

Interview of Mark Matte by H.B. Simonsen
Transcript reviewed and corrected by H.B. Simonsen
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[SPEAKER_02]: it's working, and it's working now.

[SPEAKER_02]: Will you please tell me your full name?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my name is Mark Christopher Mattes.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm in my early 50s.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm from Seattle, Washington, originally.

[SPEAKER_00]: My education, which was to study to become a pastor, a Lutheran pastor, then a professor,

[SPEAKER_00]: was at St.

[SPEAKER_00]: Olaf College in Minnesota, then Luther Seminary, St.

[SPEAKER_00]: Paul, Minnesota, then University of Chicago.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've been here since 1995.

[SPEAKER_00]: I served parishes for eight years prior to that, but I was also working on my dissertation.

[SPEAKER_00]: My dissertation deals with contemporary theology, 20th century theology.

[SPEAKER_00]: I chair the department here at Grandview for quite some time, and I have thoroughly enjoyed being here at Grandview.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's been a great experience.

[SPEAKER_02]: What is your background in terms of nationality?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my ethnic background, my father's side is German, and my mother's side is Swedish.

[SPEAKER_02]: And you have an interest in the old NFS Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_02]: How has that come about?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I would not have known anything about Grundtvig from my education.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think perhaps when I studied at Luther Seminary his name might have come up

[SPEAKER_00]: a couple of times as the Danish hymn writer.

[SPEAKER_00]: So in our hymn book we have several of his most famous hymns like O Day Full of Grace, The Bells of Christmas Chime Once More, God's Word is Our Great Heritage,

[SPEAKER_00]: The hymn book I was raised in would have also included a beautiful morning hymn of his, Golden Light, Serene and Bright.

[SPEAKER_00]: But Grundtvig would not have been on the horizon, not only for me, but the vast majority of pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest Lutheran church in this country.

[SPEAKER_00]: I really did not have exposure to Grundtvig until I came to Grandview.

[SPEAKER_00]: But after coming to Grandview, I took a real interest in Grundtvig, not because our school at that time was loaded with a lot of young Grundtvigians.

[SPEAKER_00]: That wasn't the case at all.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think with some self-reflection about where I might have been coming from or what might have sparked my interest in Grundtvig and to try to perpetuate his voice,

[SPEAKER_00]: in some way or another here, was the sociologist Reisman.

[SPEAKER_00]: I forget his first name.

[SPEAKER_00]: He talks about people who get attached to academic institutions.

[SPEAKER_00]: He has pointed out that some feel a great loyalty, like professors, some feel a great loyalty to the life of the mind.
[SPEAKER_00]: but not a great loyalty to the school where they're at.
[SPEAKER_00]: There's some people who might feel a great loyalty to the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: For instance, some of my students here might come here simply to play sports, but they're not so much into the life of the mind.
[SPEAKER_00]: There's some that might be at a school, they're not either into the life of the mind or the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: And there's some who really identify with both the life of the mind and the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: I belong to that ladder.
[SPEAKER_00]: That is, I enjoy the world of thoughts, love to read, love to think, and the wider academy, but I also attach myself to the institution.
[SPEAKER_00]: that I'm serving.
[SPEAKER_00]: That is, I feel a great loyalty to the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: And you can't be loyal to the school if you're not aware of and seeking in your own way to carry on its roots.
[SPEAKER_00]: That is an important part
[SPEAKER_00]: of having loyalty to the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: So I think I'm of that group of people that, again, treasure the life of the mind, but also feel a great loyalty to the school, the institution.
[SPEAKER_00]: And part of that is that we have a torch that we pass.
[SPEAKER_00]: So clearly, at this point, you're looking at half a century.
[SPEAKER_00]: The Grandview has not primarily been a Danish-American institution.
[SPEAKER_00]: was in the year 1954, that the number of students here, there was a tad more of non-Danish people.
[SPEAKER_00]: And even for some time prior to that on the faculty, Grandview was always welcoming to non-Danish people on the faculty and included significant
[SPEAKER_00]: perhaps more diversity than what the city of Des Moines would have had at those times.
[SPEAKER_00]: So they would have welcomed, say, Jewish background people on the faculty and others.
[SPEAKER_00]: So there's always been a welcoming of diversity here insofar as you'll find it here in the upper Midwest.
[SPEAKER_00]: We aren't so terribly diverse.
[SPEAKER_02]: And today there wouldn't hardly be any on the faculty with a Danish background, isn't that so?
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, with full-blooded, now we just, Rudy Jensen, who had been our last, he retired.
[SPEAKER_00]: We have a few that are ethnically part Danish.
[SPEAKER_00]: But it's non-significant at all.
[SPEAKER_00]: It is non-significant, that is absolutely true.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, it is non-significant.
[SPEAKER_00]: There are far more, and this would be, I...

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[SPEAKER_00]: With people of European background in this country, Scandinavian background especially, when they lived in small farming communities or when they lived in certain neighborhoods in larger cities like Chicago or Minneapolis, the ethnicity held on.

[SPEAKER_00]: Many Americans, because there's two world wars with Germans,

[SPEAKER_00]: these folks were all too close from the American perspective to Germans, as horrible as that would sound to Scandinavians and Scandinavian Americans.

[SPEAKER_00]: But from the wider Yankee perspective, they were all too close and there was a push, even here at Grandview back in the time of the First World War, the state of Iowa required the classes be taught here throughout the state as well in English only.

[SPEAKER_00]: Grandview protested and continued to offer courses in Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: They were not going to permit the governor and the legislature to tell them how to operate.

[SPEAKER_00]: They were very heroic, I think.

[SPEAKER_02]: It would be so unusual to most of them to...

[SPEAKER_02]: to go on in the English language as well.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think Scandinavian Americans, with my own mother's side of the family, with Swedish background, they just amalgamated into the wider culture so quickly.

[SPEAKER_00]: They intermarried outside of that ethnicity.

[SPEAKER_00]: They intermarried outside of the Lutheran approach, the Lutheran faith.

[SPEAKER_00]: For many Scandinavian Americans, and as a person in my early 50s, I really sensed this.

[SPEAKER_00]: It is not what it would have been when I was a child at all.

[SPEAKER_00]: The ethnic and cultural things are rapidly being lost, especially for Scandinavian Americans.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_02]: But your interest in Grundtvig came about being at this institution, as you said.

[SPEAKER_02]: Oh, I think so, yeah.

[SPEAKER_02]: What have you been...

[SPEAKER_02]: You've been doing some studies in Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_02]: You've been writing a number of articles.

[SPEAKER_02]: What have you sort of been dealing with the most?

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I think it's very simple from Grundtvig that I would be most interested in because I am primarily a theologian.

[SPEAKER_00]: is his phrase, human first and then Christian.

[SPEAKER_00]: I personally find a lot of promise in that.

[SPEAKER_00]: I find that a life-giving approach to everything.

[SPEAKER_00]: I feel that there's so many positive things about Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it's a terrible shame that the torch wasn't passed better.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's not just to a kind of nostalgia that I would look to the various practices that were in place at this institution.

[SPEAKER_00]: For instance, folk dancing, singing, time for reflection.

[SPEAKER_00]: Our young people today are said to be far more into electronic sorts of forms of entertainment and whatnot.

[SPEAKER_00]: But again, it's the practices that lend themselves to integrating mind, body, and spirit.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I find it sad that these practices have been lost over the decades.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's not likely that they're going to be retrieved anytime soon.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token...

[SPEAKER_02]: To be specific, the tradition of folk dancing that used to be in this institution, that's an example of one of the things that you've been trying to promote.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I've raised it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I would like to see it come back.

[SPEAKER_00]: I really would.

[SPEAKER_00]: You raised it.

[SPEAKER_02]: I have raised it more than once.

[SPEAKER_00]: But that was not the necessary... It's not perceived as an effective marketing tool.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I would dispute, I find that I very much disagree with the administration on that one.

[SPEAKER_00]: But that's the way it is.

[SPEAKER_00]: For myself, what I try to do in my own classes is simply make certain that students understand who Grundtvig was, how there's a connection with Grundtvig with this school.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's one reason that we

[SPEAKER_00]: got the Grandview reader going.

[SPEAKER_00]: I gave my first assignment in that yesterday.

[SPEAKER_00]: I even told them it was on a Sunday morning driving to church in October, the beautiful fall leaves, and I just had this moment of inspiration.

[SPEAKER_00]: It said, get this reader going.

[SPEAKER_00]: It'd be a great collaborative project.

[SPEAKER_00]: You'd get all these faculty together.

[SPEAKER_00]: and try to connect the dots for the young people.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is in terms of you have this heritage coming from Denmark.

[SPEAKER_00]: In my opinion, it's a powerful and beautiful heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: So how can our students at Grandview at least be aware of it, then through their awareness of it, they could connect the dots in their own life.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is how it might move them forward.

[SPEAKER_00]: So that's my hope.

[SPEAKER_00]: The reader would be one thing.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's some other things, the articles and whatnot.

[SPEAKER_00]: I've done a few of those things.

[SPEAKER_00]: In part, I do strongly believe that Grundtvig has a beautiful, powerful, and life-giving heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm limited in how far I can move with that in terms of scholarship because my scholarship is placed in other realms of inquiry.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token, I feel it's very important that our young people here and our adult learners be exposed to that.

[SPEAKER_00]: And to help them connect the dots of what that all might mean.

[SPEAKER_00]: Many of our students here are quite secular.

[SPEAKER_00]: Human first, then Christian.

[SPEAKER_00]: The Christian part might not at all be appealing to them.
[SPEAKER_00]: But the human first, in my judgment, has to be appealing.
[SPEAKER_00]: has to be appealing.
[SPEAKER_00]: That is, how do we connect with that?
[SPEAKER_00]: What does it mean to be human?
[SPEAKER_00]: How is your life different in light of that question?
[SPEAKER_00]: You can't manipulate a kind of enlightenment.
[SPEAKER_00]: But I think you can put the pieces in place that would help aid that.
[SPEAKER_00]: Again, as perhaps silly to some people as it might sound, things like
[SPEAKER_00]: It's the practices.
[SPEAKER_00]: Things like, you know, the singing or the folk dance and whatnot can make a difference with that.
[SPEAKER_00]: But I back off.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't see them coming back any time too soon.
[SPEAKER_02]: How do your students receive this concept of Grundtvig that you present to them and you also present it in this brand new college reader?
[SPEAKER_00]: That's a very good question.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I think what I need to do is do more assessment of that.
[SPEAKER_00]: I need to determine where they... Because all I can give you is my perception.
[SPEAKER_00]: I can't give you... I can tell you this.
[SPEAKER_00]: Professor Emerit Diver teaches sociology here.
[SPEAKER_00]: She also has used that book.
[SPEAKER_00]: There's four, five, six of us over the years that use that book and have tried to expose people to the thought of Grundtvig.
[SPEAKER_00]: She actually did have students write paragraphs about that exposure.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I have not kept these.
[SPEAKER_00]: This was probably about two or three years ago, but they were all positive.
[SPEAKER_00]: They were intrigued.
[SPEAKER_00]: They were grateful.
[SPEAKER_00]: They wanted to know something of the heritage of the school.
[SPEAKER_00]: Again, what I would like to see is play it forward.
[SPEAKER_00]: How would your life be different in light of this information?
[SPEAKER_00]: How would you take ownership of this question about humanity?
[SPEAKER_00]: Now, that I don't think that we've done enough with, but I think that's what we need to do.
[SPEAKER_00]: Very interesting way of going about it.
[SPEAKER_00]: That's what we need to do.
[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah, that would be good.
[SPEAKER_02]: Would you tell a little more about your academic work so that we can, so that you can get an idea of how Grundtvig fits into your main field of academic work?
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, it fits in indirectly.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I think some of the experts in Denmark might, in Denmark you get incredible,
[SPEAKER_00]: incredibly gifted experts.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, they know all the details.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it is fair to say that there is parallels with the wider Romantic movement of the 19th century and Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I do quite a bit of work in the Hamann, Johann Georg Hamann, that in many respects, both Kierkegaard

[SPEAKER_00]: and Grundtvig have, you can see parallels with.

[SPEAKER_00]: Hamann died in the year 1788.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was a friend of Immanuel Kant.

[SPEAKER_00]: He lived in Königsberg, Kaliningrad today.

[SPEAKER_00]: He was, in many respects, he's the father of all postmodern thinking because

[SPEAKER_00]: in opposition to Kant who argued for a pure reason.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is, what can the mind know about how it thinks?

[SPEAKER_00]: And those pure categories wouldn't be sullied by sense experience.

[SPEAKER_00]: But Hamann's thought is that there is no pure reason because all reason comes sullied through history, language, and culture.

[SPEAKER_00]: those very things that Grundtvig found most attractive.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think that's what Grundtvig took from Romanticism as well as Hamann would have pushed our original language is actually rhythm, it's poetry, it's music.

[SPEAKER_00]: See, these are thoughts which all deeply resonate with Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: Ironically, I think there's a parallel with Kierkegaard as well, because it's not only Kierkegaard's pseudonymity which he takes from Hamann, this kind of literary style, and the use of, how do you put it,

[SPEAKER_00]: playfulness in writing, which Kierkegaard gets from Hamann.

[SPEAKER_00]: But also there's a focus on the self as well, which is obviously Kierkegaard.

[SPEAKER_00]: Now I think the stronger way to go is self is always in culture.

[SPEAKER_00]: Our forms of thought itself, or themselves, are social codes.

[SPEAKER_00]: So in my opinion, Grundtvig has the upper hand.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I do think there is a moment or an element of Kierkegaard that if one's going to come to one's humanity, it is very important.

[SPEAKER_00]: The one that needs the sense of individuation.

[SPEAKER_00]: becoming one's own self, if you will.

[SPEAKER_00]: Grundtvig was certainly not opposed to that.

[SPEAKER_00]: He's all for that.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think he has the upper hand in terms of overall approach because he has far greater the sense of culture, language, and history.

[SPEAKER_00]: But there's much parallels with this because I'm greatly interested in Romanticism and this kind of postmodern turn against Kant.

[SPEAKER_00]: And a lot of this work I do is with Hamann.

[SPEAKER_00]: Also, a lot of my work is with Luther studies.

[SPEAKER_00]: And you can accentuate the differences between Grundtvig and Luther.

[SPEAKER_00]: I personally think it would be a mistake to do that.

[SPEAKER_00]: The parallels, I think, are very strong.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think a living word, the iconicity of Luther putting his hand on the Bible as a written word, but the Lutheran movement at its best and as a whole is a focus on a living word.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think where you could push real tension points between Grundtvig and Luther is, and this is now more theology, but the sense of law and gospel, which is so important to Luther, is not there in Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: But neither would it be there for many 19th century figures.

[SPEAKER_02]: And wider... Also the stress on ordinary life, ordinary people's life.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, that's Luther.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's pure Luther.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's where you have these strong parallels.

[SPEAKER_00]: You don't need to be a monk or a nun.

[SPEAKER_00]: You know, God's spirit works in common, ordinary life.

[SPEAKER_02]: I'd like to get back to...

[SPEAKER_02]: some of your impressions and your ideas on Grundtvig and the contemporary society but I have another question about the sort of the state of interest in Grundtvig if you go if you look around academic institutions in the United States sort of in general that's a quite broad question but

[SPEAKER_02]: Would there be academics around that work with Grundtvig?

[SPEAKER_00]: In the United States?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.

[SPEAKER_00]: Certainly with Kierkegaard, there continues to be... With Kierkegaard research, there has been...

[SPEAKER_00]: Since the late 1940s, there has been up and down, ebb and flow.

[SPEAKER_00]: Interest in Kierkegaard in this country, and I'm not avoiding your question, I'm trying to reinforce that things Danish, there is an interest in this country.

[SPEAKER_00]: But in wider circles, in this country and elsewhere,

[SPEAKER_00]: Kierkegaard continues.

[SPEAKER_00]: Even in the down times with Kierkegaard, there's a great deal of interest.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's just always how Kierkegaard gets repackaged or reframed.

[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, in the 60s, it's Kierkegaard the existentialist.

[SPEAKER_00]: In the last 15 years, it's Kierkegaard the great critic of modernity, the postmodern Kierkegaard.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it's a terrible shame, but my impression is that there is not much at all of Grundtvig studies in this country.

[SPEAKER_00]: I struggle to think of any major scholar at any major university.

[SPEAKER_00]: And as I mentioned to you, even in the church,

[SPEAKER_00]: There had been, but you see these... In the ELCA.

[SPEAKER_00]: In the ELCA, right, the church where you would have, which incorporated most Danish church people, is ended up in the ELCA.

[SPEAKER_00]: There had been a fellow at the Philadelphia Seminary, Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia, interested in liturgics and ritual studies.

[SPEAKER_00]: that would harken to Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: But you see, it's just harken.

[SPEAKER_00]: Honestly, I don't think he or others have read much of Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: Even Grundtvig in translation.

[SPEAKER_00]: I just don't, I don't, I don't see it.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't see it.

[SPEAKER_02]: Well, I was just about to ask how much this lack of interest could be due to the lack of translation into English.

[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, I think that's a huge part of it.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I, I, I, I...

[SPEAKER_02]: But not only that, that's what you're saying, that also the English editions of selected writings, that hasn't really caught great attention.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think this is superb, that they're doing this.

[SPEAKER_02]: I think this should help.

[SPEAKER_02]: Is the NFS Grundtvig interest alive?

[SPEAKER_00]: The Aarhus University Press that will move towards volume one, towards many volumes.

[SPEAKER_00]: This will definitely help.

[SPEAKER_00]: It will also help with some people who will latch onto this and will say, I need to go to Denmark to do more in-depth study.

[SPEAKER_00]: I need to learn Danish.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I...

[SPEAKER_00]: I think if there is an Achilles' heel in Grundtvig, he so wrapped up his work with the Nordic spirit that that also ends up limiting his horizons.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't think it has to.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't think it has to.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think that an unintended barrier,

[SPEAKER_00]: gets thrown up, that hurts.

[SPEAKER_00]: A second factor is Grundtvig's writings are actually deeper and more subtle and more parochial than Kierkegaard's.

[SPEAKER_00]: Kierkegaard is working with specific figures.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's always Schelling, always Hegel, always Kant.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's always specific figures.

[SPEAKER_00]: Grundtvig's work stems, as a historian and as a student of myth and linguistics, stems a much wider horizon.

[SPEAKER_00]: Now, when I answer your question about the interest in America,

[SPEAKER_00]: I do that from my own background, which tends to be in philosophy and theology.

[SPEAKER_00]: Are there scholars in Anglo-Saxon who a study won't be?

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't know.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is a blind sight that I don't know.

[SPEAKER_00]: But you see, that makes it even more narrow.

[SPEAKER_00]: That makes it even more narrow.

[SPEAKER_00]: In my opinion, I think it's a

[SPEAKER_00]: If I read the situation accurately, and I think I do, I think it's a terrible loss.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it's a terrible loss.

[SPEAKER_02]: So this is the state of the art in the academic world.

[SPEAKER_02]: Grundtvig's ideas of education have had a somewhat broader

[SPEAKER_02]: influence, I think, around the world.

[SPEAKER_02]: We talked about India before.

[SPEAKER_02]: And there would have been some examples in this country as well.

[SPEAKER_00]: There has been translation of his writings, educational, just a little slim volume.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah, I'm also thinking about people who have
[SPEAKER_02]: started running schools that has the folk high school tradition as its background.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_02]: But that's not your field.
[SPEAKER_02]: But that might be educational ideas might be one part of that could be the area
that would have a go.
[SPEAKER_02]: Appropriate.
[SPEAKER_02]: in this country, like it seems to be coming underway in other countries around the
world, little by little, but... I don't want to come across glum, because I'm not glum.
[SPEAKER_00]: I'm very realistic about what the uphill battles would be.
[SPEAKER_00]: The tendencies in educational theory and the social sciences move towards
quantification.
[SPEAKER_00]: That is, to do assessments of what is good education, how do we quantify things?
[SPEAKER_00]: For instance, here at Grandview, we, as all institutions of higher learning in this
country do, is students do course evaluations.
[SPEAKER_00]: All the course evaluation does, which is filled with statistics because it's
mathematical, you know, how do you see, you know, how would you answer
[SPEAKER_00]: certain questions about the course.
[SPEAKER_00]: I'm not against this.
[SPEAKER_00]: I think there's some good things with this.
[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token, I'm not convinced the human spirit can be quantified.
[SPEAKER_00]: I think quantification, because assessment is so important in American higher
education, is an important element.
[SPEAKER_00]: But ultimately, the human
[SPEAKER_00]: is mysterious.
[SPEAKER_00]: There's an element of the human that transcends definability.
[SPEAKER_00]: So however we would like to slice and dice the human in terms of say human
genome or biochemically or in terms of sociological kinds of assessments of how people behave or
even economic behavior.
[SPEAKER_00]: The fact that we can make such quantifiable analysis is because the human itself
is mysterious, is spirit.
[SPEAKER_00]: See, Grundtvig is quite right about that.
[SPEAKER_00]: And that's the element, education at its best is always magic.
[SPEAKER_00]: education at its best between all the students, the teacher, working together is
always magic and that can't be quantified.
[SPEAKER_00]: Now, I think an analysis of quantification might pick up on that magic.
[SPEAKER_00]: But you see, Grundtvig was in touch with the magic.
[SPEAKER_00]: I mean, he's the magician.
[SPEAKER_00]: He understands that.
[SPEAKER_00]: Ultimately, it's a mystery that we cannot fully comprehend.
[SPEAKER_00]: We sense it when it happens.
[SPEAKER_00]: We sense that point of contact.
[SPEAKER_00]: And we sense the magic of community.
[SPEAKER_00]: But the brilliance of it all is it can't be manipulated.
[SPEAKER_00]: All you can do is put the pieces in place and wait and see what happens.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think that that would be an excellent route to go, quite frankly, is through education.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that would be, if American, I think he has much to offer.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was William James and even more so John Dewey.

[SPEAKER_00]: In this country, John Dewey continues to be the preeminent educational theorist.

[SPEAKER_00]: But Dewey moves towards a kind of quantification.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think Grundtvig would be an excellent supplement and a welcome supplement.

[SPEAKER_02]: Thank you, very good.

[SPEAKER_02]: Before we started the interview, we talked a little bit about Grundtvig and the American capitalist society today, and the European capitalist society as well.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'd like to let the Europeans off the hook, but I think they might even be far more clever than us.

[SPEAKER_02]: You went to sort of the how Grundtvig's ideas do fit or do not fit in with the sort of the market.

[SPEAKER_02]: Could you elaborate on your ideas?

[SPEAKER_00]: I think my idea is very simple, and it's fairly straightforward as well, and that is there's simply a tendency to separate public and private.

[SPEAKER_00]: And it's a distinction that I don't think Grundtvig would acknowledge.

[SPEAKER_00]: because he's going to say that's artificial, that's invented.

[SPEAKER_00]: It might be easier to pull off in the United States where you have far greater diversity than you have in Denmark, though Denmark has far more diversity now than what it had, say, 60, 70 years ago.

[SPEAKER_00]: But

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it privatizes the question of our humanity.

[SPEAKER_00]: So you can come up with your own perspective.

[SPEAKER_00]: But what will definitely stay in place is the market economy.

[SPEAKER_00]: I personally feel the market economy needs to be put into a much wider framework.

[SPEAKER_00]: Otherwise it becomes its own monster.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that

[SPEAKER_00]: the market economy needs to serve humanity, and not humanity serve it.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that's where I feel the Grundtvig would greatly help us.

[SPEAKER_02]: But as the situation is now, it's uh, you don't see the

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, we live under the conditions.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's common now in academic circles to speak of America as an empire, and it's true to say that America is.

[SPEAKER_00]: If we are, if that is as right as I think it is, I think we're much like Great Britain, which means it's simply a matter of time.

[SPEAKER_00]: But the other side of the fence is we're an empire in cahoots with everybody else.

[SPEAKER_00]: because it's a global economy.

[SPEAKER_00]: The clothes we're wearing were probably made in Thailand or some such place.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a global economy.

[SPEAKER_00]: And we have all contributed to this.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token, Grundtvig, who taught that the earth is in God's image, not just the person, but the entire earth is in the image of God.

[SPEAKER_00]: then I think we need to be much, we are severing our oneness with our own home through much of our economic practices.

[SPEAKER_00]: It is self-defeating.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think that until we really raise the question of the common good,

[SPEAKER_00]: that our privatization of that question is a part of environmental self-defeat that we need to.. We've idolized the economic dynamics of the market and we need to go back to the question of the common good

[SPEAKER_00]: and where our humanity fits in the entire framework of everything.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think Grundtvig can move us forward with that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I fear that there's too much, not only in this country, but in Europe as well, that we tend to privatize these matters.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I feel that that's already self-defeating.

[SPEAKER_00]: We privatize them because from the Enlightenment heritage, that was a way of not to kill one another.

[SPEAKER_00]: Your conscience is here, somebody else's conscience is there.

[SPEAKER_00]: So that was a way to stop the religious wars after the Reformation.

[SPEAKER_00]: And in many respects, it was a good move.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I don't think it's serving us well in light of environmental matters.

[SPEAKER_00]: because we all say, okay, this is your perspective on ultimate matters in private, but in public we all share an economic system that might be doing as much harm as it is doing good.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that system goes unchecked because we don't have any wider framework to check it.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I think we need to appeal to our common humanity

[SPEAKER_00]: as a framework to check the economic system.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't see global capitalism going away anytime too soon, unless the environment eventually gets so bad that it forces it to go away.

[SPEAKER_00]: But it would be my hope that we don't go that far, and that we find a way to check that through wider concerns of

[SPEAKER_00]: How do we honor our humanity?

[SPEAKER_00]: How do we honor the earth in whom we are an expression of?

[SPEAKER_02]: I think I'll come to some maybe final question that we'll have to see.

[SPEAKER_02]: which areas of Grundtvig's, both his writing and you might also say the Grundtvigian tradition that has come about in Denmark and this country but maybe mainly his writings, what areas would you appreciate and sort of put forward and

[SPEAKER_02]: which areas, if there are some, that you would say they are maybe too much part of 19th century Danish political, cultural life that we cannot use.

[SPEAKER_02]: But is it possible

[SPEAKER_02]: to put some points forward, or maybe some points aside?

[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, I can.

[SPEAKER_00]: Just for me, I would prefer to put the points forward, which might not be as typical as what you might hear from some people, because I understand where we're at today, which tends to quantify humanity, and what I would say kind of slice and dice humanity, and much good has come from that.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is, we map the genome.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, that will help us with genetic sorts of problems.

[SPEAKER_00]: We map the human body.

[SPEAKER_00]: That will help us with medicine and whatnot.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's much good that comes from all that.

[SPEAKER_00]: But it does tend to make the human one-dimensional.

[SPEAKER_00]: If you would ask me something to reclaim from Grundtvig's reclaim, I would actually appeal to his poetry.

[SPEAKER_00]: Poetry, which is multi-polyvalent in terms of rhythm, rhyme, it's something that stays up in your head.

[SPEAKER_00]: It provides a framework, a lens through which to see the rest of life.

[SPEAKER_00]: I would actually appeal to things like his poetry as something... I would appeal to his...

[SPEAKER_00]: his work in mythology.

[SPEAKER_00]: Because Muthos' story provides the wider framework from which to give the key that opens us to the mystery of life.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think his appreciation for history

[SPEAKER_00]: I think the philosophers always want a timeless answer.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm more skeptical of the timeless answer.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think history is the only royal science because everything ultimately is historical.

[SPEAKER_00]: Everything the philosopher does is simply a moment or a breath within history.

[SPEAKER_00]: Religiously speaking, for me, because I am a theologian, I am a minister, I find...

[SPEAKER_00]: Grundtvig's appeal to, at least theologically, of holy days, of not just a Christmas and an Easter, but also a Pentecost.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is, the Spirit continues to renew the church.

[SPEAKER_00]: And the power of the Spirit to do that is easily forgotten.

[SPEAKER_00]: It needs to be reclaimed.

[SPEAKER_00]: Historically, Lutheranism has tended to have what you would call a penitential piety.

[SPEAKER_00]: Historically, Lutherans are deeply Lenten people.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's always something to feel bad about or to feel guilty about.

[SPEAKER_00]: I would not pit a penitential piety against an earth or spirit piety.

[SPEAKER_00]: Those people, for instance, who are recovering alcoholics, all have to make a list as a fourth step of the harm, the wrong they've done to people.

[SPEAKER_00]: That's a Lenten dimension.

[SPEAKER_00]: And until they confess that to their higher power themselves and another human being,

[SPEAKER_00]: That's confession and absolution.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't think getting rid of, I don't think you pit penance because there's a lot of evidence that one's healing can only happen through taking ownership of one's wrongs.

[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token, when you're quite free of, that you walk away from the narrative of being a victim or a victimizer,

[SPEAKER_00]: perpetrator when you walk away from that narrative you are open to everything that this earth speaks to you and that other people speak to you that you become one with God's Spirit and that you you you share in that journey

[SPEAKER_00]: So I think Grundtvig gives us, as a young teenager, his father being a pietist was so enmeshed with that kind of piety you see in Babette's Feast.

[SPEAKER_00]: And there's where I think he opened the key that

[SPEAKER_00]: that doesn't provide health.

[SPEAKER_00]: That itself is part, the judgmentalism is part of the problem.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm a better Christian than this person.

[SPEAKER_00]: So to let go of that and to affirm our common humanity.

[SPEAKER_02]: You talked about the Pilgrim Fathers and their... Calvinism.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's a Calvinism.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's definitely... The majority of people in America, if they claim any kind of religion, it's Roman Catholicism.

[SPEAKER_00]: But we have always had a Calvinist heritage because the original people who started this country were English.

[SPEAKER_00]: They came here against the Church of England.

[SPEAKER_00]: They wanted to establish a Christian nation.

[SPEAKER_00]: Anyone of Lutheran background finds this absurd.

[SPEAKER_00]: But Lutherans have always been a minority in this country.

[SPEAKER_00]: Even though this approach statistically, numerically, is not the strongest group in this country, it continues to, and I'm very disturbed, as many Americans are disturbed by, and I'm on tape so I'll watch my language, but this sort of thing, in my opinion, is a real violence.

[SPEAKER_00]: Politicians, it was in 1973 that Roe v. Wade became legal.

[SPEAKER_00]: It was at that time that born-again Americans took over the Republican Party.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm old enough to remember a Republican Party that born-again Americans had very little to do with.

[SPEAKER_00]: But after Roe v. Wade, they took over the Republican Party, and they have caused much mischief.

[SPEAKER_00]: in my opinion, in the name of this Calvinistic heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: Not just mischief, but even violence.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's elements of their approach because I try to see the positive of where they might be coming from.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's a heritage in this country that doesn't prove itself to be true all the time.

[SPEAKER_00]: If you work hard, you will be rewarded.

[SPEAKER_00]: That is mythology, but I think it's a positive mythology.

[SPEAKER_00]: We certainly want people to do their best.

[SPEAKER_00]: These people will claim this.

[SPEAKER_00]: There's something that I find beneficial in that, for all the errors that might be in that.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think it is wise to work hard, be thrifty, etc.

[SPEAKER_00]: But there's a tendency, in the kind of religion I'm criticizing, it parallels the kind of fanaticism that you see in Islam, where there is not all Islam, but some Islam, where there is no separation of church and state.

[SPEAKER_00]: And I find these people are capable of the same kind of terrorism that a minority in Islam would follow.

[SPEAKER_02]: So, in this respect, our Grundtvig ideas, Grundtvigian ideas would certainly be welcome.

[SPEAKER_02]: Are there areas of his ideas and writings and the tradition that you would not be like to

[SPEAKER_02]: You don't see any much value for the present.

[SPEAKER_00]: Well, the 19th century was a time of great nationalism.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that nationalism allowed people to claim their heritage.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think Grundtvig, in my opinion, is best packaged to the wider world

[SPEAKER_00]: he claims and owns and conveys the Danish spirit. Truth is always mediated you cannot walk away from the particular I think it's finding the balance between that particularity

[SPEAKER_00]: and the universality that it conveys.

[SPEAKER_00]: And that, I think, is the challenge at multiple levels, not least of which is Denmark has five, six million people.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a very small country.

[SPEAKER_00]: English, whether we like it or not, my ancestors would have held on to Swedish language if they could have, but that went away.

[SPEAKER_02]: So some measure of the nationalist idea is part of the Grundtvigian heritage... It is, and it's a plus and a minus is what I'm saying.

[SPEAKER_00]: It's a plus and a minus.

[SPEAKER_00]: And in a good Lutheran paradoxical fashion, you can't make it disappear.

[SPEAKER_00]: You just have to live with it.

[SPEAKER_00]: So, I think it's a plus and a minus.

[SPEAKER_00]: It does come packaged through the Danish spirit, but the Danish spirit also isn't exactly somebody else's, you see.

[SPEAKER_00]: So, if you try to uncouple Grundtvig from Denmark, I don't think you have Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think you'd have somebody else.

[SPEAKER_00]: I don't think that's the answer, but it comes with its problems, because the deep particularity also throws up a barrier.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm not convinced all barriers can be brought down.

[SPEAKER_00]: It just is a question of how you work with it.

[SPEAKER_00]: Grundtvig never had to really address any of those things, because he saw himself as a wider Nordic spirit

[SPEAKER_00]: and that the Scandinavian peoples would eventually have their day.

[SPEAKER_00]: He certainly didn't see his Danishness as in radical opposition to where Norwegians would be or Swedes would be.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think the ethnic particularity does throw up barriers.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm not convinced that the barriers should be demolished.

[SPEAKER_00]: I think barriers is something we have to live with, just like boundaries we have to live with.

[SPEAKER_00]: So what good, you know, to look at the common humanity, you can also look beyond the barrier.

[SPEAKER_00]: But I think it does come packaged with the uniqueness.

[SPEAKER_00]: You probably, and I'm not the scholar, my deepest hunch is for the true Grundtvig expert, you simply could not separate his insights from the Danish language itself.

[SPEAKER_00]: It wouldn't be possible.

[SPEAKER_00]: So it's good to have him translate into English, but there will always be a space.

[SPEAKER_02]: The context would be the Danish...
[SPEAKER_02]: history, society, politics.
[SPEAKER_00]: Right.
[SPEAKER_00]: Because he was so wrapped up into that.
[SPEAKER_02]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_02]: Of course, you have to have that context to sort of get to what he was doing.
[SPEAKER_02]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_02]: I think we are
[SPEAKER_02]: We've been through a lot of very interesting topics.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, it's a privilege and an honor.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I do hope you'll send me your work if it's in English.
[SPEAKER_00]: There'll be English quotes.
[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, I just... This is a lot of fun for me.
[SPEAKER_02]: I think there's maybe...
[SPEAKER_02]: interesting sideway from Grundtvig.
[SPEAKER_02]: His son was over here. Frederik Lange Grundtvig.
[SPEAKER_02]: Yes, that's right.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes, boy, we don't talk about that very much.
[SPEAKER_00]: No.
[SPEAKER_00]: I think he'd hoped to become president here.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, at some point.
[SPEAKER_02]: I have a thing that I'd like you to comment on.
[SPEAKER_02]: F.L. Grundtvig, his son, Frederik Lange, he was very much into the idea that the Danes in this country
[SPEAKER_02]: should maintain their Danishness in the sense of they should maintain their language.
[SPEAKER_02]: And they would still be or should see themselves as part of the people of Denmark, as a Danish folk.
[SPEAKER_02]: And he had this idea about the United States, what kind of society that would, that was developing
[SPEAKER_02]: at the end of the 1800s.
[SPEAKER_02]: Right.
[SPEAKER_02]: And he had this phrase of, he called America, Folkestævnets Land, that means the country where the people, the peoples meet.
[SPEAKER_02]: They meet, the peoples from all over the world, come here and meet, but as people, as folk, so they would
[SPEAKER_02]: they would cooperate and exchange ideas and traditions and songs.
[SPEAKER_02]: But he had that idea that people would... So someone has called it a very early idea of multiculturalism.
[SPEAKER_02]: Have you any comment on that?
[SPEAKER_02]: How Grundtvigian is that thing?
[SPEAKER_00]: Oh, it's very Grundtvigian.
[SPEAKER_00]: Tremendously Grundtvigian.
[SPEAKER_00]: And it's a very... I was not aware.

[SPEAKER_02]: No, because it's his son whose writings are not known very wide.
[SPEAKER_00]: I'm glad you raised this question.
[SPEAKER_00]: If you hear a thread of continuity in some of the things I've said...
[SPEAKER_00]: Is it... The way I phrased it is there's a tendency... What's happened... A popular American way of operating is from... I'm using a 60s phrase.
[SPEAKER_00]: And even though we're a long ways from the 60s, it's still...
[SPEAKER_00]: It's still a part, allegedly, of America.
[SPEAKER_00]: "Do your own thing".
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, my young people in class do their own thing.
[SPEAKER_00]: But they all come dressed in the same designer jeans.
[SPEAKER_00]: Are you following me?
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_00]: I would hate to see our folk identity simply succumb to this kind of flattening
[SPEAKER_00]: has been the metaphor that I used earlier of just the dynamics, again, of the economy, which is, this is the brand for you to wear.
[SPEAKER_00]: This is really your identity.
[SPEAKER_00]: This is your food.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yes.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.
[SPEAKER_00]: And that, unfortunately, becomes a world phenomenon.
[SPEAKER_00]: So you could be in Papua New Guinea.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I, for one...
[SPEAKER_00]: like our differences.
[SPEAKER_00]: I don't see them as threatening, nor do I see them as potential for war.
[SPEAKER_00]: I see them as a window into uniquenesses that all convey our humanity.
[SPEAKER_00]: That the weakest notion in Grundtvig, in the long run, is this whole thing of folk.
[SPEAKER_00]: Unfortunately.
[SPEAKER_00]: Because I'm trying to convey to you that it can be a strength.
[SPEAKER_00]: But the economics of the 19th century are very different than the economics of the 21st century.
[SPEAKER_00]: But another thread you've heard from me is...
[SPEAKER_00]: the fate of global capitalism is problematic at best.
[SPEAKER_00]: And Europeans, by being more socialist, are no the less let off the hook.
[SPEAKER_00]: We are all wrapped up in this very much together.
[SPEAKER_00]: The fact that Europeans have a better health care system in place for much longer is we are all wrapped up in a global economy.
[SPEAKER_00]: And I don't want to be an alarmist
[SPEAKER_00]: But by the same token, I would share many concerns.
[SPEAKER_00]: That's my phone.
[SPEAKER_00]: No, I don't need to take it.
[SPEAKER_00]: It'll come on.
[SPEAKER_00]: It's interrupting the... Well, that's no problem.
[SPEAKER_02]: But I think I'm about what I had to ask you about.
[SPEAKER_00]: Well, you're an excellent interviewer.

[SPEAKER_00]: You do a great job.

[SPEAKER_00]: Thank you.

[SPEAKER_02]: That's not my idea because, well, here the language problem, you know, that you're not a native speaker is because sometimes you have some

[SPEAKER_02]: specific area that you would like to ask about and then you... I use a lot of metaphor.

[SPEAKER_00]: I use a lot of metaphor, which may be more so than others.

[SPEAKER_00]: I use a lot of metaphor and often my metaphors are very colloquial.

[SPEAKER_00]: They're very narrow.

[SPEAKER_00]: I'm aware of that.

[SPEAKER_02]: I follow you.

[SPEAKER_02]: Sometimes I might not be aware of the exact meaning, but I get the broad meaning all the time.

[SPEAKER_02]: It's quite easy to get.

[SPEAKER_00]: In my own work, I feel that I've been deeply influenced by Grundtvig.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah, I think.

[SPEAKER_02]: I wouldn't be surprised if you say so.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah, I mean, if you hear this talk about spirit and whatnot.

[SPEAKER_02]: Yeah, absolutely.

[SPEAKER_00]: Yeah.

[SPEAKER_02]: Well, I'll say thanks very much.

[SPEAKER_02]: Thank you.

[SPEAKER_02]: Thank you.