



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

The Third Sector in the Nordic Countries

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Conversations
with the
Friedmans

To Have or to Be

- Economics is about how much money you can *have*
- But what really matters is what you *are* or aspire to *become*: it is what gives life meaning
- We speak Icelandic because we are Icelandic
- We might gain materially from adopting English, as Rose argued, but we would also lose something valuable, as Milton pointed out
- We have to *belong* somewhere, *be* something
- If you marry your housekeeper, GDP decreases, while happiness increases
- If one of a couple leaves the labour market to care for their children, GDP decreases, but they become happier

Burke and Tocqueville rejected atomistic individualism

- Mutual benefit is a strong tie, but the individual is not only a consumer or a producer
- In a flourishing civil society, the individual has several ties, commitments, attachments: family, friends, locality, class, congregation, schools, profession, workplace, party, associations, clubs, leisure activities, nation
- French Revolution failed because it tried to tear apart those ties, leaving the individual alone and defenceless against the almighty state, leading first to terror (Robespierre) and then to military dictatorship (Napoleon)



Nationalism, Good and Bad

- *Good*, natural, non-aggressive nationalism regards the nation, and the nation state, as daily plebiscite (Ernest Renan), based on national consciousness and acceptance of national values
- Reaffirmation of national identity, the collective will to preserve and develop traditions, usually based on shared history, common language and literary heritage, respecting a similar will of other peoples and nations
- *Bad*, manufactured, aggressive nationalism not about belonging oneself, but about belittling others, false feeling of superiority, urge to dominate, subdue, humiliate others
- Bad nationalism based on conquest



Revanchism, Chauvinism, Jingoism



Herder and Nationalism

- Herder: Each nation or national community has its own special values, symbolic myths, folk songs, culture, *Volksgeist*, incommensurable with other communities (but not incomprehensible to their members)
- Rationalism and universalism do not fully account for community and culture
- Maistre concurred: 'Now, there is no such thing as "man" in this world. In my life I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, and so on. I even know, thanks to Montesquieu, that one can be Persian. But as for man, I declare I've never encountered him'
- While one may belong to one community, one should look at other communities with sympathy
- One could belong to many communities, e.g. be from South Tyrol, a citizen of Italy, a member of the German-speaking community, a participant in a Euroregion, an inhabitant of the EU
- Another example: The Nordic Council

The Case of Denmark

- Denmark peaceful and prosperous, economy relatively free despite high taxes
- Danes the happiest nation in the world
- Fukuyama: 'the problem of getting to Denmark'
- Strong civil society, high level of trust
- Honesty, reliability, mutuality, solidarity, accountability, transparency, low level of corruption
- Social cohesion brought about by a certain culture, not created by commands from above
- Economic reforms under influence of Adam Smith (1779) in late 18th century, abolition of monopolies, privatisation of land, formation of class of independent farmers
- Danish identity then articulated and to some extent created by N.F.S. Grundtvig, Denmark's national poet

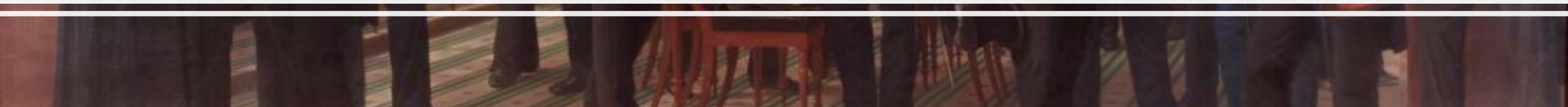
Grundtvig as a Conservative Liberal

- Prolific and powerful poet; author of many popular Danish hymns
- Sought inspiration in the Nordic cultural heritage, translated Snorri Sturluson's works, also influenced by Herder's romantic nationalism and by English economic liberalism
- Coined 'Happy Christianity' (glade kristendom)
- Strong supporter of religious freedom
- Also of free speech: 'Freedom for Loki as well as for Thor'
- Saw the need to educate the public, 'Schools for life', the (private) people's high schools





Member of Constituent Assembly, 1848–9

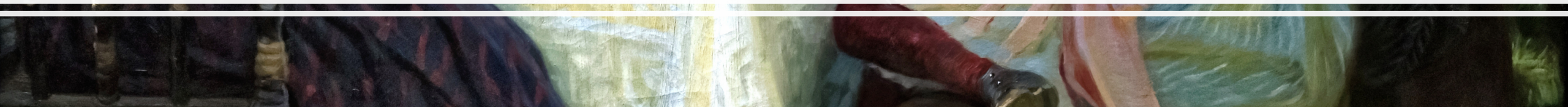


Denmark developed strong national identity

- In 1872, Nordic industrial and art exhibition in Copenhagen
- Holst: 'What is lost externally, must be regained internally'
- Loss: Denmark lost Skåneland (Southern Sweden) in 1658, Norway in 1809, and Schleswig-Holstein in 1864
- Economic gain: Industrialisation, trade and shipping, in late 19th century
- Social gain: Free congregations, people's high schools, sports clubs, dairies, consumers' cooperatives, trade unions, political parties
- Even social democrats tried in 20th century to appropriate Grundtvig, abandoning their internationalism



Danish word 'hygge', being content and feeling cozy



Recent threats to Danish Social Cohesion

- Immigration from countries with values hostile to freedom, enclaves of people on welfare
- The 2005 cartoon affair when Jyllandsposten published cartoons of Muhammad and imams residing in Denmark encouraged Arab protests
- Danish tradition of free speech contested by immigrant population
- Also, Danish welfare state presupposed that only those in real need would go on welfare, not shirkers and loafers
- Nevertheless, the Danish experiment successful, not least because of strong and flourishing third sector

