimilation*, I find it important to take a closer look at the *manner* in which it is orchestrated - through the eyes of the participant, through his or hers personal experience of the events. It is therefore relevant to my research to figure out if we could unravel, hopefully, any mechanism of control, actually *implanted*, unwillingly, into the actions and stances that Elijah and Ezekiel made towards the same cultural entities, that might have had a significance, in creating the very same actions and stances in the first place, paradoxically.

In His book *Social Identity*, Richard Jenkins gathers clues from early sociology, and morphs it into his version of how he sees *social identity* played out in everyday human behavior (Jenkins 2014). His theory sees identity as a *lingually dependent* way for an individual, to shape the way she appears to herself, and to other individuals. *Social identity*, however, is far more complex, in that factors of self interest, and gain of social territory and comfort, will affect the way the individual's identity forms *inwardly*.

Reversibly, any factor of *social adaptiveness*, on single or multiple encounters, will affect how other individuals, friends or foes, so to speak, identifies her as an in- or outsider, a team player, artistic, empathic, narrow- or broadminded, and so on.

Exemplifying this could be a homosexual Muslim immigrant, having to switch identities, whether he is relating to the local law enforcement as an immigrant, the Mosque as a Muslim, or the Gay Pride community as a homosexual, but also as all of these identities in relation to all three entities (law, Mosque and Gay Pride), when at the end of the day, in solitude, the individual may not relate to these three marks at all, but rather to the fact that he is watching the "Trilogy DVD", a concert dvd, recorded in Berlin, of the somewhat iconized, internationally acclaimed indie band *The Cure*, where they perform three linked albums in chronological order, and to whom he is a deeply committed fan.

Social identity, it seems, depends heavily on not only who we dare to come forth as, but also how we see it in our best interest to do so, according to what *social situation* we are trying to blend into, or excess in, and how we interpret the common acceptance at the time, acting in fashions that seems suitable for further interaction and gain. As Jenkins puts it;

*How I identify myself has a bearing on how I define my interests. How I define my interests has a bearing on how I identify myself. How I define my interests may encourage me to identify in certain ways. How others identify me has a bearing on how they define my interests, and indeed, their own interests. My pursuit of particular interests might cause me to be identified in this way or that by others. How I identify others may have an impact on which interests I pursue. And so on. (Jenkins;2014)*

Thus, my interpretation of Jenkins' view, is that we are somewhat helpless on our own, if we are to create a believable outcome of our personality, in our own and others eyes. The platform on which we stabilize our entire self, though changing with the tides, is built up by the matching of interests with others around us, and that in pursuing one goal, we can not always be certain if we do it solemnly by our own choice, or if we are subconsciously driven by the expectations of what has been *stamped behind our ears* by society, significant others, professional co-employees, the doorman at the concert, and so on. (If this can be stretched as far as regarding why we fall in love with someone, is totally irrelevant, but still enchanting).

The key elements in Jenkin's (2014) theory that serves this thesis, is thus, hopefully, that these mechanisms of *identity formation* and *creation*, tells us a lot when it comes to how The White Band has interacted (*integrated*), adapted (*assimilated*), or dispatched (*segregated)* themselves of the reactions and behavior of the identities and entities they've confronted through their career. In other words; if there were signs of *integration*; did the individuals manage it in any way, signs of *assimilation*; was it to the individual liking or beyond their control, and so on.

**4.0 Method.**

Methodically, and as referred to the literature on the subject below, it would hence be essential to craft the interview questionnaire appropriately, to the extent that the collected data, that I will be searching for, is obtained. Eventually, in finishing the interviews, the *deciphering* and *transcription* of the data will establish a clear text for the coming analysis. Here, the basis theory, will be defining.

It seems obvious, that the shape of my thesis will enroll as a classic and specified qualitative case-study, based on the methodology of *grounded theory*, that I will explain below (Stake; 1995, Bryman; 2012), supported entirely by the one-on-one interviews, and the narrative of the Extreme Metal community (and, needless to say, the theory and methodology).

The methods used in these kinds of studies are pretty straightforward, but has historically been played out in slightly different manners. In order to fully encompass a clear definition of the chosen method, we must first examine some of the theory that has been written on the subject.


**Henrik von Wright on empathy and control.**
In the somewhat essential book by Robert E Stake, *The art of case study research* (Stake;1995), Finnish philosopher Henrik von Wright (Wright in Stake 1971), shows a somewhat clarifying insight in distinction between *understanding* and e*xplaining*, *methodologically,* the complexity of a qualitative case interview.

His theory can be seen to state, that the position a researcher draws most knowledge from, in order to fully comprehend the vast psychology and complexity of a single case (seeing as how the subject often is respondent to human behavior), the power of fully, and almost *empathically*, understanding the subject (the interviewee), as if the researcher somehow saw the subjective point of view from the very emotional platform the subject is seated, so to speak. In sharp contrast to the quantitative studies (the collecting of vast amounts of data concerning certain phenomena), where *explanatory* methods are required in order to systematically control the outcome of conclusion, the qualitative researcher needs to sharpen her

empathic skills in order to imaginatively put herself in the chair of the subject, arguably, only then, properly adjusting and, in Wright's words, subjecting herself to a;

*"re-creation in the mind of (...) the mental atmosphere, the thoughts and feelings and motivations, of the objects of her study"* (Wright; 1971).

This is significant to the methodology in which it is my goal to follow. The attempt to theorize as to how, and wherefore, the impact between the Subject (The White Band), and the community (the Extreme Metal scene), has been played out as narrated by the interviewees, could benefit from a philosophical point of view, seeing as how the nature of human behavior, as is commonly known, so bases itself on collecting impressions down to the almost unnoticeable, interpreting and subjectively adding all these factors into a response, sometimes in the flash of a moment. It is therefore vital to the methodology that it is also founded in a fashion that serves the research the most, and creates the most empathically efficient set of case study interview questions, in accordance to the psychological aspect (Wright 1971).

**Bryman on Social research.**

In his book *Social Research Methods*, Bryman proposes some vital standards as to how the core *methodology* in a *quantitative* thesis is crafted (Bryman 2012). His emphasis might be said to focus on the research questions, and their close connectedness to the theory and methodology of the research.

In his chapter on qualitative research, we read about the nature of *grounded theory*, and how there can be two main outcomes of this method (Bryman; 2012). The emphasis lies basically in the tightness of interaction between the

gathering of data, the analyzing of them, and the *theory* we decide to use or conclusions that we reach, *empirically*. There are those (amongst them, i.e. Strauss and Corbin 1998, Silverman 1993) who claim that the theory we use in qualitative research can, and should, influence the theory we end up with implementing into our research (Bryman 2012: 387). In other words, we could define this as both utilizing academically *reliable*, or acknowledged, theory and method, as well as referring the gathering of data repeatedly back to the analysis, and vice versa, in order to empirically create new theory, based on the theory literature provided.

Bryman (2012) also claims, that in order to pose a questionnaire adequate to the essence of what you want to find out, and why you want to find out about it, a close connection to topical literature is a vital part of the phase of creating one, seeing as how (obviously) the collected academic experience in the field of research is what we generally focus new research on. However, there may be other ways, where the researcher puts herself in a somewhat open position, and decides that the interviews shall be carried out in "blank slates", that is in a spontaneous manner, without a drafted questionnaire, in order to let the flow of the conversation guide the next question (ibid).

This way, the researcher hopes to almost stumble upon data that might not have appeared if the questions were already decided, and that could be of significance to the upcoming discussion (Bryman 2012). It seems, almost, that the criteria behind this method, emphasizes the importance of not binding, or steering in any way, the mindset of the researcher, when performing the interviews, but rather fully trust the spontaneous reactions and the chemistry that is crafted between the interviewer and the interviewee.

I see no direct opposition between these two approaches (Bryman 2012), or that the one rules out the effect of the other, so to speak. But being a freshman, and somewhat new to the academic "game", I find it necessary, and actually polite, to explore and use what researchers have developed of sociological understanding before me, in order to create a solid ground of empathy and knowledge about all the different methodological aspects of my thesis. The notion of motivation, background and suspected, or unsuspected, behavioral pattern of the interviewees, has to be investigated from different angles, through the questions, in order to fully be prepared, come interview-day, to make sure that the conversation does not come to a grinding halt, or in any form disintegrates before the researcher's eyes and ears.

Also, I feel it would be the "cocky" thing to do, if I performed the interviews in the full assurance of my ability to suppress all emotional aspects of my own relation to the interviewees, all the time focusing on the point of view of the narrator, and creating communicative leads as we went along, given my short experience in Academia, without having steady ground to stand on in the form of interview questions. I must therefore lean on Wright's empathy-guided researcher's presence (Wright 1971), and Bryman's accurate description of one-on-one case interviews, the possibility of generalizing or projecting one's own persona into the mix, the responsibility of protecting the interviewee's individual rights when transcribing the interview and the academic demand to always refer to the listed literature and stick to the method chosen (Bryman; 2012).

Arguably, the risk of showing up with no plans for the actual interview, other than that the questions must circulate around the topic chosen for the

research, is a huge one to take, and seemingly, it would heavily depend on the staleness, self-awareness and empathy of the researcher. It could, in the symbolic talk of pilots, "crash and burn".

In showing up prepared, that is, with a pre written questionnaire, it would seem that the safety of the project, the stability of the work, and, most importantly, the possibility of ending up with valid and informative data, would be secured, in accordance with the method literature (Bryman; 2012, Fangen 2005).

The experience of "flow", drawn from the liberty of performing an interview solely based on gathered theory and absorption of literature, truly seems an intriguing one.

But is this a respectful way to spend preciously bought interview-time when performing a first time case interview? It could easily be argued, that this method alone, is made for experienced scholars and scientists, and that the respect of the science, would lead this freshman away from unchartered waters, and on to the steady vessel of research, that a planned questionnaire would seem to be in this case (Bryman 2012).

There are also certain pro's and con's to the one-on-one manner I've performed the interviews, and the nature of case-study interviews as a whole.

One can always be ambushed, so to speak, by an urge to generalize the findings, in order to reach conclusions, as a thesis takes up most of your life while writing it, and could therefore lose the freshness of new intelligence, if you will. In the article *Generalization in Qualitative research*, we read about the ongoing discussion of the avoidance versus inevitability of generalizing

the data in qualitative interviews and analysis (Payne & Williams 2005). They present a method they call *moderatum generalization*, which basically points towards the fact that there is no way one could possibly avoid a certain amount of generalizing data, as the reality of life and certain behavioral standards are, at all times, present in the analysis of the data, and in the data itself. It is therefore important to, again, be watchful and critically present. The continuous control of an advisor is a good beacon in the chaos of text, but nevertheless, the danger of generalizing the material, extensively, is present and must be watched over.

The obvious pro of a qualitative case interview, as I see it, is that the objective narrator (the interviewee) is so closely in dialogue with the subjective inquirer (the interviewer) (Bryman 2012). This way, a sense of trust can be established, enabling the flow of the conversation to intensify, opening up for information that, in writing or by telephone interviews, could be lost. However, we are always forced to be reliant on the subject of interview to tell us the truth, something we in no manner can control, and we are also submitted to the fact that, given a number of *if's* and *so's* we do not know of, the subject must be of sound mind. These are factors that we can observe, try to comprehend as solidly as we are able to, but can neither prove in any way, or *falsify* (Bryman 2012). Ergo, we must basically trust that we've chosen the right persons for the task, and process the data accordingly; as personal statements, not necessarily rooted in reality, or in proven facts, a key element that points us back to the stress on empathy that von Wright shows us (Wright 1971).

There is also the question of interviewing each person on his or her own, contra performing a group interview. In a group interview, I could experience

the luxury of observing a dialogue, and, if lucky, lean back and let the conversation between the two (or even three) create itself. Thus, we could cover more grounds on behavioral and argumentative research (Bryman 2012, Fangen 2011). However, this thesis takes on the question of the individual experiences of two of The White Band's former members. The quest for psychosocial research is not an issue of importance to the data, nor is it a craft I in any way master. The one-on-one interview has therefore been the best possible solution in crafting this thesis, as it opens for a, somewhat peaceful, conversation and leaves none of the participants feeling overwhelmingly squeezed or uncomfortable, provided the presence of the interviewer is to the liking of all three - something I sincerely hope that it was. It also gave me more time to consider the empathic nature of my questions and presence. I could, of course, have come to other conclusions in performing a group interview, as the narrative could have played out totally differently than it did, but I somehow put a little more faith - given the nature of the subject, the delicacy of The White Band's history, and the fact that what I am after is solid answers to somewhat emotionally rooted questions - in the method chosen (ibid).

I have chosen to keep this thesis anonymous, primarily because it has no impact on the narrative, and could actually steer the focus of the reader away from the personal arena, and towards the actual language that is served. Secondly, there is the case of protection. If there is no necessity present in giving away personal identity, why on earth do it? This thesis has no benefit in flashing names, and it is therefore my firm belief that my job as a researcher is, to the best of my ability, shield the involved parties from any possible unfortunate impact their statements, that they only gave because I asked them to, could have on them. In our day and age, intel-information is

easily spread throughout the web, and I believe we share a responsibility, especially as academic researchers, to withhold as much delicate information as possible from the masses.

The empirical material will eventually be stored on one hard drive only I know the whereabouts of. It will not be marked. I recorded the interviews, but they are now transcribed, so the sound files will be erased. My faculty will have access to a copy of the transcriptions and the thesis itself. The implemented identities has also been given a copy of the transcriptions. This is all according to the standards of The Norwegian Center for Research Data (http://www.nsd.uib.no).

It seems then, that the base of my chosen method for this thesis must consist of these key issues:

The always apparent, academic knowledge-bank on social communication, and how it affects the smaller entity within the overarching larger one - how the crafting of the tiny boat´s float skills on the infinite sea, responds to the stubbornness of the seas movements, so to speak - helps us comprehend and transcribe the interview situation in an arguably better, and possibly more secure order (Bryman 2012). The former work of so many skilled scientists has made the task easier in mapping out the main territory of social sciences, and obviously helps us in staying emotionally professional, but empathically present (Wright 1971) in performing our interviews, and protects the integrity of the people lending us their time in order for us to succeed.

On empathy, I will put great effort into following the methods of Von Wright (1971), and imaginatively strain myself to, as full-heartedly as possible, put

myself in the presence of my interviewee, so that I am sure that every personal interest has been protected, and the most reliable transcription is made when interpreting the language of the answers/narratives. this also has an influence on how I chose to disposition and narrate the questionnaire (Bryman 2012), as imaginative empathy presumably puts its warning sign up every time a line is crossed when it comes to the possible discomfort that could arouse from an offensive question (Wright 1971).

It is my sincere hope that I am capable, humanely and professionally, to fully grasp the intentional meaning of my informants, the very essence of why they agree to narrate to me, the emotional story of their professional lives, namely the existential experience in having been a stubborn outsider in a presumed pre-narrated *savoir faire* within the somewhat dogmatic Extreme Metal scene.

When it comes to crafting the interview, and deciphering it afterwards, the essence of the questions should be steered towards a fine line drawn between *pragmatism*, *criticism of information*, and *empathy* (Bryman 2012, Wright 1971). For example, if I want to discover the true emotional response of one of the interviewee to, say, his or hers exposure to segregation from a group she, or he, otherwise would feel like a natural participant in, it would lie in my empathy to keep my questions clean of prejudice of any kind and emotion, and perhaps not pinpointed directly towards what it is I seek. The difference between "*How does the negative response from the Metal Scene make you feel?*" and " *Tell me about the Metal Scene*", could mean the difference between the interviewee locking down, or opening up. It could also lead the interviewee into giving possible predisposed answers, not necessarily truthful, seeing as how the human mind easily picks up on leading questions as to how we feel the situation expects it from us (ibid).

I believe that by somewhat generalizing our topics, or opening the door for subjective experience when talking to people, we grant the receiving part space to, at their own will, go outside the comfort zone and speak freely, without the feeling of being urged in any way to answer in this or that direction of thought or narrative creativity. This also, according to the empathy Wright speaks of (1971).

In transcription and discussion of the theme, a valid sense of lingual understanding is of the utter importance. Interpreting how people chose to speak their mind, can often be a delicate matter, and the fault of inserting one's own worldview and life perception is always at close range. Again, it is vital to turn to Von Wright (1971), in an attempt to "stick to the story" and listen carefully to what is actually said, without putting too much, or too little weight on tone of voice, eagerness, distancing, or other bodily or verbal language that may seem to appear out of the recorded and observed data. Nevertheless, the ability to imagine what the subject is trying to say, relies on the researchers empathy.

Here, we are not talking about feeling sorry for, or in any way pitying or promoting the subject, but again, being able to put oneself in the subjects position and understanding the data, as well as possible, as if we tried to actually think through the subject ourselves (Wright 1971).

I will require a recording computer to, as wholeheartedly as possible, give my full attention to the interviews, instead of preoccupying myself in transcribing alongside paying attention. I will then, back home, edit the takes, using my producer tools, without the disturbing element of writing while listening, then translate the Norwegian narrative into English, before I finally transcribe what I have into a suitable academic narrative language.

**5.0. Interview questions.**

- About the existence of The White Band, as a band, when, would you say, did the first thoughts about forming a band appear?

- In the beginning, what was it that dragged you towards the Extreme Metal genre?

- How would you describe your music, and the visions you have had connected to it?

- How, in your opinion, has the dynamics, in relation to composing, arranging, promoting, and so on, developed within the band and amongst the different compilations of musicians?

- How would you describe your worldview?

- Your lyrics are often, or always, connected to a Christian worldview. In your opinion, why is this genre so well suited as a herald for the Christian gospel, and are there any obstacles connected to the link between the Christian teachings and the esthetics of Metal?

- How has your relationship been with the Extreme Metal community?

- How would you best describe the Extreme Metal community?

- Has there, in your opinion, been any positive or negative development, when it comes to the social culture and structures of the community, from the early beginning till today, that you feel is significant?

**comments**

These are essential questions to what is the core self-impression, so to speak, of the individuals of The White Band, and how they see themselves as Death Metal performers, and as Christians. Ultimately, they may have moved from an arch typical (and somewhat cartoonist) identity as Christians (obedient to the church, Lord-praising through hymns and traditional culture, conservative clothing and haircut) to the subcultural mixing of cultures (Thornthon 1997), academically tagged by Ricoeur as "Bricolage" (Wood 1991), the way the youth-dominated sub-cultural world relentlessly mixes old cultures into a new expression (eg; *Hip hop* and *Old-school Funk* into Trip *hop*) to then mix this new impulse with others again, creating new directions and trends, and so on.

I did, nevertheless, bring along a clear possibility, no; anticipation, rather, that the interview questions may be altered during the talks, something that also happened, due to the intimate nature of both the topics, but also the warm welcome I got from the three participants. The questions can therefore be seen as exemplary, or at best an outline of how the interviews evolved, and developed, throughout the talks.

**6.0 Structure and layout.**

The structure of the thesis will be; The prelude, pointing out what it is I shall cover, what theory/theories I shall use to discuss the gathered data, the problem, and why it is a valid one, if the data are falsifiable, and thus creates a valid thesis, and how the structure will be. The analysis, or discussion, founded in my theory, consisting of how The White Band, as a time-linear organism, and as individuals, experienced their having a special position in

the metal community. Finally comes the conclusive remarks, based on what has been unraveled, or discovered, in the discursive part of my thesis.

# Presentation of material & 𝔘nalysis.

**(**_An analysis on how to understand the core of the Extreme Metal scene, and the integration of the Christian belief system into it, based on the interviews of Elijah and Ezekiel of The White Band, and Julius of The Black Band, by kind permission.)_

**7.0. The cafe at the end of the line (Elijah).**

When I meet Elijah, the former vocalist and frontman of _The White Band_ (named this way, due to anonymizing of this thesis), a sunny Monday in February, it is at, in his opinion, the only place in the city of the encounter, that serves decent coffee. It turns out that he is a gourmet lover and a coffee fantast. Needless to say, this triggers the sociologist in me, and Pierre Bourdieu with his academic, table-wine drinking, 2cv drivers, springs to mind (Bourdieu 2007).

_"I love to take all sorts of ingredients and start a whole new cooking experience each time. Sometimes it turns out well, sometimes not"_, Elijah tells me. He´s just administered a party celebrating the anniversary of his wedding, and it was a smashing success. He wonders what kind of coffee I drink, and offers to surprise me with something I haven't tried before. A mug of Ethiopian brew is set before us, and it serves him right. It´s excellent coffee.

Elijah bears gracefully the sight of a man that has been down a road or two, when it comes to life. He comes forth as super gentle, with time on his hand for his listener, and for listening, but with a touch of anxious watchfulness. I can tell that he finds the situation a bit odd, and he has already expressed his feelings about how it would be better if I wrote a thesis on the congregation and The White Band, something I kindly responded to with assuring that already, there is a load of material written about prejudice religious damnation, whereas the investigation of the Extreme Metal scenes alleged conservative culture still is a semi-open book.

He buys it, but I sense that he wished I slapped the Christians a bit around.

Elijah says that The White Band started out for him when he was only fourteen, in the early Nineteen-Nineties. He was a member of a small church in Eastern Norway, a theologically charismatic society who´s belief system, according to Elijah, clearly dictates the individual's direct relationship to God and the need for the spreading of the gospel on the streets, and the correctly lead life.

*"In (the beginning of the Nineties), my elder brother and Ezekiel played with the idea of forming a band, and come (...), they asked me, at the age of 14, if I would join them, and I said yes. We didn't only have ideas about playing, but we also wanted to be a light in the dark in what we saw as a destructive setting. The Black Metal hype was at it´s peak in (the early Nineties), we had watched it all through the media, and we understood that this was a gloomy culture were a lot of strange happenings occurred. We wanted to represent something else. The White Band was to be something more than just music, it was supposed to mean something to the listener. Seeing it all in retrospect,*

*it has come clear to me that this partly was a way of justifying the aesthetic expression to our community. Performing Death Metal within a Christian congregation back then was not looked upon as proper, Christian Heavy Metal was acceptable for some, but it was unheard of with the brutality and the vocals of Death Metal, and we knew we had to be cunning to get it past the leadership of the church. There were only two other Norwegian bands in the Christian metal genre at the time, (anonymized), so the grounds for this inter-action of cultures had not been widely paved. The lecturing of Jesus was in our upbringing - in our hearts - and the pressure on the subject from the congregation gave us the idea to be transparent on where our hearts were situated. "*

They were allowed to use the church as a rehearsal studio, though a lot of the congregations members were against it, or at least found the music to be un-Christian and unsuited, with its roaring vocals and aggressive sound.

We can track this phenomenon of identity building, directly back to Jenkins (2014) and his laws on social identity, that emphasizes the need we have to reflect ourselves in, and create our image in response, to the eyes of the significant others around us. The need to form one's own identity in light of how people sees us, is not only common sense for most of us, but seems to be one of the foundation bricks of all of sociology. Both Bourdieu's *habitus* (2007), speaking of the individual need to bring one's own upbringings hard earned teachings, sub-consciously, along in any new setting, but also his interest in a person's journey from one *class* to another, and arguably, how he or she cunningly makes it happen, satisfying important key players along the way by presenting, in this case; the Extreme Metal culture, with one´s *social* and *cultural capital*, and Thornton´s (1997) theories on sub-culture,

stating that within any minority culture, there will always be a focus on "know-how ", or *social capital*, if you will, making clear to the group which individuals are to be reckoned with, and who one would want to keep on a leash, also stands in the center of attention in particular, in The White Band's case scenario. Elijah and the other members must have had a natural urge to keep their credibility updated, confronting both worlds, both congregation and metal heads, and the way they were fit to do so was by implementing a flawless musical technique towards the other musicians, and an equally flawless theological stand towards the congregation, the first acknowledged in excerpt, from this review in metalinjection.net, on june the 26th 2013, regarding the last recording;

*"To put it simply, **(The White Band)** are a legendary progressive metal act that, while somehow staying out of the limelight, pioneered a lot of progressive ideas in the genre of extreme metal from their debut (...) to their eventual demise in (...). With their self-titled record, which (Ezekiel) describes as a summation of everything the band has done in the past and then some, **(The White Band)** have surpassed all expectations and delivered the absolute perfect album to fans."*

There seems to be little doubt that what The White Band delivered, was by far good enough, as creativity and skill goes, at least to this reviewer, and, might I add, also according to my own musical expertise.

As socializing within their own church goes, it seems this was kept on an arm's length, and according to Ezekiel, the founding of a christian rock congregation, almost solely based on the aesthetics and expression of Rock and Indie Culture, gave them the headroom they searched for, theologically;

*"I was one of many founders of (the Rock Congregation) because we felt as if we fell between two chairs as christians and Metalheads. There was no integrated room for us, wholeheartedly. I have worked there since, and it is a good place for me. Still, we always kept up with our old congregation, and we've been welcomed and mostly supported there at all times".*

This, in turn, brings us to another one of the theorists listed above, namely T. O. Engen.

Also, Engen´s (1989) integration theories on *double-qualification*, states that the necessity for an individual to develop several understandings, or *social* and *cultural capital*, along, in maneuvering between different cultures (most commonly used in research around the clash of cultures in an ethnic minority), can make a person qualified within different closed societies, and, needless to say, also gives the individual a broadened sense of how the world interacts, culturally and socially, alongside the mainstream *monocultural* individuals. The core of this theory is arguably what lies in the core of all intrusion, if you will, of newly bred cultural input into already established culture. This is therefore certainly the case in the unveiling of the The White Band's story.

Elijah stands out as a person who´s come to a deep understanding of these facts, without what he sees as the burden of academic theory to back it. He seems to know it from lived life, something we could say strengthens Engen´s theory on *double-qualification* (1989), birth given and learned, and Bourdieu´s on *habitus* and growth/*class-journey* (2007). Elijah lends me a few stories about his academic friends at a theological faculty, and how he likes to fool around with their minds, giving harsh speeches at parties about the falseness of theory and the realness of action.

*"I once stood up at a party amongst academicians and started to saber out what I thought of the whole academical nonsense. It was supposed to be a joke, and it actually came forth as one, I've always believed in seeking the truth amongst people out there, and not within corridors."*

Not all solely mr Nice Guy, Elijah is, it may seem. This is equally not at all surprising, after all those years of battling for freedom of expression, within a tough crowd. Anyone would toughen up, though it might also tell us a few things about his *social* and *cultural capital*, how he's evolved the two over the years.

The identifying of oneself is, as both Jenkins (2014) and Thornthon (1997) insists, is a process that takes place in between the arenas of how we see ourselves, solely on the inner experience, the gut feeling, if you will, but vastly also the identifying statements, acknowledgments, interest and disinterest, criticism, and so on, that we receive from our closest societal surroundings.

As Elijah shows us, his tolerance for what he sees as *besserwissers* and normative authorities has worn thin, it may appear, over the roughly twenty years he has endured life as an outsider in most groups, following Thornthon (1997) in her description of subcultural behavior as somewhat orthodox and exclusive, that is until someone manages to create a new current on the subcultural arena. Elijah could, extracted from this very phenomenon of *exclusion-and-yet-survival*, grow some kind of *superpower*, in the sense that he could feel superior to the normatively driven authoritarians, the professors, the Metal "gurus" and media, or the Men of Cloth; in short - all those who, in some way or another, has, as he sees it, tried to slow him down in his attempts. Thus, he enjoys the fact that he can, empowered by whom he has

turned out to become, shine in a crowd of all the alleged "naysayers", showing them that he still stands firmly in his choices, and that the plan that The White Band - and himself - laid out many years ago, more or less worked out nicely. To him, no matter why he has become who he is, that display of power would signify a small victory, since it places him on the map solely because of who he wants to be seen as.

**Counter measures.**

I ask whether he thinks they were on a quest to develop their faith, or if it was some sort of counter reaction (in other words, if the social strategy they chose was *segregative* or *integrative*).

*"None of the above, really. We just wanted to be ourselves, and that which we were, was essentially a problem within the cultural setting we were a part of. We wanted to show the love of God in a gloomy environment, and still not compromise the ones we essentially were. That turned out to be anything but a walk in the park. A horrid example on this, is when the leader of praise in the congregation once came home from a visit to Canada, where he had performed exorcism. He leaned over and said to me; "you know, (Elijah), I've seen demons come out of a body, and the noise they make as they´re exorcised, sounds just like your vocals in (The White Band)". This was a terrible, and dominant thing to say to a fourteen year old, and it really took me."*

With ease, I somehow reckon, we can see the formation of how Elijah laid the ground for his *social strategy* in the narrative above. According to Jenkins (2014), the formation of the personal identity is vastly based on how the significant others in our lives feeds us and raises us in their image *at that*

*specific time*. In other words, how people say you appear, can sometimes be a *self-fulfilling prophesy* in terms of how it actually makes you behave, gradually, or, in this case maybe, how you counter strike. At fourteen, the backbone of most boys is a fragile one, and to stand your own ground can be quite the challenge. Comprehensively then, we understand that the impact of an Elder's statements on its teenagers, in a Christian community, is momentarily awful (in the term's explicit comprehension) and leaves a mark. This mark, here, seems to have matured within Elijah, delivering him, later on, into relatively successfully (as we will learn) handling the no-man's-land they created between their church and their artistic community.

Therefore, and as time went by, the band took a more conscious turn towards defining themselves towards their old community.

*"We claimed; being a Christian, is not like this, or this, or that. I started paying close attention to the sermons, and picked up a story from the Old Testament, about "expanding the tent plugs". I figured that was what I was a part of now, to expand the landscape of the church. I used the story of when they crowned King David, where it reads; Man looks to the exterior, but God looks to the heart ".*

Elijah claims this was a conscious act of integration strategy, but can we help him underline that particular statement?

The notion of *integration* is a widely debated subject in modern society, as we have all come to learn. Engen's theory (1989) states that in order to go from one *social culture* to the next, we need to adapt and compare the cultural actions of tradition, or *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), of the unknown to our own, thus discriminating what can, and what cannot, be the logical narrative

backdrop that explains them, in order to gain understanding of their nature, and adapt them into our own core of social knowledge.

But could you do the same within an already established culture, that you're already a born-into part of? In order to do so, we could argue that you would have to tear down all the alleged qualities your culture has provided you with, the image of you that gives them meaning within the worldview that continues to persists inside the culture.

Again, the knowledge of how his community works, learned from early on, and the later interaction with them and the band, gives Elijah a set of tools to maneuver through a well known *cultural landscape* (Bourdieu 2007). His *social capital* on Christian conduct is intact, and he uses his old *habitus*, wisely, to gain acceptance from them, as the relentless studying of Biblical literature (the baptism of King David, where God looks into the interior of man instead of the interior, the order from The Lord to pursue the ongoing expansion of the tent plugs) makes him capable of discursive interaction with his fellow Christians, and persuade them to see the formation of this, to the congregation, new artistic expression, as some sort of creation of God, or will of God, to help expand his gospel to new territories. Monseigneur Bourdieu would applaud the effort (2007).

Does Elijah, however, maneuver quite as elegantly through his new surroundings, the Extreme Metal community?

We read above, in Engen (1989), that a period of adaptation is required, from a person trying to make sense of a new culture. Thornton (1997) describes a small stream of light from the subcultural doors, allowing only the worthy inside. Bourdieu (2007) claims that the individual has a hard time climbing out

of the soothing crib of it's native culture, but that the journey is doable, though exhausting. I shall discuss this below, after going through the two first interviewees.

I ask Elijah if he can define what he means with "gloomy", a word that appears often in the conversation.

*"for me, the gloominess was superficial, when I looked at it from outside. It was more of an image thing. A lot of people want to point towards aggression and frustration, and about letting that out, when they explain Extreme Metal. That wasn't it for me at all. I just loved the effects, the riffs, the nail belts, the sculls and the black leather. I thought it was awesome. It was not a state of mind, I was never a gloomy or destructive person, as I was still a feel-good Christian boy. I loved people and life and to me Death Metal has never been a dark thing. Still, looking at the culture we started to become a part of, I saw another kind of darkness. That wasn't about the nails or skulls or covers at all, but how these people were captured in a destructive spiral. A lot of those we knew about ended up in suicide, drug abuse, self molesting, alcoholic to extremes. It was a dark thing to be a witness to".*

This *standing-outside-looking-in* way of seeing themselves, already then, in a broader sense, being able to choose style over message, comes as somewhat of an exception to the rule, the way I read it. Bourdieu (2007), Thornton (1997) and Engen (1989) are all very bent on the identity oriented part of style and aesthetics - the way it is supposed to carry you from one cultural crib to the next, or define what your insides look like to other people around you. What Elijah talks of here is an extremely individually free stance, considering the harshness of the community they operated within. His social strategy on the matter, could be seen as an attempt to assimilate, deeply and

almost stealth-like (under wraps, or camouflaged, if you will), their (The White Band's) Christian heritage into the narrative of the Extreme Metal cultus. He, somewhat jokingly, enters an unknown realm, but instead of kneeling before the king, he somehow takes on the part of the theater-group, and trusts the impact of entertainment on the inhabitants, hides his Christianity in the common attire, takes the stage, seemingly with grounded certainty. From up there, he could manage to persuade the listener of his right place amongst the other participant artists, thus creating sanctuary to himself and his band.

On my question on what kinds of feelings and reactions they had around the Extreme Metal community at the time, Elijah claims an early fascination towards the spectacular and psychedelic scenery of it all was at the base. It was exciting and scary. He does not think they were dragged towards it because of wanting to be a part of that aspect.

*"What dragged us towards the scene was not at first a need to be a part of the culture, but the weirdness and spectacle of it all was intriguing. It was exciting and scary. We believed the medias version at the time, that it was a lot bigger than it actually was, and sometimes we were scared shitless. I remember the anxiety when we were sitting at Elm Street, a metal bar in Oslo, once in the late nineties, wanting to be a part of the crowd and be light and salt in the darkness. A couple of Black Metal guys at the table beside us rose, came over and spit on us, saying it was because we were Christians, and that we were a disgrace to the culture. That day I was terrified, with the whole Black Metal environment backdrop, church burnings and all, and all of a sudden this happens to you. It freaks you out. Nevertheless, when we got to know our way around, we understood that all these Metalheads were just a bunch of kids, seeking some expression for their fears and anxiety towards*

*the establishment, to say something about what they meant was wrong with the world. After that I changed my view upon them".*

To Elijah, it seems like this was partly a game, something funny, though serious in it's own fashion. Surely, part of him seems to have wanted to revolt against the look expected of him, both ways, as we more or less all do in that period of our lives. Nevertheless, the ability to see oneself, as Elijah does, as a love-soldier of God, if you will, and come off as something most people around you define as the opposite field, is cunning, imaginative and *class-journey-esque*, in it´s own nature (Bourdieu 2007). It both defies the theory of habitus, along with underlining it.

I say this, as I read Bourdieu (2007) as a solid defender of the notion that it is vital for any class journier to, first and foremost, put some sort of seriousness into the effort, if she wishes to enjoy a secure travel from one class entity to the next, but also that it could - in most cases - require *keeping the cards close to one's chest*, if you will, or at least be aware of who she shares the intel of her plan with. In Elijah's case, the openness and bluntness of the narrative, seems to me to put him in a category shared with a minority amongst *class journeyers*, and therefore makes him a minority of a minority, an exception to the rule of how to, both, perform a safe journey from one *cultural habitus* to the next, and also, how to act according to the *comme-il-faut* - the natural order of the group - of the Extreme Metal community (back in the nineties, mind you) (Bourdieu 2007, Thornthon 1997).

If we see the *habitus* as a complex software, pinned to every individual exclusively, the nature of the phenomena, it could pretty much take as many shapes as there are persons, logically (Bourdieu 2007, Jenkins 2014). In any case, this must be said to create a self awareness that surely has helped

Elijah in his discussion with the Secular Metal environment, the ability to sink into the right expressive habit, and play amongst those that disagree with you, or even despise you, and still stand tall in what you do. It seems like a necessity to survive, artistically.

It would be appropriate to drag in Thornton (1997) and her ideas on sub-cultural evolvement. Her emphasizing the "ever-forwardness" as a kind of prerequisite for the very existence of sub-culture, her love for Ricoeur´s theorem on *bricolage* (Wood 1991), ever-new revisions overlapping each other in a chain of re-invented artistic expression, seems applicable to Elijah's narrative, as I read his explanations on the *whys, wheres* and *hows* that made them act as they did; standing so tall in their beliefs, as a solid symbol of the natural impact of *habitus* changing, laid as bricks upon already defined core values (Wood 1991), and the same *habitus* clearing the way for a new interpretation of Death Metal narrative, expression and artistry.

**Habitus, Subculturalism, or…?**

For the common mind, the deductive ways of classical sociology, can be read as a field of practice we simply use our common sense about, when handling. The definition by Thornton on *subculture* (1997), tends to drag us in the direction that you need counter-creativity to form a subculture, i.e. a reformation of a broader, older understanding of how to fit into a certain culture.

But can we honestly say, in this case, that the subjects at question had any knowledge about the Extreme Metal society, or desire to enter into it wholeheartedly?

Elijah defining himself as a "Christian happy-boy", draws me in another direction. He grew up in a happy family. He has had no «beef» or quarrel with his relatives, as he says. He felt no need to distance himself from the church, or in any way insult them. Though the *social strategies* he chose might not have taken him exactly where he wanted, he ended up getting their attention, as when he searched the sermons for Bibel quotes and came upon the one with the "*expansion of the tent-plugs*" (in the first biblical book of Kings). His heart seems to have been bent on keeping a relation to his old church, and the way he did it was to relentlessly argue his way through biblical quotes to exemplify why what they did was ok, and how it would actually help spread the Good News, why it was his calling and therefore an act of holiness, not to be taken in any other manner than seriously. An important reason, situated back on his own ball court, if you will, why he felt the need to be a Death Metalhead, seems to me to be, that he simply fell in love with a certain way of dressing, and a certain style of music, and that by this, he additionally felt that it was God's will that he'd do so, if we ought to respect his answers (and I definitely think we should). Ergo, we could argue, that Elijah breaks with the theories of Thornton (1997), in that he´s strived, consciously and systematically, to obtain his Christian core, and to keep within the bosom of the church, not contesting it, his creative expression always underlined by the wish to fulfill what he believed was his calling, his gift as a Christian. In a manner of speaking, the quest that The White Band set out for, can be seen as a kind of modern crusade, in lack of a less tainted expression, towards what they saw as a misguided darkness, only the blades and armor had been

replaced with unconditional love; love for the genre, love for God and lust for change and constructivism. There might, in other words, have been a desire amongst them, to *integrate* (Gravem 2004) the Metal environment into their own Christian beliefs, instead of the other way around .

We can also argue that the theory of *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) is bended a bit by the data we collect from Elijah, not in a grave way, but still. His *persona* engulfs a great many layers for a mere musician, showing an almost incredible ability to distance himself and put a meta perspective on his own interaction with all the diverse settings he has been forced to operate within. As *habitus* goes, this is a little difficult to pinpoint into anything else but a solid social understanding and ability, maybe too much for the wellbeing of Elijah, seeing as how when we understand every aspect of a case, we might struggle to make a defined ethical conclusion on aspects of life on our own. It is easier, as Thornthon points out (1997), to fall into the ranks of the social group we turn to, and not blindly, but maybe specifically, pick the aspects of conduct nearest to our own comfort, and settle in, if you will.

Bourdieu (2007) could be accused of claiming, that we each have a set of *savoir-faire tools* with us from birth, observed by us, taught to us and adapted by us, as a matter we can almost equal to our own ego, our selves. The trick, in that perspective, might be how to read Bourdieu, or how to interpret what he's actually saying.

Elijah is solidly anchored in that his image of God has changed radically over the years, because of his journey through the music scene. The White Band was on a quest, and the way they stood tall in their beliefs, but kept on hammering out their brutal music, gave them a two-sided story to build their existence on. He comes of with a sort of fiery theology, where the main

message is that you do not know what people around you have gone through, and must therefore never judge and always be gentle and well meaning towards others. This must have been a great help during the harsh night at Elm Street (as He spoke of above), or, when they were called up by an impresario hours before entering onstage for a venue, with the message that they were withdrawn from the gig, as the main attraction had refused to share stage with them - again because they were outspoken Christians.

The grown up version of Elijah has a substantial amount of new baggage, as opposed to the 14 year old Metalhead. He has, in my understanding, developed sound and critical thoughts towards his old congregation, his meeting with both them and the Metal environment, and a mindful way of living, as a creative person. Today he sees a lot of what happened back in the nineties with the distance natural for a 40 year old ex musician, and through his interview he lets an edge of, not so much bitterness, but rather a protective distance, shine through his narrative. It is as though he observes his past as a kind of social experiment, or a path that he looks behind at with a wonder of how he got to where he is today, exemplified by, for instance, this quote;

*"(...) nevertheless, when we got to know our way around, we understood that all these Metalheads were just a bunch of kids, seeking some expression for their fears and anxiety towards the establishment, to say something about what they meant was wrong with the world. After that I changed my view upon them".*

Arguably, then, his *habitus* back at the time of The White Band's first steps, seems to have failed to interfere with the making of the band, but rather have

helped him in slowly integrating into the skeptical Extreme Metal environment, doing it´s best (or worst) to keep him and The White Band on the outside, hence a withdrawal from The *"Sodoma" festival* (Anonymized) , the non-existence of interviews after a nomination (see interview with ezekiel below) for a music award, the non-collaboration of other secular bands in stage sharing. His natural sense of *double-qualification* can almost be seen to have leapt at him, hence his thoughts above on the way he changed his view on the whole culture, leaving him open minded. When he did encounter obstacles along the way, in form of prejudice or alienating from the Extreme Metal scene (or his congregation), he seems to have controlled this in such a manner, that I ask myself how much his upbringing could have slowed him down, or held him tightly in place.

His thoughts - in retrospect - on how he must have reacted, subconsciously, to the waves of more or less hidden remarks coming towards the band, with fright, wonder, and eventually, withdrawal from the scene, have a much clearer ring to me of bonds being broken, of *habitus* changing (Bourdieu 2007), but it did not grab at him at first, it seems. Him being an exception to the rule, is unquestionably a point to bring into this lay-down, but it could arguably be safe to say that he does not represent the arch-type minority kid in facing the opposite world (Engen 1989). He seems to have been taking the world on, more or less, seeing it as a sort of playground where he could evolve and perform, and not as a hostile area, dangers lurking about that he didn't feel he could handle, or defeat. This staleness could also be said to have grown from a strength he may have gotten from the very upbringing within a safe theological environment, of course, parented and guided through his childhood with the certainty of God's unconditional love and the walls of the church around him, this manifesting itself as a remark I present in

the spirit of Bourdieu (2007), Jenkins (2004) and Engen (1989), as the integral identity of Elijah seems to flow from his evolvement, from - and between - one *habitus* to the next, qualifying on several grounds, reflecting himself in the feedback he naturally received in "entering the ring" with new tricks up his sleeve, new rules, if you will, in the form of replacing the alleged anti-Christian Death Metal expression with aggressive Christian lyrics instead. He somehow managed to juggle balls of different shape and size, in a fashion that lead to a rather unique career.

Elijah recalls a limbo after their nomination in a music award under the category of metal, for their 2007 album "*Xerox*" (Anonymized). There was almost no press, and no invitations to sit-downs at any of the networks.

*"In resemblance (a famous Black Metal artist) was invited a lot of times, talking about his winemaking in Italy. It's as if they (the media) are terrified of inviting Christians into their studios, for some reason".*

The quietness from all sides must have felt unfair, and It most definitely placed them under a glass dome, looking out, only being allowed to operate within the hemisphere of their own kind. If we'd asked Jenkins (2014), it would certainly qualify as a badly disguised message from the Kingdom of Extreme Metal to stay out, and again, if we turned to Bourdieu (2007), he would nod recognizably and state that this was a typical reaction of one *cultural class* protecting itself from reformation and outside intrusion from another.

## 7.1. The ways of the king (Ezekiel)

When I drive in to meet Ezekiel, it is with a sort of *cartoony* image of him, created by a lot of hearsay concerning him. He is supposedly the kind of guy who comes to you from all over the place, a flush of words running from his mouth.

Ezekiel in real life, however, is nothing of the kind.

His studio is located in the central east of a major East Norwegian town, and above it lies a training studio, feeding us the occasional thump in the ceiling - when the athletes cannot take no more - throughout the interview. He meets me in the hallway, asks if I'm thirsty for coffee, and gives me a heads up on the building of his special, and most adequately tuned studio premises.

In terms of how he experienced the early days of The White Band and their co-operation with the congregation, he somehow gives the same replies like those of his band mate, only with a slightly differed worldview as backdrop.

Where Elijah seems to have experienced his upbringing as comfy, but somewhat closed and narrow-minded, Ezekiel expresses an attitude of gratitude towards it being a safe haven that was always there. Elijah appears to have been on a quest for respect and appreciation from the church - after revealing the band, and from the metal scene, as we can imagine easily, where I feel Ezekiel sees the shortcomings of his congregation towards leather and nails, and the shortcomings of the Extreme Metal culture towards their Christianity, as somehow in tune with the natural environment we exists in.

Having said that, it seems to me that he in no manner disagreed with Elijah on the moral stand on where they were going, and according to both, the band was one voice in expressing their appreciation towards God and the task they felt they were given.

As to the bold task of "light and salt in the darkness", I start out by asking Ezekiel how he felt they could interpret the teachings of the Bible into the rawness of Death Metal.

*" I think my intentions on expressing the gospel through metal music, lay entirely on the effectiveness and expressive nature of Death Metal. You meet so many bold people in the Biblical narrative, people who stood up against the crowd, believing in what they had set out to do, willingness to be an instrument of God. They were all super uncompromising, just like Death Metal is. When we were younger, we were occupied with the contrast of God towards Satan. We were, after all, operating within a culture where people called themselves Satanists, so our task seemed very clear. As we grew older, I think we leaned more towards writing about things that were important to us as individuals, for instance love... If people could experience love from what we expressed, that felt like a privilege to me. I think that the nature of the Holy Spirit is to make people feel naked and seen, but still warm, loved and comfy, and that is the core expression that I wanted (The White Band) to be built upon, and that I wanted to give forward to the audience. I guess that was a more exciting theme than that of God´s war against Satan"*

The interesting aspect, in this difference in retrospective identifying of their common past, is the manner of which their narrative takes shape. In Elijah's answers I find a whole lot of bewilderment. Frases like -

*"that which we were, became a problem within the cultural setting that we were a part of"*,

*"I think i believe in the good in man, even though we are rotten to the core, it´s the good in us that I believe in"*

or

*"on my account I think that the problems we faced in relation to the church is just as problematic* (i.e. as the one they faced in relation to the Extreme Metal scene) *but i guess that´s not crucial to this thesis?"*

- carries with them not so much bitterness, than a more constant watchfulness, or perhaps a solid skepticism towards the world.

In that manner, Ezekiel could be said to have settled down in a steadier *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) than his band mate has. His unconditional humbleness towards a sort of cultural relativism, is striking compared to Elijah's more radical, almost reformist attitude towards how he feels conservative cultures should soften up, as shown above. When I say *sounder habitus*, I speak of the traditional conceptional academic kind, the one that Bourdieu (2007) speaks of that accepts the native culture for what it is. I will not argue that Elijah in any way feel a need to punish or "set straight" the characters from back then, but rather that his fundamental feeling towards the matter would be something along him seeing the very essence of open-mindedness as a quality that should lie at the foundations of any culture, and that the fact that it often does not, has given him reasons for a sort of ideological grief through periods of his life. If so, we could argue that

Elijah's *multiculturalism* and *double qualities* (Engen 1989) emerged from a stronger sense of *autonomy* than that of Ezekiel's. There could almost be talk of a kind of by-passing the whole issue of *habitus* and dive straight into the task of *double-qualifying* one self, whereas in Ezekiel's case, we see a more direct, somewhat evangelical, acceptance of the fact that people are all but flawless compared to God, and that in accepting this, we make it easier for ourselves and those around us to complete the task in joint fellowship. Then again, this ultimately ends up *double-qualifying* him as well...

These are points I make, because they say something about how the different persons appear in front of me, and might be helpful guidelines along the way to me, in order to understand the nature of the problem. On the other hand, they may as well relate nicely, as the stories of any inter-cultural happening says something about where people come from and where they have gone since then (Jenkins 2014).

**Integrating into metal.**

Ezekiel, when I ask more directly about the darker aspects of the Extreme Metal trade, shares with me a suspicion of a sort of underlying resident evil, that he claims he has met throughout his career.

*"I sense some kind of darkness in what happens to some people when nightfall comes, what one tends to free up space for, in one's surroundings, how one talks to people, how one contributes to one's surroundings. Normal Rock n´roll bands parties in somewhat normal aggressive manners on tour, but in some cultures there is a lot of crap going on, in a way sex and drugs and Rock n´Roll, but taken to extremes. It's as if your core attitude is that you do not wish good upon the people around you, so naturally unpleasantry is what comes out of it. When you additionally get set straight, verbally, on*

*the notion that not everybody wishes the best for people around them, then that makes you stop and wonder, it gives you a wake up call. These aspects were totally new to me. Both according to my faith, but also standard societal norms, a minimal amount of courtesy is the consensus, but within some Metal cultures this is simply not the case. That being said, I must stress that the whole of the environment mostly consists of incredibly nice people, but there are some dark and gloomy exceptions"*

There is, from neither members, no accusations towards the Extreme Metal community, as a whole, of being truly dark, Satanic or in any kind evil. But when it comes to single persons, and extremely small fractions, hiding from society, there has been encounters. What troubles Ezekiel is not so much the artists, who he sees, mainly, as theatrical and nerdy musicians with a "taste of the trade" and overwhelmingly nice personalities, but rather the disciples, or the fans, who, according to him, interpret the lyrics and style into their own worship of destruction, and, in not so few occasions, even suicide. There is, in other words, a clear ringing distinction between the *advertiser* and the *receiver*, seeing as how an urge for *socializing*, and *assimilation* in some individuals (by that, referring to the way an individual performance always will stand on its own feet, and therefore never truly *integrates*, but rather adapts in an environment of equals), here of creative mind, to find true expression for their specific *persona*, presents no real danger, as it in almost every case is talk of using the alleged Devil worship, simply as a creative backdrop, to paint the music in coherently toned colors. The *receivers*, on the other hand, represents a far more exposed group, indulged by the lyrics and overwhelming theatricals of the scene, to fall into Satanism, in an attempt to diverse themselves from the mainstream public, but ending up being mainstream themselves within a destructive larger and cartoonized group of

followers without the necessary *cultural* and *social habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) required to deeply understand and reveal the implied diversity of the *subcultural language* (Thornthon 1996), thus not acting up to the original creatively crafted message, but rather receiving an altered message, missing the original point of the music, namely that to *express*, and not necessarily to *act upon*.

Jenkins' (2014) point here, in the theory of *mirroring* one's soul in the definitions of all the people one share certain amounts of time with, is spot on, as it says something about how one can end up with a totally convex image of oneself, simply because one is not able to fully decloth the sub currency of the messages one's significant other feeds one with, and therefore builds up a misinterpreted version of oneself.

Ezekiel continues;

*"Metal is in itself a rebellion, and the mission is to stand up against the Establishment. Black Metal stands up against the Church as an oppressive force in society, and from that they build upon an extreme antipathy. For some reason, the Norwegian society shows some kind of pride towards Black Metal as well. When an artist can shout "kill the christians" from the stage of the national Opera house, without anyone interfering, then something is in motion. I find it very peculiar; if it had been laid out in some sort of "splatter"- humorist fashion, that would have been one thing, but these are artists that take themselves and their message very seriously. It is odd that society tolerates it, especially if you think of all the youngsters who adapts to the message and integrates it into their own lives. In the worst case it could lead to drugs and even suicide.*

- But do you think that this has been taken further than to only be about the Christians, are we scratching the surface of *fascism* here?

*That all depends on how you define things. There is a clear and upfront oppression of women reoccurring in Black Metal expression - never spoken of, but highly visible. I think it belongs in the obscure underworld, it is strange that it is allowed a space in everyday culture. As fascism goes, I am uncertain of some of the values of renown bands. Nazism is an incredibly dark path to succumb to... of course, I only have my own experiences to build on in speaking of this. I just wonder what it is that makes people draw the curtain and decide that they are to lead a super-destructive and dark life. Those of us who grew up in a Christian culture, tend to think that you have the ones on the bright side of faith, and those on the other. What makes people end up in an idealized self destructive lifestyle is beyond me, as the scientologists say; it is not the path to survival. I am not out to judge anyone, but I find it very strange."*

Here, Ezekiel defines himself sharply against the cultural backdrop of sex and drugs that society tends to put on the bigger Rock scene. He will not, as we read, fall into temptation and put judgement on the people he encounters on his path, relating to the Christian *commandment* of leaving the judgement of souls to God alone, following his *habitual* (Bourdieu 2007) core belief. But as Thornthon has implied (1997), the full *socializing* into the *habitus* of Extreme Metal has proven to present a problem for him. How is it possible to stand alongside the soccer field, if you allow my comparison, and still be an active player of the game happening on mid field? In other words, is it not impossible for Ezekiel to crawl in under the skin of the culture, when there exists core values there, that so sharply disagrees with his conviction? Would

it not be the natural reaction of the subculture to try and keep him on an *arm's-length*, if you will (Thornthon 1997)?

**Squeezed**

On several occasions, The White Band experienced a notion of *segregative* behavior (Gravem 2004, Engen 1989) from the Extreme Metal culture that they tried to operate within, as if the very existence of them as a band was an annoyance to the culture.

Ezekiel Recalls:

*"People put obstacles in our way. We were drawn from The Sodoma festival (anonymized metal festival) and we also got a call four hours before a show where we were told that we were withdrawn from the program, because the main act did not want to stand on the same stage as us. That, of course, was just a rejection. I once played in a band called (Anonymized), that I was very skeptical towards at first, consisting of one scientologist, some christians - outspoken and hidden, one satanist and one anti-religious punk rocker. In time, a fierce skepticism towards Christianity surfaced, sometimes in an unpleasant language. It seemed that the respect towards Christians equaled zero. Later on, Satanic bands emerged from that constellation."*

There is something very central to the whole essence of this thesis in this statement. Ezekiel experiences an awakening of hostility towards his choice of faith, right in the midst of people who has chosen to form a band constellation with him; arguably, people who would, under so-called normal circumstances, play on his side of the table, simply because of the music they were making together. What happens could be seen as a shift from an alleged prospect of *integration* - the gathering of forces from different cultural

and social entities, carrying with them their respective *capital* (bourdieu 2007) - that turns on itself, and creates a *segregation* (Gravem 2004) of clashing interests - and the mere exclusion of Christianity as nothing more than a misguidance, or, might we suggest, a failed attempt to understand the nature of Rock n' Roll, the latter supported by both the phenomena of the exclusion from the "Sodoma" festival, but also by the mockery of Ezekiel's band mates.

Sarah Thornthon (1997) would say that this would be the archetypical behavior to expect from people operating within subcultural settings, protecting to all extents the crucial *identity* of the entity. There might even have been an honest intention by all the participants of (Anonymized religio-plural Band), to, honestly, form the constellation *specifically* because of it's mixed cultural lot, but we might imagine that the subcultural *comme-il-faut*, the *habitus* (Bourdieu 2012) of each contributor made some of them turn, automatically, as time passed and "push came to shove", if you will. There was simply too much to swallow, it might seem, for some of them, as they had to coexist with people who inhabited a different set of values than that of their own origin. This makes us contemplate the openness, the hidden prejudice, the fear of the "others", the somewhat tribal attitude, and the mere positivity, actually, of the core-intent of creating subcultures.

Are subcultures, as a suggestion merely, simply smaller entities, easier to relate to, in the sense of overview and control, that makes the whole prospect of prejudicial behavior something that might be transformed, in the right hands, into something that we relate to as creativeness held on a tight leash, when it in fact might be a shelter for fear of those who differ from the interpretation of its key actors, or gate keepers? Might we even suggest, that this indicates a lesser (than average) *social capability* of those involved, and

that the exclusiveness of the whole expressive orthodoxy simply is rooted in uncertainty of one's own place in time and space (Jenkins 2014, Thornthon 1997)?

## 7.2. Secularism and privatized religion.

Arguably, and needless of introduction, the impact of the anti-religious domination of postmodern sociology (Berger 1969, Habermas and Ratzinger 2006), from the 1950´s to 2000's, where sociologists, such as Jurgen Habermas and Peter Ludwig Berger, mostly heralded the inevitable death of religion, as a natural development of modern thinking, put it´s natural mark on Norway, religiously. The state initiated a growing distance and cool down towards its former ally, the Church of Norway, and was, increasingly, kept out of official settings but also the state-church congregations (Nybo 2006).

Being religious has, arguably, for many been troublesome during this period, and has been a largely privatized phenomena for the individual believer (Elstad & Hvalvik 2015), logically restraining to interact with the growing dismay of the general surroundings.

This follows Engen's (1989) theory of *assimilation* and *double-qualification* sharply. In order to fit into a secularized society, the religious individual keeps her *theology* to *herself*, keenly nursing her religion as a *private* matter never to be mentioned, in order to not create any friction towards colleagues, family or friends. The religious *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), then, that was a daily asset in earlier times, is being kept under wraps, so to speak, and is pushed further and further into oblivion. This again, bereaves the next generation of knowledge of the religious *habitus*, and could in many forms develop into

mockery towards any worldview that does not follow the scientific laws of nature, so academically renowned by 300 years of enlightenment and an overwhelming library of scientific truth, studies and findings. *Pragmatism* could arguably be seen as the sole true religion of modern Western Society, with a few exceptions, today.

We can ask ourselves, then, following Bourdieu´s train of thought on *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), what this does to the Norwegian sense of *decency* towards religious minorities, in this case a Christian Death Metal band? Is there a loss of know-how, or *cultural religious habitus*, amongst the people, that forces us on the one side, as a whole, to ignore the validity of all minority worldviews because of their reactionary, or revolutionary, tendencies towards *common habitus*, while we, in our "ignorance and bliss" simply regard our, relatively, newly discovered individual *lebensraum* and indefinite freedom of thought and speech, as a commodity that we deserve, in contrast to those not so fortunate, and that religion simply is a way of relieving us of those assets? Is, in other words, our way of exclusiveness so dear to us that we simply ignore and exclude these religious ideas, that threatens our social and cultural mobility?

Further; does this also apply to the already marginalized group of Extreme Metal musicians, and fans, when someone from another group, in this case Christians, tries to penetrate their culturally guarded castle walls - if you will - and refuses to *assimilate* (Engen 1989) within the groups ideas, but rather claims the grounds of their cultural expression, thus creating a *new minority*, within the *monoculture*, and so forth threatens to change the whole identity of the group, that in so many ways is built upon standing together against the order of common society?

In Engen´s view (Engen 1989), the whole nature of *double-qualification* is based upon the keeping of your old *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), when adjusting to a new form of culture that you wish to be a part of. The avoidance of *assimilation* clearly lies at the heart of every individual that has not fled the scene of their old world, but for various reasons seeks to harvest the fruits of a new acquaintance, and for The White Band, this was paramount in order to obtain the *rights-of-existence* as a Metal Band, while not succumbing to religious discrimination. In order to manage this, a *class journey* was taken, that, according to Bourdieu (2007), is possible for anyone, but requires an open mindset and keen observational skills, for the individual to succeed in her quest, as seeming as an outsider, or showing up with the wrong luggage of *social* or *cultural capital*, might be perilous to the mission in itself, exposing her as someone who clearly does not belong, and therefore threatens the already laid down *habitus* of the class or culture she´s trying to get invited into.

In The White Band's case, this phenomena of *exclusion* is highly visible. Them being systematically ignored, and sometimes confronted, outspokenly, because of their beliefs, shows a high sense of protectionism within certain parts of the Extreme Metal culture, if we concentrate on the beginning of their career, the Nineteen-nineties.

Nevertheless, resembling an answer to the prayers of The White Band,  a development happens, and it happens according to Thornton´s (Thornton 1997) theory of subcultural *bricolage* (Wood 1991) and renewability, Bourdieu's (2007) theories of journeying from one *cultural class* to another, and also Engen (Engen 1989), laying out the prospects of a renewed

kindergarten society - if you will - advantageously gaining insight and knowledge, in multi cultural mixes of *double-qualified* children and employees.

According to Elijah and Ezekiel, the Extreme Metal community opened up throughout the first decade of the millennia, and the criticism towards different mindsets or worldviews softened. This is exemplified by the development of New Metal (*a mixture of the modern version of R n'B, rap and Metal*), so-called White metal - with a christian message - and other cross-over genres developing over the first decade of the Millennia. There are sale stands on metal festivals entirely focused on Christian metal now, according to Ezekiel, and church burning seems a ghost from the nineties.

## 7.3. The reformation of the reformists.

How, then, does this intervention from religion, the alleged enemy of Extreme Metal, happen? Was it not written in the foundations of the whole structure of Black and Death metal that the main message was to emerge from the old ways of religious conduct, into atheism and individualism?

According to Thornton (1997), the phenomena is a bound-to-happen, as any subcultural movement is based on exactly that; to renew the ways of an already existing trend or culture. Metal grew out of Hard Rock, that grew out of the Hippie movement, that was inspired by Blues and Folk and mixed with earlier pop music, that came from Rock n' Roll of the fifties, that emerged from the Chicago Blues bands of the forties, and so on, all the way back to African slaves, implementing European traditional folk music into their rhythmic music.

Ergo, and true to the theory, The White Band was a phenomena waiting to come forth, as the metal genre itself, from *Ozzy Osbourne* to *Iron Maiden* and *Dimmu Borgir*, clearly had an opening for the unquestionable theatrical narrative of the Bible, and could arguably be said to have invited The White Band's Christianity inside, unknowing themselves of the fact.

If we read Engen´s (1998) theories of *monoculture* and *cultural qualification*, Bourdieu´s (2007) on *class journey* and *habitus*, with a backdrop of Thornton´s (1997) theory of subcultural theory of the *bricolage* development and ongoing entwining and brick building of genres and styles, we can build a picture that points us, presumably, in the right direction.

Elijah and Ezekiel both talk of a tight grip of metal culture slowly being altered through a period of almost twenty years. As aforementioned, Ezekiel has been engaged in a musical project that consisted of a *Scientologist*, an *Atheist* and an alleged *Satanist*, something he found a strange and somewhat challenging constellation, but nevertheless a band that played together.

I believe that to find the answer to the closed circles of the Atheist, or even Satanist, Metal Cultures in the Nineties, and their reluctance towards religion, we must again turn to sociologists Peter Berger (1969) and Jurgen Habermas´s (2006) *secular humanist sociology* of the postmodern era.

Western societies experienced a softening of theology on several grounds during the post-war period of the Nineteen-fifties and Sixties, but the idea, famously, was even earlier introduced by Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, in their (in) famous work on *class struggle*, the *opium* that religion allegedly was to the masses, and God as merely the replacement of a *father figure* in a

young person's life, all the way back in the Nineteenth Century, and we can even trace it back to Eighteenth Century *enlightenment* philosophy.

Following Peter Berger's thesis (1969), an inevitable *secular* wind blew through Europe and The U.S. alongside the modernization, education and growing rights of western individuals. It was during the Nineteen-sixties' revolting academic "bashes of the theories", so to speak, that Berger (1969) and Habermas (2006) heralded the before mentioned inevitable death of religion as a natural companion to the enlightenment and individualization of the people. Secularism itself, it seemed, was a sign of freedom from oppressive religious norms, and an invite to pragmatism and faith in science as the deliverer of truth.

One could always argue about the significance of Academia to the average person in a society, but I would suggest that the secular backdrop of this period, inevitably shaped the way the whole societal debate developed and gave the same average person a sense of "divorce", or separation, from the earlier times she'd experienced, and from the State and Church, acting out societal norms and unwritten laws of conduct, side by side.

Imaginatively, we see the whole outburst of the Rock n´Roll culture, the invention of "youth" as a defining period of a person's life, the *Flower Power* movement battling the governmental institutional powers, the dark Rock culture of the Seventies end Eighties, with an alleged tendency to the worship of drug abuse and *narcissism*, as a strong definer of a society driven far away from the pietism of earlier religious governmental and societal conduct, as explained by Berger and Habermas (ibid). *Social*, *cultural* and *economic capital* became something that, more and more, belonged to the masses, and the sense of individual freedom, drove people to what both Berger (ibid)

and Habermas (ibid), amongst others, refers to as a conduct of common sense, enabling the reduction of a need to *explain existence through religion.*

Could this new truth-bearing doctrine, arguably, have laid the ground for a *discrimination* of *religious minorities* in the western hemisphere, at the fall of the Twentieth Century? Is it the sense of being able to define one's own truth that made a "bunch of kids" go all-in, and test the boundaries of freedom, in such a manner that they hoped to shake the foundations of the freedom itself? And, could it be that the lack of a moral definer, i.e. the Church, was such a problem for some that they had to develop a new sense of *spiritual awakening*, well aware of their individual freedom, dressing in Satanic garment, ritual-like smearing the blood of animals on their demonically made-up faces, *growling* out their hatred towards an already allowing establishment?

It would, in some manner, explain the heat that allegedly was put on The White Band as they tried, and eventually succeeded in some manner, to fight their way into the culture and somewhat turn it a little. It would also be a stronghold to back up the Bourdieu-esque (2007) notion that any *class journey* is possible with the right amount of *savoir-faire*, or *cultural* and *social capital*, if you will.

Why, then, this early skepticism, nay, sometimes hatred, towards cultural intrusion of the Metal scene?

## 7.4. The parallel side of the table (Julius).

To strengthen my thesis´ validity and cover the grounds of what it is the modern secular *Metalhead* could look like today, I interviewed an insider of the mainline metal culture in Norway," Julius", a vocalist, guitarist, composer

in his mid twenties, from the non-Christian Black Metal band, hereafter referred to as *The Black Band*. He is not old enough to be a part of the early days of Norwegian Black Metal, and represents the era after the Millennium shift.

Julius lives with his girlfriend in a tidy apartment on the central west side of a major East Norwegian city and studies engineering. He comes forth with a sense of strongly developed self-control and bears a pleasantness about him that, to the researcher, almost comes off as something out of Zen Buddhism.

Julius, however, starts out as an Agnostic.

**Hello Darwin - and you others.**

In response to my question on belief and worldview, Julius says;

*"My worldview is, maybe typical for that of an engineer, built upon the laws of science and self-obtainability. I see the development of individual intelligence as somehow driven by the need to protect one's own interests. We are just animals, something I don´t emphasize in a bigger scale than that of reproduction, the need for a comfortable life, to hold enough wealth to secure one's existence, not necessarily focused on money for all, people emphasize different aspects of life as important for survival. I think the need for stability, in a way that feels individually fitted, is central to what lies in the core of each individual. An individual is first and foremost interested in itself and its own adaptability to its surroundings. Thus, I do not see God as a key element to existence, but rather, as animals, I believe we are driven by an instinct of survival. You could say that to a certain point I value a pragmatism of not adding a higher purpose to life than that of existence in itself."*

- What about destiny?

*"Destiny is somehow supported by science in that all that happens is predictable, how mass redistributes through the universe, if you make use of a significantly high level of detail, so I believe in destiny in the way that inevitability is a constant of science. There is, I think, a predestination that started the moment mass, that we are all a part of, was created, and started a chain-reaction that will go on until the universe eventually ends."*

- So that would place you amongst the Atheists?

*"To a certain degree. I have always been intrigued by the question of the soul or the spirit. I believe in the existence of parallel universes, and the possibility of transformation of mass and intelligence between these dimensions, in events of death or similar cases, that could explain experiences of visits to other worlds and levels of existence that many religious people refer to. I can assume that this is a possibility, but it remains more of an interest for me, rather than something I would define as a religious belief. When speaking of Heaven and Hell, I believe that is a product of memories of one's own lived life, that sort of adds up, to either remorse, acceptance or even inner peace in the moment of a person's death. I believe that the self in some way places judgement on itself at the finish line, and that this is what we experience as entering Heaven or Hell, and that that very nano-second can come of as an eternity, seeing as how time is a relative factor. Still, I believe all this is a consequence of nature and something that we create in our own minds."*

Julius attempts, to the best of his abilities, to draw an outline of how he sees religious belief as simply a matter of science yet to have been explored, as I read him. In short, he sums up the possibility of angels, demons, afterlife et

cetera, as both relative towards the concept of time, matter, energy, and so on. In many ways, what he says does not contradict what Elijah and Ezekiel believes in, other than the mere theological details of Christianity, that states a will behind the creation of our world, of humans and the universe, as we know it. Julius' movement towards understanding and acceptance of other worldviews than his own, shows a leap from his own *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), a leap he started on already in exploring new musical and ethical grounds as a young adult, and into a different *cultural class*, thus sinking deeper into the academical understanding of a typical *subculturee* (Thorthon 1997).

We can, arguably - to serve the thesis better, and give it a clearer ring - define Julius as an atheist, but, then again, we can also stretch him towards agnosticism, as he in many ways seems to explain that which people see as a higher intelligence, or God, as somewhat scientifically valid, as long as one reaches the full physically scientific understanding required to prove his theories. Anything, in other words, is quite possible for him, and the solid clarification of his worldview seems a little lost...

**The hellishness of Metal.**
I ask Julius what he thinks it was that drove him towards Black Metal?

*"I have tried to free myself from the defined genres within metal, but my music would definitely be defined within the Black Metal genre. I think what drove me towards Black Metal, through early years of listening to harder and harder material, was that it seemed that those involved in that particular branch of music had a stronger focus on what they were doing than those from other genres of metal. These days I have found interest in religious bands, such as Woven Hand and 16 Horsepower, and when I first got into*

*Black Metal it seemed to me that they had an almost religious backdrop to their music and lyrics, that lead to an experience around listening and later on creating Black Metal.”*

We must stop here and contemplate on this statement. What at first seemed intriguing by the Black Metal expression to Julius, was a clear and dedicated sound, a steady drive towards a goal, almost. He continues by mentioning two Christian bands of his choosing in later years, and that when he first emerged as a Black Metal listener, what captured his attention was the religiousness of the music. Ergo, it is possible to argue that he was drawn towards religious thoughts at the time of his teenage years, and even earlier.

One could argue, that what the young Julius in reality sought, was something that could define some meaning to him, and fill out the gap of an already religiously intrigued soul, and that the reason he hid this interest, could be that his social setting, the *secular humanist* culture around him, showed, at best, a non-interest in the religious sphere, making it a safer bet to operate within his *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), and make his choice of musical heroes related to expression solely, than to have to face the possible questions of why he felt he had the need to fulfill any religious craving. If so, he was possibly trapped between two worlds, and therefore had to develop some sense of *double qualification* (Engen 1989) in order to maneuver his way amongst the different stages of his life.

*“When I started, as a teenager, I hung a lot with different people within the (Black Metal) culture, it was exciting and new. But as I grew older, and got to know many of them, I saw that we did not have that much in common other than the music. People got dragged into drug abuse, unemployment, stuck in the ditch, so to speak, clinging to the culture that they were a part of when*

*they were 18. I wanted something more. I think that the sort of culture that Black Metal represents, the environment, or the group-mentality of it, has also attracted certain people, of a certain quality, that found it hard, once they were inside, to come out again, to free themselves of the need to be fundamentally different. They stopped evolving."*

The phenomena Julius describes here is the exact same that Elijah and Ezekiel spoke of. All three has stated, in disappointment, the moral and physical decline of many individuals around them and within the cultures they somehow belonged to, and how this made them distance themselves, gradually, from the need to be part of an overarching culture. Julius also admits to the Extreme Metal scene as an environment that, perhaps because of its aggressive and stale nature, attracts certain types of individuals, that fails to let go of their new found belongingness, that possibly nurtured them in a time of limbo when they first found it. Again, this unveils a common ground for our three subjects of study, that they might not have seen, or may never see, unless there be an even closer relation, and interaction, between musicians of differing world views with similar sound and expression.

Further, there seem to be a common conception that they all got moved by the *aesthetic* expression of the music, more than the actual *religiousness*. Julius was religiously intrigued perhaps, but states that this, to him, was far from a feeling of entering a cult, and Elijah and Ezekiel saw it as a way of interpreting their religious beliefs into new territories, paving the way for their already established religious conviction. Ergo, for both sides of this discourse, there seems to be a common fascination for the theatrical feel of the music, rather than an urge to make it the new meaning of life, so to speak, leading us to point towards good old Bourdieu (2007) again, when he

speaks of how an individual that seeks to enter another cultural entity than his own, needs to adapt in one way or another, interpreting the skills, that he or she has a core understanding of, into the new setting, replacing the old *cultural* and *social* preferences with the newly conquered ones.

In The White Band's case, they could have made the assumption that the narrative of the Bible, and the charismatic expression of their church, was not far from the scenic expression of Extreme Metal, thus giving them a free ticket into interpreting how to deliver their music onto a new audience.

In Julius', and The Black band's case, the *Secular Metal* influence provided by his uncle, leading him on to ever heavier bands to listen to, may have schooled him and prepped him, so that he was ready to enter the stage, and the character, credibly.

According to Jenkins (2014), this was possible for all parties, because they could build their freshly adapted *personas* upon the impression of the people they encountered, through the new environment, that expanded their identity, and that, following Engen (1989), made them see themselves as not only participants of one cultural understanding, but several.

Julius and I move on to the question of religious belonging.


- Do you see the theatrical part of Black or Death Metal as Satanic, as an opposite to Christianity?

   *"When we toured Russia and other countries, we encountered some individuals that were part of Satanic cults, and were believers. I have not*

*seen much of that in Norway, and I do not feel that Satanism necessarily equals Black metal, or Death metal, here. In Europe, however, some participators of Satanic Churches are active Black Metal musicians. As a youth, this was also interesting to me, and intriguing. But I soon developed an interest towards multiple dimensional thinking, the notion that demons and such could be explained scientifically. As I said, I was intrigued by witchery and cults early on, but realized after a while that there was a lot of religious humbug and nonsense about. When it comes to what I see as traditional Satanism, I guess Lucifer stands as the angel that breaks free, the Liberator of men, from the oppression of God's boundaries and rules. Within the Metal community, the Church has traditionally stood as the oppressor, a sort of evil, and satanism has been used as a symbol of revolt against this oppression, but not necessarily in a religious manner. I think it´s all about the message, the revolt"*

Without yet having touched the issue of The White Band, and in order to understand the identity of Julius, his *persona*, if you will, to broaden and secure the way his answers tells us anything about the relationship between Christianity and Extreme Metal, we can arguably read some kind of confirmation on the resistance in the community, towards religion as a whole, in his statements. Him obviously representing only one voice, his deep participation inside the Metal culture gives him validity.

According to Engen (1989), the need for Julius to understand the do´s and don´t´s, in order to get credit and ability to operate within the environment, has given him a clear understanding of how the Extreme Metal - and in particular the Death and Black Metal community - works. Although he opposes the Church, he claims to have used the Satanic effects as just that;

effects, simply because it serves the original aesthetics of the genre. I read his early revolt against what he saw as oppression of the State and Church, interfering with his freedom as an individual, based on statements from the transcripts above, where he speaks of his teenage enchantment by dark spirituality as a way of standing out from the crowd - playing along nicely with Thornton´s (1997) thesis on the subcultural´s sense of purpose as part of smaller exclusive entities - but also his need, when aging, to free himself from the archetype of Black Metal and simply go his own ways, *bricolage* his way further and deeper into what he hopes is new ground (Wood 1991). The resemblance to The White Band's story is striking, the only difference being the ethics in the foundations of the participants. Throughout the interview, as we shall see further down, Julius shows no interest in passing judgement upon either the Satanic individuals he´s met along the way, or towards Christian performers. The base of his beliefs seems to be anchored in a strong *liberal individualism*, where the need of every person for self sustainability, no matter the faith or culture, must be the person's responsibility to stand firmly in, and answer to.

*"I see no point in clinging to the old ways, either musically or ethically. You mentioned the band Gloomcastle (pseudonym) as an example of orthodox Black Metal performers, and how they claimed they were the sort of everyday bread, accusing the ever changing and evolving Death and Black Metal bands after them for being more of a cream cake fashion. This has no impact on me and my creativity. I simply see the extreme sound, the distorted guitars and fast drums, as a way for me to express myself. But during my time within the genre, I have encountered a great deal of norms and unwritten laws about how to act and think as a participant, something that I see as a great paradox, seeing as how I feel that the whole idea of Death and Black*

*Metal is to actually turn away from the rules. I have never been part of that orthodox view, but I have heard a lot from others within the culture that I was not true to the idea, and that this and that was wrong about how we or I did things, you were supposed to act in a certain way towards the rest of the world, and of course dress according to code. When we first started (The Black Band), Satanism lay rooted in our lyrics, but only as an expression for our need to free ourselves from the reigning religious and ethical laws of society. Lucifer stood as a symbol of uproar and individualism, but it was just a language, not a belief in a dark spiritual person. Later on my lyrics has circulated around the moment of death, the process of death, the judgement we make upon ourselves at the point of crossing over. (The name of The Black Band) is the Demon of death in (an old Hebrew biblical book)."*

- But how, then, do you feel the expression of Christianity coheres with the aesthetics of Death and Black Metal?

*"I have actually not paid too much attention to Christian Extreme Metal bands, though I have come to learn that there exists a conglomerate of Christian bands. I have no beef with Christian Black or Death Metal, but I feel that the sound of Extreme Metal might be a little contradictory towards the purpose of spreading a Christian message. The norms or narrative of established Christianity seems to me as something that interferes with the norms and expression of Black and Death Metal. I just don't see the point in going there, if you will. Nevertheless, I feel that Metal, as a musical expression, simply is a way of stating oneself as an artist, and what lies ethically at the base, or what kind of worldview an individual is having, should not necessarily interfere with the expression. I have nothing against it. I just don't see why Christians have a need to define themselves as Black or Death*

*Metal performers. You say that The White Band had a clear definition of themselves as a Death Metal band, and not a Black Metal band, and Death Metal is, accordingly, a much wider genre. I have no difficulty in imagining that they have encountered resistance and mockery from the group, however. As we spoke of before, Death and Black Metal artists and followers can be extremely normative. The notion of a band entering the scene, speaking of Jesus and Christianity, must have been seen as an intrusion of the enemy, in many ways. I have played Christian extreme metal for some individuals that has reacted with extreme rage towards it, but today, as opposed to the scene of the Nineties, this view engulfs a relatively small group of people. I think the genre today is very openminded. The Extreme Metal environment has widened and has naturally evolved towards a broader understanding of itself, in a way."*

- But would you feel that it would be strange to share a stage with a Christian metal band?

*"Nah. It would of course depend on the setting, and I would have thought it over first, but only on grounds of thematics, the genre, expression and so on. I would never have thought about a Christian band playing the same festival as us. In a setting where we would share a stage one night only, I would have considered the band, as I would all other bands, on grounds of how their message coheres with ours, seeing as how our themes are so strong."*

 - Do you feel that there are certain themes that naturally belongs within the Black metal genre?

*" Yes, I do. But again, I feel that the doctrines can be too strong, and that the revolt could quickly drown in the expression. Today you see a lot of show-biz*

*Black Metal bands, screaming "Death, Satan, Lucifer, blah blah..", if you get my drift. For me it is much more important that the people involved individually, adds a personal base to the music, rather than following the dogma just for the show of it or because it's cool. Lately, I have listened to a lot of Christian bands, simply because the music comes off as passionate and sincere, and this passion has grown as a subject of interest to me, rather than the theme in itself."*

- The White Band builds a lot of their lyrics on Old Testament thematics, about God who tries to reason with his stubborn and sinful chosen people, the Israelites, and the issues of being a Christian in modern society. Do you understand the choice of Death Metal better in that light, rather than if they would have portrayed the soft and popular modern version of Jesus as a beautiful, Caucasian savior?

*"Yes, that would make sense to me. In that light, I would understand the choice of expression, and they would certainly have a deeper understanding of the gloom of the genre, than many of the modern bands today, who uses the music as a superficial and cool way of finding a lifestyle."*

In fact, Julius here states the exact same reasons for doing what he does that Elijah and Ezekiel has done above. The important thing for all of them is to follow their hearts and seek inspiration within the gloomy expression of the music. Jenkins (2014) would say that what they tried to achieve here, was to *mirror* themselves in the aesthetics of the music, to try and build up a credible and bulletproof expression that would reach out to the audience, if you will. It would mean that their intentions were *honorable*, in some manner, and that they were taking the art form *seriously*, respecting the rules of the original game. Also Thornthon (1997) clarifies this for us. She emphasized the

need for *orthodoxy* within the entities of the different subcultures, and all three above utters allegiance to precisely this notion, as their quest for honesty of expression, and creating their own paths, stands as pillars in their ethically dedicated musical careers.

Julius continues his narrative, thus;

*"The ability to believe, fully, in what you sing, is to me way more important than how you look doing it. I agree with* (the former head man and vocalist of a Norwegian Rock band, later turned religious and removing himself from the scene)*, when, as you say, he claims that (The White Band) actually are the real punks of metal, seeing as how they revolt against the old dogma of the trade. They fulfill the very essence of what the music should be, an ever challenging of the old ways. To take an unpopular stand is in the nature of metal itself, and thus (The White Band) is an interesting asset. The mission was always to soften the Christian impact on society, and that job, from my point of view, is what they have done. I think it is interesting, however, that the aforementioned band Gloomcastle, to such extent criticizes the trade for being untrue to the origins of Black Metal, when they themselves has moved away from the original sound. I also think that hard-core Black Metalheads should attack Islam heavier than they have, because extreme Islam poses a threat to our way of living today. They seem stuck in the old anti-Christian dogma, when they, in my view, should feel a sense of duty towards always meeting extremism with extremism. It´s a paradox."*

Somewhat in sharp contrast to his own statements of suitability towards a certain way of lyrical expression within Extreme Metal, Julius here shows us an interesting turn of thought, narrowing the alleged gap that would be seen to stand between Christianity and the original Extreme Metal environment. In

other words, we could argue that he has developed, maybe just during the conversation, being presented with new information, into *mirroring* (Jenkins 2014) his own field of expression, towards the approach that Elijah and Ezekiel has emphasized, therefore moving from *segregating* them (in the harshest case) into *assimilating* them or even *integrating* both himself - and The white band - into his newly discovered *landscape of empiria*, thus generating a broader sense of interpretation of what the Extreme Metal sound can incorporate (Gravem 2004). He agrees in the position that the Christian approach on Death Metal actually could turn out to be the true revolution to the genre, and that many of the so called orthodox bands stands in danger of conformity and romanticism - which is the exact same tendency the very same bands opposed in establishing Extreme Metal in the first place. They have, arguably, in doing so, created their own stubborn *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), excluding the same kind of revolt they created, back then, and fallen into the trap that they laid for the Establishment of the time of their emerge, hence coming forth as the new Establishment, and therefore turning away from the world of subcultures (Thornthon 1997) and appearing as mainstream conformists.

Though this is only presented as a theory from Julius, it is intriguing that he somehow takes the same stance as both boys of The White Band, criticizing those that refuse to evolve, or at least honoring them, The White Band, for their willingness to enter and demand a presence, within the room of extreme metal. It is as if the very fact that what The White Band presented, when they appeared, was so unheard of, that when they managed to linger, and build a career of it, this is the phenomenon that makes Julius support their existence, all in all. For the love of the rebellion, one might say.

It is also noteworthy, that Julius recognizes that the aforementioned old school band indeed has moved on, musically, and can therefore be seen to take part in the evolvement of the genre, though their criticism of competing bands drags them in the very direction of conservatism spoken of above.

**Complexity of the mind.**

Julius' worldview as a *liberal agnostic* (if we go for that solution instead of the aforementioned atheism) and individualist, his skepticism towards religion, his rebel-like spirit, and the focus he has on creativity as a cornerstone of his work, but also his somewhat contradictory open-mindedness towards super-natural phenomena, and how they could be explained scientifically in future research, arguably reveals a complex nature. It is as the willingness to accept that things we do not comprehend fully can exist, and most likely does, somehow intercepts with the notion of atheism - or does it? His *rebellion* and *creativity* is arguably some of the key issues that binds him and the boys of The White Band together, that gives them a common language and standing ground, seeing as how the expression and exclusiveness of the two bands are quite similar, genre wise. They can, in other words, find common exclusivity within a subcultural language (Thornthon 1997), and even Julius could be said to break out of his alleged *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007), while, at the same whiff of breath, The White Band builds up a backdrop of *double qualification* (Engen 1989), that in the case of Julius' views today, has *integrated* them into at least one Black Metalhead's mindset.

According to Thornton (1997), this flexibility of view is common in subcultural groups, as individuals tend to stretch the dogmatic concepts into new ones, that in turn could end up as a new dogma to be challenged by ever new individuals contesting the established. In his statement, no direct

confrontation on The White Band as an entity within the Extreme Metal genre appears, but one senses a certain skepticism early in the statements, that seems to revolve around the very concept of expression, rather than the musical expression. It's as if he instinctively asks himself; "Why choose darkness when you speak of the light?", so to speak.

There seems to be, and most certainly are, a variety of ways to interpret what Julius is actually saying. Elijah and Ezekiel both talk about how they have always been confronted by condescending talk, directly, concerning Christianity from fellow Metalheads, and Julius certainly mentions that one of his key issues is to take the edge of the established religious impact on society. But he does not seem to have a very deep insight into Christian culture, as I suspect goes for many individuals of modern Norway, and sees it as one whole body, represented by one outward bound restrictional opinion, fundamented in the Church of Norway. Further it also seems that his skepticism towards the Church is not all that aggressive, and that when the conversation warms up, he floats into a *philosophical* stance, both towards his own conceptions of faith and ethics, but also towards the fact that one religion can take so many different shapes. It is as if the emphasis on Engen´s theory on *double-qualification* (Engen,1989) has not at all been something that Julius has had to relate to, as his atheist upbringing and background already gave him a firm stance in the metal environment, and that these questions strike him with full power for the first time during our conversation, and when they do, he cannot seem to find any fundamental reason for excluding The White Band's Christian Death Metal, but rather praises the effort for being just that; an effort to stand up against *orthodoxy*.

In that manner, Julius turns out to be more of a self-sustained free thinker than I presumably would hope for, in interviewing a participant of the original non-religious Metal community, seeing as how that would have given me a clearer ring of opposite poles to work with. On the other hand, we could argue that it is precisely this flexibility of thought that is so typical for the Extreme Metal scene today, as we understand both in listening to Julius's statements, but also in the narrative of Elijah and Ezekiel. They both state that the Metal genre has undergone a vast development during their stay, and that the reality is a completely different one now, than that of the Nineties.

Thornton (1997), again, has a few things to say on this subject. The nature of subcultures can, in her writings, be understood to be somewhat *self destructive*, or at least extremely easily *bored* with its status quo. It needs to; in order to reform and re-generate new, and always fresh subcultures, she says. It can be seen as a sort of superhero Bourdieu-ism (2007), individuals *multi-qualifying* and *class journeying* at high speed, relatively speaking. This way, we can interpret Julius as a typical *subculturee,* quick to reform his views, always on the look-out for new maelstroms in the Metal landscape. At first, he opposed the establishment in flirting with Satanism, but quickly broadened his view and let in impressions of other mindsets, ending up with actually partly accepting Christian Extreme Metal as refreshing and intriguing, not welcoming the ethics of the religion, but defending The White Band's right to reform what he sees as a *stagnation* of a before *exploring* genre. This both gives him a classic neo-Norwegian mainstream liberal democratic stance, as it invites every opinion into the discussion, following also the Habermasian thesis on the *power of the better argument* (2006), at the same time as his reflection upon Extreme Metal calls for a higher presence of anti-establishment expression and reformism that never sleeps, hence his

criticism above on *Gloomcastle* outwardly criticizing the modern Extreme Metal scene for not being true to the original language, themselves, at the same time, moving in a softer direction.

**Not exactly a minority.**

According to Engen (1989), Julius cannot be seen to possess the same *double-qualifying* mindset, since his upbringing was closer to the expression that he chose, that Elijah and Ezekiel can. Their journey from an eclectic minority, such as their own congregation, into somewhat the opposite camp, adapting to the genre of Death Metal, has forced them to investigate the premises of Metal culture, and build their own interpretation. Arguably, they represent the few against, according to both Habermas (2004) and Berger (1969), the national secular mainstream-voice, guiding the everyday stance of the North European countries during the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties and Nineties, a clear call for human common sense and empirical science as ground stone for how we interpreted life, and a skepticism towards religion as a whole, a point of view that Julius clearly shares.

**Order and humbleness.**

The interesting notion, I think, when it comes to Julius's mindset, is how true to the academic order of *validness* it stays. Nothing should be excluded as a valid thought, as we read in his statements, as long as the thought itself is well thought through, *deducted*, and founded on some sort of logic, whether it be pan dimensional ideas, individualism, religious beliefs or political convictions. The genre of Extreme Metal can, arguably, to many observers, come of as morbid and in it´s nature alienating and violent, but Julius, being rooted in one of it's darker musical and thematic expressions, shows an

almost nature-given *social understanding* of Thornton`s (1997) idea-span, in that he constantly seems on the lookout for new ways to develop the music and the written word, and that he shows an almost *socratian*, argumentative and tolerant attitude towards the world's different ideas and phenomena. It is almost as the world for him never sleeps, or halts, in its own confidence of knowledge, and that the one thing he loathes is people who think they have the answer and places themselves at the peak of civilization.

In terms of Bourdieu, and social study on *class journeys* (2007), Julius must be seen as a middle class boy, growing up, in no need to break with his family´s traditions or in any way lacking the tutoring on everyday society from his parents, if I read him *empathically* correct during our interview. He claims his upbringing was *secular*, safe and gave him room to evolve. His uncle, a solid grown up around his home, introduced him to Heavy Metal, and lead him on to increasingly more aggressive music. He shares the classical skepticism of religion as an entity of society, aimed at narrowing the individual's sense of freedom to choose freely amongst cognitive, sexual and artistic options of choice, in order to maintain civil conduct in a state, and one of the things that drove him towards Black Metal was its rejection towards just that. He sees the alleged Satanism of the culture as a theatrical tool, designed to express opposition, rather than worship of a Dark Lord.

Since Julius never had a religious background to criticize, or run from, his journey cannot, in that specific manner, be described as a *class journey*, seeing as how the very exit from one worldview, or *cultural capital*, into another - alienated or deemed lesser by the original - lies at the base of the concept of class journeying (Bourdieu 2007). At best, we can argue that he had to evolve his *habitus* slightly, but not radically, in order to fit into the

teenage entity of Black Metal, though this arguably comes down to the choice of garment and the choice of group-communication, the language of metal, so to speak.

It is my belief that we, in meeting Julius, are in the presence of a sound minded young adult, who has constantly strived, on his own terms, to develop his artistic expression, so dear to him, in the soundest way possible, when it comes to craft, expression and philosophy, but who has also set out on an academic journey, in order to secure his aftermath, his future family´s safety, and his everyday sustainability. This description can be seen to not always fit the individuals of the music trade, or for that matter, any other artistic trade, simply because these trades themselves are, to extent, uncertain in their nature, sustainably speaking, but also, I believe, in the general opinion, un-recommendable in terms of steady everyday life security and income.

But could we find proof of Julius being prejudice towards The White Band, after all? Is there anything in his statements that reveals some sort of unjustified categorizing or judgement passing?

He supports and, in so many words, confirms, the feeling that Elijah and Ezekiel expressed about a great portion of the environment mockery towards them, *excluding* them or *silencing* them because of their Christianity. He holds no grudge towards Christian Metal as a contender in what he sees today as an inviting and tolerant community. But, and there seems to be some sort of *Thornthonian* (1997) undertow to this, he does not see - at first - the point in a Christian ensemble taking on the expression of Black or Death

Metal, because he feels that especially Black Metal was created as an opposition to Christianity. The White Band are picky to underline the fact that they are a Death metal band, and not a Black metal band, so in terms of Julius's question on Christianity and specifically Black Metal, they do not come up from under the radar. Still, one can wonder, if we peel away the alleged natural environment of Black Metal - which musically, to the musically skilled listener (such as the Metal performing author of this thesis), is a very close sibling to Black Metal - roaring and massive guitars, growling vocals, fast drums and all - and add Christian lyrics, is it not but a *musical expression*, and if so, is it not then somewhat prejudice to assume that The Band's message does not fit into this certain musical expression?

As a student of sociology, nevertheless, I am of course keenly aware of the fact that you simply cannot remove the *social* or *cultural* expression from an art form, in that when doing so, the expression may stand in danger of losing it´s *folkloristic* meaning in society and within the community. Nevertheless, the fact that an individual, speaking from within the community, raises a question about the validity of Christian lyrics in Extreme Metal - or at least Black Metal - presents a meaningful utterance, but can still be regarded as *exclusive* and somewhat *prejudice*.

**A comparison of worldview.**
On my question on where the three parties would place themselves, in accordance to their sense of worldview, Julius claims a sort of non-militant and open minded atheism;

*"My worldview is, maybe typical for that of an engineer, built upon the laws of science and self obtainability. I see the development of individual intelligence as somehow driven by the need to protect one's own interests. We are just*

*animals, something I don't emphasize in a bigger scale than that of reproduction (...)"*

Had it stopped here, we could easily define Julius as a classic atheist, with a love for Darwin's ideas of evolution. But, in fact, it doesn't stop there at all. When confronted by the question of the clearly religious content of his early texts, He opens up a whole other world to us, and reveals what I fail to see as anything but a sort of *new religious science*, based on his belief that Man will, someday, unravel the mysteries of parallel universes, and establish inter dimensional contact;

*"(...) I've always had a little trouble placing myself completely religion-wise, I've been asking myself so many questions about the soul and I believe in parallel universes, and whether there may exist any possibility of transferring mass and intelligence between these worlds, at the moment of death, perhaps, and that it may explain experiences of visiting other worlds or meeting God, or the likes of him, as many religious people refer to. I have a greater faith in that explanation, and I can assume, with faith, that the possibility of God is there, but it remains more as an interest, more as a belief."*

If we compare this statement to that of Elijah, we can identify the similarities, but also the elements of *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) that separates them. Therefore, we must add an extensive excerpt from Elijah's interview, that I found unsuited to fit above. Here, on the other hand, it gives us a closer look at Elijah's religion ;

*"(...) We (The White Band) just wanted to be ourselves, and that which we were, was essentially a problem within the cultural setting we were a part of.*

*We wanted to show the love of God in a gloomy environment, and still not compromise the ones we essentially were."*

*- Your view on life, what does it look like?*

*oh, that's a difficult question. it's constantly evolving, of course, but my view of life ... hmm ..*

*- Is it easier if I ask about your worldview?*

*It's easier if you ask about my view on humanity. I guess I hold a Christian humanistic view on humanity. we are all in the same boat, all of us, here to meet other people with grace and humility.*

*- By grace you mean...?*

*I mean indulgence, or ... I think that when others do wrongly by me, makes fools of themselves or make mistakes, I know very well that that could be me too. I know that if I start pointing fingers, or put my arrow to the string and send it off, it will turn and hit me straight in the heart. My faith characterizes how I look at the world and its people, but my picture of God is constantly remodeling. I've spent the last 10 years deconstructing it quite a lot, what I believe in, how I read the Bible, what I think the Bible is. I've gone from a pretty monumental and literary biblical faith, to see the Book, more as stories written by people about people's perception of who God is. Unlike a definitive book, I think God develops throughout history, and throughout the Bible, the peoples and history, we might see more of God.*

- *When you talk about the world picture, do you speak as Elijah inside the head of Elijah or Elijah inside (The White Band) also? is there any link between what you do artistically and the worldview?*

*Absolutely. As of now (The White Band) is a closed chapter. As a creative person there is a clear connection. To be creative and create something comes from somewhere, from the creator with a capital S. I think I've seen it as an essential part of the process. Very difficult to formulate ... take the vital force, which I believe exists in all human beings, that there is something on earth that gives life. To use this power has been a driving force, not only in the music, but in creating relationships, in the community, in creating things that changes this life-making power into fertile soil so it can spread. I think I believe in ... I must stop before I go on ... but yes, I believe in the goodness of people, even though we are dead rotten, there is good in us, I believe. Had you asked me 15 years ago, it would come out of my mouth consecutively. I have often thought that (The White Band) felt like a kind of vocation. That was what I thought then, while I was keen not to proselytize. I was always annoyed at those who differed in it; Now I work for God, now I do not. I was more occupied with being a whole human being, whether I was on stage with (The White band), led worship in (the rock congregation), or as a classmate. Still, I savored (The White Band) as a special calling, but if that was what it was, I honestly do not know."*

From this extensive excerpt, we can draw parallels between the different worldviews of Elijah and Julius, and I believe that the most distinct difference lies at the base of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) of perception - because what is basically unsimilar, as I see it, is the way the forces of nature determines the two interviewees' path.

Julius states that he, in no way, abolishes the possibility of God, but that he has no connection to God, as a source to rely on. For Elijah, the very dependency of God's activeness in the world is fundamental, as we read above.

Julius has not undergone a religious upbringing, whereas Elijah has. The similarities lies in the outcome of these two identity formations, as they have both stuck to the teachings their elders lay on them as children and teenagers. Both environments seemed to have been peaceful and supportive, and while Julius's parents showed him the world as a *secular* place of individual freedom and self-dependency, a kind of mainstream attitude in Norwegian comparison, Elijah's parents must be said to belong to a more exclusive, and, in lack of finding a better phrase, *awe-succumbing cultural class,* that presented him with the word of God as the true and liberating source of life.

The interesting part here, is that both parties has stuck to their worldview, but still, similarly, fancied the religious backdrop of the gloom that lies rooted in the backdrop of Death- and Black Metal. They have both managed to create a believable set of values as to why they choose Extreme Metal as their source of creative expression, and they share the fascination of the mythical world surrounding the culture. This way we can claim, that the theories presented by Engen (1989), on *double-qualification* fits both on Julius, and Elijah. They have both diverged from the path laid straight in front of them, and, I claim, in a quite similar fashion, Julius from the broad path of secularist humanism, onto the gloom and mythological deadliness of Black metal, Elijah from the shimmering hood of his Christian childhood, onto the loudness of Death Metal, a path more similar to the Wrath of the *Old testament God*, than

that of the portrayed *Western Evangelical Jesus Christ*. Julius says he is keenly interested, also through his lyrics, in the science of what happens at the moment of death, and how can we honestly say that Elijah (and Ezekiel, for that matter) is not? It is no well kept secret that the Gospel of the Bible is quite focused on the *resurrection* of the true believers through Jesus, hence the orientation of an after life, an eternal solution, if you will.

There is, from the extract of these interviews, in cross-examining them to the theorists, possible to see the shape of a sharply governed *plural monocultural* Metal scene here (and actually broader Rock scene). To enlighten that fraise, the *Plural Monoculture* theory came in use, as laid out above, in the theory section, in Gravem´s (2004) and Engen´s (1989) work on integration and cultural science in the Eighties and the Nineties and early new Millennium. It says something about an *over-hovering main culture*, here; The Metal Scene, and how it is divided into smaller entities that coexists but do not interact, on grounds that the *subculturee identity* often is fundamented on the exclusiveness of the subculture, or *monoculture*, the participant is part of, and therefore guards affectionately towards any "thinning" of the trade by intrusive cultures. Also, the unwillingness by the press, by other bands, by impresarios, to handle The White Band as an equal band, simply because of their merits, their skills, comes as a silent (and sometimes brutal) front against the Christian message, that for different reasons, as we all know, has been seen as the opposite field of ethics compared to those of the Rock culture, that, in its birth, strove to distance itself from the establishment in any way possible. Thus, it is logically valid to extract from this how the musical skill of a band, such as The Band, is overshadowed by its message, lyrically, and that this puts them in an awkward position alongside similar bands, who share their musical expression, simply because their choice of worldview, a

factor that does not affect the same musical expression, music theoretically, mathematically, is different from the majority of bands.

## 8.0. Conclusive Remarks.

Now, the problem presented in this thesis, has been;

"*What were the socio-cultural dynamics of the interaction between the Christian metal-band The White Band and the rest of the metal scene?*"

After this discursive travel, I will now turn towards hopefully reaching a conclusion that sufficiently gives this thesis a clear voice on what I believe I have found of evidence, or at least circumstantial evidence, debatable of course, and bring the ship safely ashore, so to speak. The confusing seas of discursive argumentative academical language has, to me at least, many times made me feel lost in a little pram, no steady rock in sight and contradictory waves coming in from all sides. I will try to narrow the language and fall into sobriety.

### On the matter of Secularism and privatized religion.

Arguably, and needless of introduction, the impact of the anti-religious domination of postmodern sociology (Berger, Habermas), from the Nineteen-fifty´s to the new Millennium, where sociologists, such as Jurgen Habermas et al, mostly heralded the inevitable *death of religion*, as a natural development of modern thinking, set it´s natural mark on Norway, religiously. The state initiated a growing distance and cool down towards its former ally, the Church of Norway, and was, increasingly, kept out of official settings but also the State-Church congregations.

Being religious has, arguably, for many been troublesome during this period, and has been a largely privatized phenomena for the individual believer

(Elstad & Hvalvik 2015), logically restraining to interact with the growing dismay of the general surroundings.

This follows Engen's (1989) theory of assimilation and double-qualification sharply. In order to fit into a secularized society, the religious individual keeps her theology to herself, keenly nursing her religion as a private matter never to be mentioned, in order to not create any friction towards colleagues, family or friends. The religious *habitus*, then, that was a daily asset in earlier times, is being kept under wraps, so to speak, and is pushed further and further into oblivion, as aforementioned. This again, bereaves the next generation of knowledge of the religious habitus, and could in many forms develop into mockery towards any worldview that does not follow the scientific laws of nature.

We can ask ourselves, then, following Bourdieu´s train of thought on *habitus* (2007), what this does to the Norwegian sense of decency towards religious minorities, in this case a Christian Death Metal band. Is there a loss of know-how, or religious habitus, amongst the people, that forces us on the one side, as a whole, to ignore the validity of all minority world-views because of their reactionary, or revolutionary, tendencies towards the common societal *habitus*? And does this also apply to the already marginalized group of Metal musicians, and fans, when someone from another group, in this case conservative christians, tries to penetrate their culturally guarded castle walls - if you will - and refuses to assimilate within the groups ideas, but rather claims the grounds of their cultural expression, thus creating a new *minority*, within the *mono-culture*, and so forth threatens to change the whole identity of the group, that in so many ways is built upon

standing together against the order of common society? It is tempting to draw conclusions. But we will not, until all has been thoroughly turned over.

**Hearsay?**

How do we conclude on hearsay? How do you know that your interviews were honest - that you, when you performed them - were honest? Have I established a comfortable zone for my subjects? Is all this just a pile of untrue and circumstantial bable?

First of all, I would hope not. Bad luck for me. Second of all, it would not make a difference whether the statements above were sincere or not. The main point would be that I have interviewed key persons to the subject of my research, and that no matter the outcome of it, this very outcome would be the interesting sociological data that I could build my thesis on. If the conclusion would be that there was nothing to write about at all, then so be it. I would have made one more effort to participate in the great sociological discussion on integration.

Luckily, in the manner of research, but not in the manner of integration, this was not my findings.

The men of The White Band makes a somewhat ringing statement about how there is something fishy in the State of Metal. My impression, and my assertion, is that they have not felt as welcome into the land (pardon the Biblical reference), as one would expect in such an individualized culture, at least that was the case in the early beginning of their career.

How did I come to this assertion? Is it not so, as numbers have proven, that The White Band became a vastly respected band, selling hundreds of thousands of records, and performing to their extent through a good number of years? And is it not so, that a major broadcasting company in Norway in fact bought their documentary and has shown it at least two times (removed from the credit list in order to protect the identity of The White Band)?

Leaning on Bourdieu (2007), and his theories on the stubbornness of *Habitus*, and Thornthon (1996), and her theories on the somewhat ever changing nature of the subcultural underground, and comparing it to the interviews above, we find evidence that points us in a certain direction.

**Habitual stubbornness.**

Bourdieu (2007) made a point out of clarifying how an individual makes everything material surrounding her, an artifact of her nature of mind, her preference of taste, as a symbol that places her amongst her "own" - her kindred people, and opposes her to "the others", so to speak - all those representing other social classes, political standpoints or ethical views (worldviews), not to mention other lines of work. He created a map, or diagram, after conducting a significant quantitative research amongst the different classes of Paris, France, that presents us with an overview of where different working classes, and worldviews, places a person's preferences in art, food, brand of car, et cetera (see figure below).

```
                    CAPITAL
                    VOLUME      MORE
                                OVERALL



            FiREBiRD
            SUiTE
         FLEA
         MARKETS
              FROZEN
    KAFKA     FOOD
CAPITAL
COMPOSITION

      + CULTURAL               - CULTURAL
      - ECONOMIC               + ECONOMIC



                         BEER


                           BRiGiTTE
                           BARDOT
                                 FARM
                                 LABORERS
                       POTATOES



         LESS
         OVERALL
```
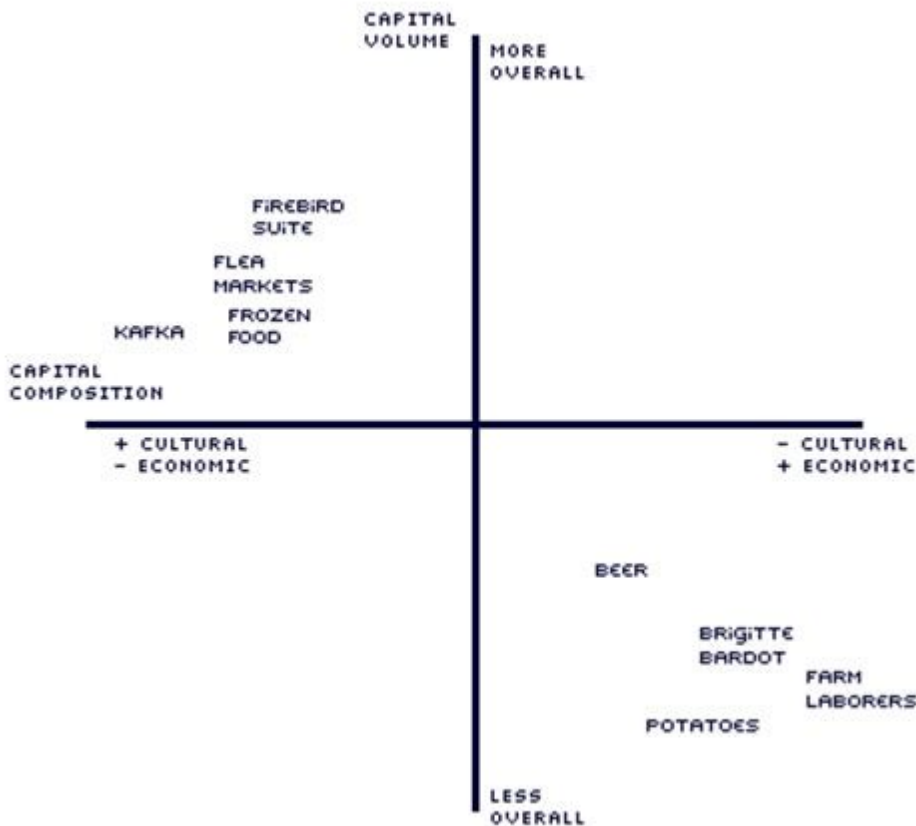
Figure 1. Bourdieu-an diagram of social capital (simplified, unoriginal, to exemplify).


The interesting notion for us in this research is the impression it leaves us, that not only is an individual expected to form a certain expression of life, if you will, when settling down in this or that social neighborhood, but the repetition, or common absorption of each lifestyle, seems to indicate that the individual grows into a comfort in the pre-expectancy, the unwritten law and order, of her respective cultural habitus, her imposed character, if you will.

No wonder then, that when, as Elijah told us, the young boys of The White Band decided leather, nail-belts, long hair, growling guitars and vocals, as their nature of expression, *while* holding on to their childhood religion, even

integrating the same religion provocatively into the imposed anti religious realm and performance of Extreme Metal, in other words threatening the very core of the *cultural habitus* of how the Metalheads of the Nineties saw themselves - what the purpose of their expression ultimately was, it caused a sometimes violent reaction, a war mongering, from the Metal community.

If we follow Bourdieu (2007) - and this researcher most certainly does - an intrusion such as the one The White Band represented back then, interfered with the sense of order that so typically builds the moral fundament of a *socially capitalized* group, a place where *assimilation* (adaptation), and never *reformation* (change), of the moral standards is at first strike the sole acceptable move towards group integration. This would be the only instinctively natural human response, so to speak, as history depressively shows us that reformation either comes imposed, or after several rounds of exhausting discursive, and sometimes violent, interaction.

**The whole truth.**
The ownership of *cultural truth* is something that occupies Sarah Thornton (1997), and a notion of everyday life that we all encounter in some way or another, but that we can also easily be found to impose on those around us:

 "Everybody knows that democracy is the best invention of governmental selection today!".

I believe Bourdieu (2007) wanted to show us that we in so many ways are victims of pre-destined imagery, and when he did, the keen observer would see that he kicked the illusion of total individual freedom of thought from under us. Our image of self is *mirrored* (Jenkins 2014) - and some would go as far as to say created -  in the eyes and ears of those we encounter, it

would seem, and we are thus reliant on verbal and visual checkpoints along the way in order to build up an understanding of who we are, ultimately.

Still we could argue that this is more true for some than others. In listening to Ezekiel, We encounter a somewhat mild acceptance of surroundings, and a twenty year long evolvement of how he sees the culture he was a part of. Reluctant towards judgement of any other worldview, he philosophizes about the bigger picture, slow to impose anything else than wonder about choices that to him seems to lead on to a dark path. Shurley, his concern about what he sees as a societal recline of ethical standard - such as the never debated hatred towards Christians shouted out from the stage of the National Opera house - places him culturally for us, but the means of his argumentation never comes off as anything but questions that seeks the sole purpose of knowledge about, insight into matters of how and why he has been exposed to so much criticism. His subcultural journey seems to have taken a quieter path, he says he has withdrawn from too much interaction with other bands, and he is currently focusing on recording new material and releasing it for the good of its own livelihood and his own musical development.

Still, we recognize the enthusiasm and group mentality that Thornton (1997) writes about, in Ezekiel's tales of The White Band's peak, when records were selling and the interaction with fans fueled the intention that they shared, to always do what felt right to them, never succumbing to an idea of making a clever move to gain even more fame. The typical *subcultural strictness* around production, theme and expression, fits according to her theories, that emphasizes the orthodoxy that each relatively short lived phase of the *subcultural bricolage* is made up of. Without this piety of norms and belonging, there simply would not exists any subcultures, she claims, and it is

a logically *valid* argument. The subcultural nature is to relentlessly stay opposed to the mainstream *couture* of the broader point of view.

Again, in accordance to Jenkins (2014), and closely related to Bourdieu (2007), the image we create of ourselves is highly dependent on how others around us see us, and the more significant these "others" are, the more impact they have on us.

## Suspicious mind.

In interviewing Elijah, I find in his narrative, as I've stated above, a keen observational eye, and a cautious, and life taught, reluctance that leaves fine seams alongside his stories; The foolishness of his Elder saying he sounded like a demon, the shock of being spit at from other Metalheads, the drawback and disappointment when they realized they were canceled from a show on account of the other band's reluctance to be associated with them, the poorly hidden - and most understandable - disrespect he has for the media, after having been left out time and time again, allegedly because of how they, the media, shear a notion of not letting religious artists participate in their shows, paper-interviews or reviews. This distress towards how people see them as artists, and pentecostal Christians, is also to be found - but more with the companionship of a retired frown - in Ezekiel's statements; how is it possible to utter discriminating words from a national stage, how does one so easily end down the dark path of sex and drugs in being a part of Rock n' Roll culture, why is there so little love, and so much hate?

I have a strong sentiment that the impact of opinion that has been artillerated on the two artists, from all sides of the *cesspool* of *belief* and *secularity*, has left their identity *unwillingly* shaped to make them see themselves as ultimate outsiders, or *freaks*, in the common tongue, following Jenkins' (2014) theory

of *identificational adaptation*, or *assimilation*. We want to stay unique, want to stay a product of our own free will - at least when that is what our western ideology so stubbornly expects from us, hence the ever democratic fundament of old, and closely following Jurgen Habermas' celebrated disputative theory (2006) - but we can't seem to bypass the impression the world outside us, and around us, leaves on us, in such a grave manner that it actually shapes the whole picture of who we are to ourselves. Therefore, the actions of The White Band as a cultural underdog, in some ways, setting the stage for revolt against the standing cultural capital of the Extreme Metal corner stone, has made such a difference in the lives of Elijah and Ezekiel, that it has shaped their impressions of themselves as outsiders, arguably in a deeper fashion than the Metal Culture *de facto* sees them. Further, the way that they both grew up in an environment that taught them that the world they lived in, has a more predestined, and God given, purpose than the majority of their Western society recognizes, could be said to have given them a native understanding of themselves as outsiders, already from the day of birth, and could followingly give them the idea that they were born into *exclusiveness*, if you will. The step into an even narrower path, leaving them all by themselves, culturally trapped between the two critical views of their old *habitus* - the congregation - and the new desired culture - the Extreme Metal community, would become an almost pioneered path, evangelically acknowledged by the very words of Jesus Christ himself, to "go forth and make all the world his disciples". It would be the Christian thing to do, if you will.

**Capital letters Alpha Omega.**

As we have seen in the discourse above, the similarities between The White Band and The Black Band, as biblically referred musical entities, somewhat on each their sides of the table, but still biblically founded, turns out as somewhat intriguing. At first glance, one could easily assume that the introduction of Christianity into Extreme Metal would represent a game changer, and, if it was to be a successful entry, it would somewhat change the old face of the cultural expression, and *incarnate*, into the old one, a reformed *habitus* (Bourdieu 2007) that would broaden the boundaries of the landscape of expression.

But, I claim, the ways that Julius identifies his worldview (as an artist close to the core of the Black Metal atom), makes me think that the gap between Elijah, Ezekiel and Julius is only a matter of perspective, a definition of "higher force", and highly religious for all of them (if we follow one modern sociologically broadened definition of the term).

**Social interaction, identity making and strategy.**

From early on in the process of this thesis, it became relatively clear to me that there would emerge some crystal clear, and evident, proof of strategically thought through *socialization* ideas with Elijah and Ezekiel. The surprise came as I found that also Julius, in his quest for a deeper dive into the realm of Black Metal, had both undergone a flirt with Satanic narrative, only to withdraw in slight fatigue of it all, some years later. Ergo, his *socialization strategy* can be interpreted as somehow on a day-to-day basis, but that the main thing, very similar to the ones of Elijah and Ezekiel, is to stay true, different, *integral* and on the move - artistically.

Ezekiel, in addition, strikes me as a person who, in the conceptual meaning, has held onto the freshness of youth, maybe through a playfulness rooted in the fact that he seems to have an ever spinning motor of music pouring out of him, and that he has used this energy as a sort of "bullshit filter", if you will, in the cultural labyrinth that he has been forced through. He also comes forward as the most rebellious character of the three interviewees, hence his statement;

*" I think my intentions on expressing the Gospel through Metal music, lay entirely on the effectiveness and expressive nature of Death Metal. You meet so many bold people in the biblical narrative, people who stood up against the crowd, believing in what they had set out to do, willingness to be an instrument of God. They were all super uncompromising, just like Death Metal is."*

In many ways, the mission seems very comparable to the one Julius spoke of, that was the intentional mission of Black Metal - only reversed. Instead of fighting the Church, The White Band fought the Devil, but with the exact same armory.

Or, is that to simplify things?

If we see the struggle of Black Metal mainly, and as Julius would have us believe, as a *theatrical* and not *mythological* or *Biblical - Satanic* struggle*,* against the oppression of the *institution* of the Church, and not so much the religion itself (in which the Satanists, in any case, would be a Biblical part of), then the gap between this mission and that of "expanding the tent plugs", that Elijah spoke of, would not be so huge - it may well be a matter of dialectics, one might claim - the whole charade would suddenly just be about

narrative and expression, as the goal, in many ways, would be the same; namely the softening of the State of Norway's grip on everyday spiritual life, be it from one side or another.

If, then, there is talk of an *exclusion* of some size, of The White Band, from the Extreme Metal scene, as I believe we have unraveled, simply because their narrative was not the right one, *and* there has been a significant development, over the last thirty years, roughly, towards opening up the gates of Extreme Metal and allowing it to become a stage for all that takes it on, musically, it would seem to me that Elijah and Ezekiel's story is one that is just too typical for subculture reformists, and they have, in one sense, ended up as pioneers and musical martyrs - paving the way for ever new constellations of extreme metal artists.

I therefore conclude, that what has happened to Elijah and Ezekiel, has happened on a timeline. From the birth of the band, they were ignored as nonsense from the closed, and alleged, original subculture of early Norwegian Extreme Metal, or in other words attempted into *segregation*. This left them feeling scared at first, but as their newly adapted *habitus* grew stronger, the fear was replaced by an acceptance, from their side, that the people they met were on the same search as they were. Hence, *assimilation* was to be the next step on the path, easing down on their Christianity in public and hanging out at Metal clubs, with the rest of the Metal crowd, and even gaining some friends from other bands outside of the Christian metal sphere. Then, as the intensity around The White Band grew, there simply was no way of pretending that they no longer mattered as a Death Metal act, as they reached outside the borders of Norway, getting fans of both Christian and Atheist nature. According to both Elijah and Ezekiel, this is when some of

the Metal magazines, the festivals and arrangers - even the national media, who invited some of the darkest of Black Metal artists - tried to *segregate* them for the second time, keeping them outside of their operations. Nevertheless, the fan base was at this point already established, and The White Band had become an established entity inside the increasingly vast field of Extreme Metal.

It is therefore safe to say, I believe, that what has eventually happened to The White Band, is nothing but *pluralization.* My guess is that, due to the stubborn *orthodoxy* of some of the founding fathers of the genre, they are not alone in this, and that other artists have experienced the same kind of attempted sabotage, on grounds of other things than outspoken Christianity, and that the Metal scene of today is a *monocultural sphere*.

Further, I believe that the experience with Elijah and Ezekiel also leans towards *pluralization*. Their collective narrative has confirmed the first to the other, and is validly similar, and what they come back to, as we have seen above, is a feeling of not being quite taken seriously on account of their faith. The impact of that stigma, could, over the years, lead any human being into withdrawal and resignation, as Jenkins (2014) and Engen (1989) has shown us in their lay-out of how our identity somehow reforms in relation to how the outside world greets us, on a daily basis. One could face it with a relentless fight towards total *integration* of one's freedom of thought and expression, but I fear the *orthodoxy* of the numerous minority subcultures would react in the same manner, just as Thornthon has explained to us (1996), and we could therefore justly ask the question if the idea of *pluralization* is the most humanly liveable, even if it is so that we superficially claim to collectively strive towards the notion of *integration* for all minorities.

**A final philosophy.**

On a personal note, finally, might I just add some concern. There is, to my ongoing bewilderment, a strange consistency of seriousness about the question of religion, present in our Western hemisphere, and I struggle to get my hands around it.

One thing is the religious extremist case, which many of us find incomprehensible, other than from an academic point of view, were sociological models of inferiority complexes, national depression and poor value of self, helps explain why some goes to such extremes.

Another thing is the increasing fear of religious impact on the self, that day-to-day society has taken in, the ever growing consideration, and ever growing concern along with it. It is as if we simply had no choice, come the day someone asked us to join a cult, and for the love of reason, I sincerely believe this to be untrue.

Personally, I can not seem to master what the fuzz is all about. It is as Men and Women of the Cloth, so-called True Believers, but also, Atheists and Agnostics, have this tremendous respect for the importance of their own worldview, and that something terrible would happen if someone were to question it, thereof the unwritten code that it is disrespectful to bring up the subject of religion or worldview, as it could conflict the integrity of those present. It is quite visible in some of the stories mentioned above; festival leadership, clearly not religious people, withdrawing a Christian metal band - because they are Christians, Metalheads reacting with rage when hearing Christian Extreme Metal, or, for that matter, congregational authorities

claiming ownership of which expressions are diabolic and which aren't.  Why the fear?

I believe, firmly, that the part of the world we belong to, needs to shrink down the importance of protecting the subjective ideas that we cling to as were they our core selves. It is accordingly so, that I suspect the same ideas is not what makes up our core at all, and ever so, that I suspect that in the big plan, it does not really matter that much, as long as we behave like normally decent human beings.

But that is just what I believe.

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