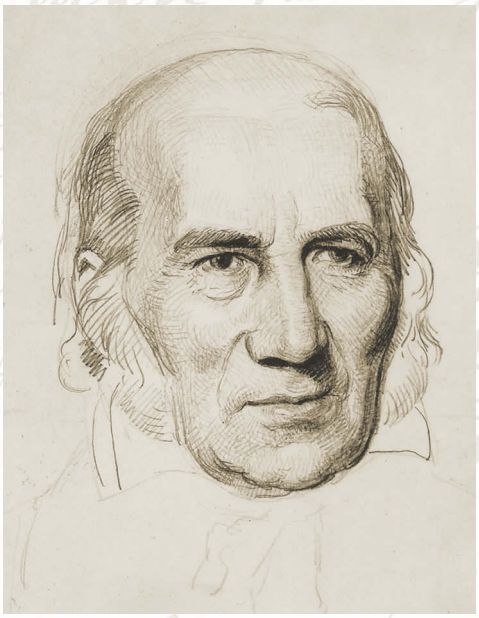

THE SCHOOL FOR LIFE

N.F.S. Grundtvig

on Education for the People

Edward Broadbridge
(translator and editor)
Clay Warren
(editor)
Uffe Jonas
(editor)

Aarhus University Press

THE SCHOOL FOR LIFE

THE SCHOOL FOR LIFE

N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People

Edward Broadbridge (translator and editor)

Clay Warren (editor)
Uffe Jonas (editor)

Opening Essay: Ove Korsgaard
Text Introductions: Uffe Jonas
Concluding Essay: Clay Warren

Aarhus University Press |

The School for Life: N.F.S. Grundtvig on Education for the People

Linguistic consultant: John Nicholson
Illustrations selected and annotated by Ove Korsgaard

Typeset by Narayana Press
Cover design by Jørgen Sparre
Front cover illustration: P.C. Skovgaard's drawing of Grundtvig, 1847. Frederiksborg Castle. The handwriting is Grundtvig's own. It includes the famous lines: "Freedom for Loki as well as for Thor". The Royal Library, NKS 3927, 4°, f. 5r. Courtesy of The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

Ebook production: Narayana Press

ISBN 978 87 7124 263 8

Aarhus University Press
Aarhus
Langelandsgade 177
DK – 8200 Aarhus N

København
Tuborgvej 164
DK – 2400 København NV
www.unipress.dk

INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS:
Gazelle Book Services Ltd.
White Cross Mills
Hightown, Lancaster, LA1 4XS
United Kingdom
www.gazellebookservices.co.uk

The David Brown Book Company
Box 511
Oakville, CT 06779
USA
www.oxbowbooks.com

Contents

Illustrations

Foreword

N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) produced a major body of work in the fields of theology, education, literature, politics, and history. He was also a poet, a hymn-writer, and a translator. In particular, however, it is his educational writings that over the years have attracted international attention – from the USA in the west to Japan in the east. In recognition of his influence the European Union called its adult education project 'the Grundtvig programme'.

As part of its agenda to digitalise and translate some of Grundtvig's vast output, the Grundtvig Study Centre at the University of Aarhus is pleased to publish this broad selection of Grundtvig's writings on education in a completely new translation. The representative selections have been taken from the standard collection of Grundtvig's writings on education, *Grundtvigs Skoleverden* (1968) by Professor K.E. Bugge. They vary in form from poems and songs to articles in periodicals, introductions to books, an open letter to the Norwegians, and a private letter to the King of Denmark. Our hope is that taken together they will provide a solid basis for international scholars without knowledge of Danish to be able to work closely with Grundtvig's ideas on education for the people.

To set Grundtvig's ideas in their historical context, Professor Ove Korsgaard of the Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, has provided a lengthy introduction, while postdoctoral researcher Uffe Jonas introduces each text into its immediate context. Finally, an essay by Professor Clay Warren, The George Washington University, discusses the international reception of Grundtvig's ideas with special emphasis on adult education in the USA.

A timeline, a bibliography of works in English, a few selected illustrations, and a comprehensive index provide readers with a scholarly basis on which to build.

The Grundtvig Study Centre at Aarhus University was established on 1 January 2009 to continue the work of the former Centre for Grundtvig Studies, which was established in 1988.

The work of the Grundtvig Study Centre is focused on the following areas:

1. An annotated digital edition of Grundtvig's writings
2. Research in areas of specific interest to Grundtvig:
   - Theology and the church
   - Democracy and the concept of *folkelighed* (the people's character)
   - Educational ideas and the concept of *folkeoplysning* (popular education/enlightenment)
3. Knowledge exchange, teaching, and communication

Edward Broadbridge has translated and edited the texts from the original Danish, assisted by John Nicholson as language consultant. Both have lived and worked in Denmark for 40 years. Uffe Jonas has checked the translations and contributed with specialist knowledge, as well as writing contextual introductions. Finally, Clay Warren has read the manuscript through from an international perspective and contributed most constructively to the end result.

The publication has been supported financially by a number of foundations. The Grundtvig Study Centre, University of Aarhus, wishes to thank the following:

Aarhus Universitets Forskningsfond
Konsul George Jorck & Hustru Emma Jorcks Fond
N.F.S. Grundtvigs Fond
Grundtvigs Forum
Sparekassen Kronjylland
Dansk Friskoleforening
Pastor Niels Møgelvangs Litteraturfond
Carlsen-Langes Legatstiftelse

Michael Schelde, Director of the Grundtvig Study Centre, Aarhus University

Translator's note

Although Grundtvig is among the most influential of Danes, his work is relatively difficult to comprehend for the modern reader. The total number of his known texts is 1,475, running to 35,000 pages. Almost all of his prose sentences are between 100-150 words, his syntax is convoluted, his language often obscure, and his numerous references go largely unheeded nowadays. For this reason most of his works are rarely read,

even in Danish, and when they are, it is mainly at graduate level and beyond. On the other hand, his hymns and songs are widely known and sung, and deeply respected.

Grundtvig has proved so difficult to translate that apart from a few songs and hymns, there has so far been little available to English readers. A previous attempt to translate extracts from several of his works and publish them in a single volume was made in 1984 by the present translator in collaboration with N.L. Jensen in *A Grundtvig Anthology* (James Clarke/Centrum). There have been a number of good biographies before Sid Bradley published a translation of Grundtvig's memoirs coupled with memoirs of others about Grundtvig in *N.F.S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled* (Aarhus University Press 2008).

The present translation of Grundtvig's educational ideas takes as its starting point the 2-volume Danish edition by Professor K.E. Bugge, *Grundtvigs Skoleverden* (lit. Grundtvig's School World, Gad 1968). I endeavour not to replicate the difficulty of the original texts but to render them into modern British English for both the scholar and the interested reader. At the same time I have sought to retain their power and originality – as well as the flavour of the times in which Grundtvig lived.

In the translation process crucial choices have had to be made, some of which break with a century-old tradition. Grundtvig is famous for providing the impetus for the 'folk high school', but the folk in question are in fact the *people* of Denmark, and so, after conferring widely, I have chosen 'People's High School' for this translation. In certain quotations, however, 'folk high school' is retained. Similarly, the Danish word *oplysning* can be translated variously as enlightenment, education, illumination, or information, so one choice of necessity excludes the others, although it may very well contain their meaning.

Despite his complicated syntax Grundtvig's style is in fact lively, scattered with wit, and often emphasised by italics. I have attempted to emulate all of these characteristics while using fewer italics and more exclamation marks. These will be clearly heard in the CD reading that accompanies this book. In only a single case have I followed Grundtvig's Danish simile where an equivalent English one exists, namely, in preferring 'clear as sunlight' to 'clear as daylight'.

One other word requires a comment here: 'fatherland'. English-speaking countries are historically less acquainted with this concept than, say, French or German speakers. "Allons, enfants, de la *patrie*," sing the French, while Americans are increasingly speaking of their 'homeland', never their 'fatherland'. Grundtvig's use of 'fatherland' should be seen and felt as it is experienced in the Welsh national song, Land of My Fathers. It contains no nationalistic overtones of animosity towards any other nation, but is rather a rallying-call to Grundtvig's own people and a complement to his use of *mother-tongue*. The phrase "in Grundtvig's fatherland" is still in regular use in Denmark when appealing to his concept of 'freedom for all'.

The endnotes supply the information thought necessary for an immediate understanding of the texts and their background. On the assumption that some readers will select certain chapters to read rather than the whole book, a few notes are repeated.

My profound thanks go to my co-editors and consultant for their contributions: first to John Nicholson for his invaluable insights and felicitous touch with Danish and English nuances on my initial draft; next to Clay Warren for his pertinent comments and vigorous improvements especially to the succinctness and general readability of the text; then to Grundtvig scholar Uffe Jonas, who has not only provided chapter introductions and linguistic insights but has also added many weighty footnotes; and finally to my Danish wife, Hanna, whose knowledge, encouragement, and patience have helped to quicken into being *The School for Life*.

Edward Broadbridge

◀ CONTENTS

Notes on contributors

Edward Broadbridge was born and educated in London. He has a B.A. (London) and an M.A. (Aarhus). He married his Danish wife in 1967 and moved to Denmark, where he has taught English at most levels and produced a large number of textbooks for English learners. Among his theological translations are books on Ruth, Luke, and Paul, two books on Grundtvig, and most recently a translation of 50 Danish hymns, *Hymns in English*, including 20 by Grundtvig. He has made numerous spoken word and musical recordings, is an official interpreter, and edits the online *Church News from Denmark* for the Danish Interchurch Council.

Clay Warren is Chauncey M. Depew Professor of Communication, Chair of the Department of Organizational Sciences & Communication, and Director of the Communication Program at The George Washington University. He holds a B.S. in Engineering from the United States Naval Academy, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Communication from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He also has been a faculty member in Nova Scotia, Denmark, and Hawaii and has published a book on Grundtvig's international contribution to lifelong learning. His interest in Grundtvig stems from childhood in a Danish-American community, a two-year teaching sojourn at The International People's College in Helsingør, and marriage to his Danish wife.

Uffe Jonas was born in Copenhagen and holds an M.A. and Ph.D. (on Kierkegaard) in Nordic languages and literature from Copenhagen University. He has been preoccupied with the philosophy, cosmology, and spirituality of N.F.S. Grundtvig for more than 20 years. He has lectured and published articles i.a. on Grundtvig, Foucault, Jakob Boehme, Ramakrishna, Rudolf Steiner and Valentin Tomberg, and is currently working at the Copenhagen branch of the Grundtvig Study Centre. His forthcoming book, *The Sun at Midnight,* is a study of Grundtvig's cosmology. As singer and composer in the band Jonas&Hjelland, he has a deep musical interest in Grundtvig's poetical works.

Ove Korsgaard was born on the island of Mors and taught at Gerlev People's High School for 4 years before becoming its Director for the next 17. From 1985-91 he was President of the Association of Danish People's High Schools and from 1996-2007 President of the Association for World Education. He has worked internationally with UNESCO. He holds a Ph.D. and a doctorate from the Danish University of Education and is currently Professor of Education in the Faculty of Arts at Aarhus University. His many books include *The Struggle about the Light: The Danish History of Adult Education through 500 Years* (1997).

John Nicholson gained an M.A. from Oxford and did postgraduate social studies at Sheffield and Southampton. He married his Danish wife in 1966 and moved to Denmark in 1977, where he has designed and facilitated programmes for adult learning, including applied theology and Christian spirituality. He was for some years the British committee member of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe. He has worked extensively with refugee resettlement and integration, as well as cross-cultural learning and community dialogue. For over 30 years he has been active in retreat conducting and retreat development in Denmark. He was translation consultant on the above-mentioned *Hymns in English*.

Grundtvig's Philosophy of Enlightenment and Education

Ove Korsgaard

Philosophy of education

N.F.S. Grundtvig was born in 1783, into a time when education was establishing itself as a central concept. He himself came to belong to a group of educational philosophers that included Rousseau (1712-1778), Herder (1744-1803), Kant (1724-1804), Fichte (1762-1814), Steffens (1773-1845), Humboldt (1765-1835), Schiller (1759-1805), Hegel (1770-1831), and others, all of whom in various ways contributed to the formation of modern educational philosophy. Even though philosophy of education does not constitute a single cohesive theory, there are a number of common features in its theoretical foundations – features that are often overlooked in the interest of pointing out differences. Philosophy of education builds on the common idea that human beings have a threefold relation: to themselves, to society, and to the world. If we disregard one of these dimensions, we are not seeing the world from the perspective of modern philosophy of education.

Grundtvig's educational philosophy also follows this trichotomy. True enlightenment, he says in *Education for the State* (1834), must take as its starting-point the fact that as individuals we only exist by virtue of our community with our people and, by extension, with the whole world. He praises "such an enlightenment – which by extending itself to the whole of human life and showing the deep connection between the life of the individual, the nation, and the whole human race, develops a way of thinking that is desirable for all social relations." The task is "to develop a complete human enlightenment" which will have the threefold effect of illuminating:

- "the everyday life of the moment"
- "the life of the people over centuries"
- "human life over millennia"

◀ CONTENTS

Like many other great educational philosophers of the day Grundtvig is not a 'thinker' in the narrow sense of the word. His thought on schools and education arises from his reflections on what it means to be *human*. In this context it is important to note that from the outset his concept of education is not about teaching methods but involves a far greater compass: namely, that the individual's learning processes are connected to *other* learning processes in history and nature.

Grundtvig's times

Why are the great philosophers of the time so preoccupied with the concept of 'education'? Why not continue to talk about 'upbringing'? What is the background for the growth in a 'philosophy' of education emphasising self-determination, self-activation, and freedom? The answers to all these questions lie in the new understanding of the relation between the individual and society – an understanding that leads to a transformation of the concept of 'the people' from subject to sovereign.

Under the old system 'the people' were always placed under a guardianship of some kind, be it in the household, the country, or their Christian faith. 'The people' were not masters in their own house, but were subordinate to the guardians of their fortunes. Education as something other than 'upbringing' was thus a response to the problem that arose with the transformation from princely to popular sovereignty taking place at the core of the political system. The *new* understanding of 'the people' comes about in conjunction with the dramatic changes in the view of sovereignty that characterise the second half of the 18th century. Rather than the people being subject to princely sovereignty there is a philosophical and popular movement towards a political system based on the *sovereignty of the people*. With the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, the American Constitution in 1787, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, 'the people' and 'the nation' are installed as sovereign powers. Indeed, the American Constitution actually begins with: "We, the people of the United States...". Kings and princes as father-figures were replaced by a social order based on democratic and national fellow-feeling under the revolutionary slogan: 'Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood'.

The change from princely to popular rule required an upgrading of the concept of 'the people'. Born only seven years after the American Revolution and six years *before* the French Revolution, Grundtvig more than anyone contributed to this process. The Danish nation and the Danish state cannot be understood without an appreciation of the contribution made by Grundtvig.

The impulse from England

The charge against Grundtvig of self-contradiction for his many inconsistent views can be made largely because he stands at a crossroads in the history of ideas between British liberalism and German idealism. He is deeply influenced by German philosophers such as Herder, Fichte, and Hegel, but it is equally clear that he is indebted to John Locke and the ideals of liberty in English liberalism. Grundtvig undertakes four trips to England – in 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1843 – which have a great influence on his thinking, not least in the field of educational theory and practice. In England he comes face to face with modern society. Although he is horrified at the shadow side of industrialism, he is also enthused by the power and energy that he witnesses. In his meeting with modernity he sharpens his understanding of the importance of the *liberal* view of liberty, economics, politics, and the life of the spirit, and this leads him to write a call to arms under the title *Nordic Mythology* (1832). He has become a champion of freedom, as can be seen from his introduction to the work, in which spirit and freedom constitute the core of his programme. He gives the essence of this view in poetic form: "Freedom for Loki as well as for Thor". The two Nordic Gods, Loki and Thor, each have their view of the world, but both must enjoy the same freedom. It may well be that the majority side with Thor, but there must be room for Loki's world-view too, although his concept of freedom is egocentric. Despite the fact that Grundtvig is critical of the selfish tendency in Loki's concept of freedom he gives the provocative trickster a special place in the introductory poem. It is Loki who with his teasing wit ensures that the battle is fought with word and spirit as weapons rather than the fist. Grundtvig argues for a freedom that is not only tolerant of divergent thinking but is itself the condition for an exchange of views in a living interplay.

Even though there is a kinship between Hegel's and Grundtvig's philosophy of history, over the years Grundtvig grows increasingly critical of Hegel's view of liberty and his theory of the state. In the third volume of his *Handbook of World History* (1843) he clearly distances himself from what he calls Hegel's obsessive idea that it should be the Germans who create the complete state, with freedom and necessity in union. In an article on civil liberty in his journal, *The Dane*, (1849) Grundtvig contrasts what he calls the English and the German idea of freedom. He laments that the Danes "have allowed ourselves to be taken in tow by the Germans without being able to live off their 'idea'; it is beyond dispute that we should be much better off with a free imitation of the English." Grundtvig clearly has Hegel's idea of freedom in mind. "If we ask the Germans... how we are to acquire and maintain 'civil liberty'... they give us a long sermon or lecture on the great struggle between 'liberty and necessity' and they impress upon us that all *outer* liberty is only a delusion, if the *inner* liberty is lacking." German thought gives pre-eminence to the spirit and inner freedom: "... *inner* freedom

◀ CONTENTS

is a treasure that must never be lost, and the outer physical servitude for the free soul is only empty appearance that in every case disappears with death". But the idea that spiritual freedom can exist with physical servitude goes against all experience and good sense.

Fortunately, says Grundtvig, the Danes can learn from the English, who point to "the so-called Habeas Corpus Act as the firm foundation of their freedom".[1] By this act no one can be denied physical freedom without a legal judgement to that effect. The Englishman argues that the act ensures that the physical liberty of the individual is absolutely crucial: "He really does regard having your *body* in your *power* as the essence of freedom." However, according to Grundtvig, it is not only Hegel who fails to assign decisive significance to the body, it is also many Christians. In *Handbook of World History* he again stresses the importance of the Habeas Corpus Act:

> "What the English call the freedom of the body (Habeas Corpus) has always been disparaged by the scribes, because they fail to appreciate human nature and life's enterprise and dreadfully misunderstand the deep yet obscure truth that the body only exists for the sake of the spirit, and time for the sake of eternity. The English on the other hand, with their unparalleled enterprise and their hawk-eye for the conditions of industriousness, endeavoured as best they could in their ancient charter of freedom (Magna Carta) to ensure 'a free foot' which alone allows for 'a free hand', so no one was to be imprisoned except for a particular, stated, charge."

Grundtvig thus supports a central concept in democracy: that freedom depends on whether one has power over one's body. We might even say that his most important contribution to the development of democracy is his repeated emphasis on the indissolubility of spiritual freedom and physical freedom. This explains his great enthusiasm for the Habeas Corpus Act, which must be regarded as a milestone in the establishment of a legal basis for liberal democracy.

Where Hegel sees the state as the instance which must ultimately ensure morality, Grundtvig regards the state as a form under which human life in all its powers should grow as wholly and as freely as possible. To ensure a free engagement in this struggle, the state should be neither church nor school; what the state should take care of is the creation of a serviceable framework for a spiritual battle, not a power battle. Grundtvig maintains his liberal view of the state's function for the rest of his life. In 1863, at the age of 80, he makes a speech in which he agrees with Luther's view of religious freedom but disagrees with him on the state church. Freedom requires a quite different magnitude from what Luther imagined. Grundtvig has seen it for himself in England, "which in those days was the only safe harbour for freedom in the whole of Europe".

Grundtvig's praise of England as the home of liberty leads to a deep disagreement with Hegel's view that the state should be the guarantor of social norms. Instead he takes the radical step of making the *conversation in pursuit of the truth* the authoritative instance of his age. Placing the *conversation* at the heart of the matter entails the rejection of institutions such as the church or the state, or even a book such as the Bible, as the guarantor of truth.

The impulse from the continent

It is not just the influence from England that forms the background for Grundtvig's educational writings; there are also influences from the rest of Europe, including Denmark. Events on the continent, in particular the July Revolution in Paris in 1830, play a decisive role for Grundtvig's entry into the political arena. The national and democratic ideas that are emerging in a number of countries also reach Denmark, where in 1830 a proclamation is issued advocating a free constitution for the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. In 1831, moreover, it is announced that to promote the democratic process Provincial Advisory Assemblies are to be established in Denmark, which will further Grundtvig's ideas on politics and education. He realises that the new pre-democratic institutions can benefit the country, if the members of the assemblies are given a better education. This will require a new form of High School that builds not on the exclusion but on the *inclusion* of the people – and of the vernacular language. Grundtvig gives form to the revolutionary idea that anyone can be enlightened and educated via *the language of the people*. In Denmark it is Danish. This ideal of enlightenment and education leads him to direct a vehement attack on the academic schools that maintain Latin as their entry ticket to education. Since only a small minority of the population attend the grammar schools, where they learn Latin, the idea of an unbreakable link between Latin and education has led inevitably to a sharp distinction between 'the scholars' and 'the people'. What Grundtvig wants is "to connect academic with popular education". However, 'the people', understood as the lower class, cannot yet be allowed to run the country; a genuine rule 'by the people' requires first that they have access to education. It is significant that Grundtvig writes most of his works on education between 1831 and 1847, in the period between the announcement of the Provisional Advisory Assemblies in 1831 and the transformation of the political system to democracy in 1848-49. He too is attempting to influence the change.

When the second wave of democratic revolution rolls through Europe in the spring of 1848, it also washes over Denmark. After a number of stormy meetings in Copenhagen in March 1848 culminating in a demonstration on 21 March, the newly-crowned King Frederik VII ends the rule of absolute monarchy, begun in 1660, and the first steps toward a new political system are taken. The assembly of 150 men from the bourgeoisie,

the so-called National Liberals, are the prime movers in the change of system to the 1849 Constitution. They take it for granted that the new democracy should be led by the educated and the affluent. Grundtvig, who is himself a member of the Constitutional Assembly that passes the new constitution into law, nevertheless abstains, primarily because he is opposed to the establishment of an upper house (*Landsting*) based on the privileged wealth of the nation. If democracy is to be introduced into Denmark, it must be firmly and broadly anchored in 'the people'. And this requires popular education.

Grundtvig's anthropology

In the same way that *communication* and *interaction* constitute the core ideas in the anthropology and educational thinking of the American philosopher John Dewey,[2] so is *a living interaction* the central concept in Grundtvig's educational thought. Time and again he emphasises the importance of a *living* interplay between teacher and student, between past and present, between earth and heaven, between soul and body, and between hand and mouth. The interaction between hand and mouth becomes Grundtvig's standard example of a general principle to which he gives the following poetic form:

> 'Hand' with 'spirit' – and vice versa,
> yet they each have their own way,
> just as hand and mouth contending
> for life's prize combine each day;
> 'hand and mouth' in their transcendence
> and reciprocal dependence
> interact most wondrously.

The same principle of interplay between 'hand and mouth' is found in Grundtvig's writings on education. In *The School for Life & the Academy in Sorø* (1838) he criticises the educational practice that builds on an incompatibility between soul and body:

> "The fundamental error to which our school-madness for boys' scholarship, or rather for the underground gods, can be traced, is, as the English doctors quite rightly observe, the conflict that is imagined between the body and the soul, so that what the body loses, the soul must win."

But for Grundtvig body and soul are united. If the body is mistreated, the soul is also affected.

The hand and the sense of touch play a major role in Grundtvig's anthropology. In the child's first stage of development there is a natural instinct to grasp something within its reach. The child begins its appropriation of the world by grasping what comes into its hands. Often it reaches out in vain. The crucial point for Grundtvig is not whether reality lives up to expectation, but that the soul has a tireless ability and eagerness to grasp at, and connect with, what is at any time separated from itself. He calls this eagerness *desire*. In itself desire is not negative, but is primarily an expression of our natural longing for union – and for enlightenment. The child's learning process is long, and moves from the grasp of the hand to the acquisition of language that enables it to *comprehend* – to grasp metaphorically. When we contemplate the senses, says Grundtvig in his article *On Man in the World* (1817):

> "...the hands must immediately attract our attention: they are the sense-instruments that stand on the border to a certain independence; they are in a way *outside* our body; they can to some degree more or less *oblige* certain things to be sensed; they can feel the whole body, but they are also a tool for the most developed sense without which the act of sensing cannot be completed, cannot offer full certainty and specific conceptions. For sense perception, which starts with a vague, indefinable feeling through touch, clearly ends in the hand with the clearest, most assured feeling, with the sense of *feeling*."

For Grundtvig the hands represent the 'border' between the animal and the human being. The animal's lack of ability to understand itself is linked to its lack of an anterior pituitary in the brain, a 'handle' that the human brain possesses. In no animal, Grundtvig writes, have we "found an instrument for the sense of touch that serves the hand". This is more important than it may seem at first glance, for it is at this starting-point that "the human being rises above the animal". The idea that it is the use of the hand that helps raise us above the animal world is shared by Karl Marx, but where Marx sees the hand as a productive tool, Grundtvig links it primarily to the mouth and to its reflexive potential. He argues that the feeling "which develops in the hand is already playing on the lips and seeks its explanation on the tongue". The hand is thus in an intimate relation with the lips, the tongue, and the mouth – in other words with language, consciousness, and reflection on the self. Grundtvig sees this almost miraculous connection between the physical and mental act of grasping as applying to body and language as well as to hand and mouth. Not only can the one not live without the other, but there is an ascent in consciousness between the physical and the mental. What the newborn child's hand senses is speech without words; but soon the words will be articulated. Words are the most important medium with which to grasp the world, for language has the highest degree of human awareness linked to it, namely self-awareness. According to Grundtvig, the power and meaning of language

stem from its concrete sensuous experiences. Words can only grasp by being linked to the *hand*'s grasp; they can only be 'living' by being linked to the physical, organic life in an amicable interplay. So for Grundtvig, what is 'tangible' possesses both a physical and a spiritual dimension.

To the anthropological and psychological use of the hand Grundtvig adds a historical and social perspective. In *Nordic Mythology* (1832) 'the hand' plays a major role, for it is in England that he has just met 'the world of the hand' in full force in what he calls 'mechanical masterpieces'. He realises that what is happening in England will take on a universal character. Whether or not this change will lead to a universal crisis will depend on the view of enlightenment and knowledge that comes to dominate. He looks for an accord between the Nordic countries and England in order to develop the form of enlightenment and knowledge that will overcome the cultural crisis engulfing his times. The main problem, he believes, is the disparity between the worlds of the hand and the spirit; it is the division between hand and mouth that is the cause of the whole wretched situation. They must be reunited. For if the hand is given a *free* hand, so to speak, it will create a spiritless mechanical culture that will lead to a comprehensive disaster.

Grundtvig's social philosophy

In Grundtvig's view, the Renaissance and the Reformation represent an historical paradigm shift in bringing about an increasing individualisation and self-awareness. To a much greater degree than before, 'the individual' now enters the stage of history – witness such great figures as Shakespeare, Luther, and Columbus. The individualisation and subjectivisation that they symbolise is very significant, but, in Grundtvig's view, individualisation and subjectivisation also represent an extremely dangerous phase in the historical process – the French Revolution has demonstrated *how* dangerous. For in France the relation between the individual's desire for liberty and the state's concern for the common good was destroyed – with fatal consequences as the revolution descended into chaos and destruction.

The desire for liberty can easily lead to the individual breaking away from civil life and regarding himself as his own master. Grundtvig does not restrict his criticism to the individual but extends it to 'the age of the individual' as a particular epoch in world history which he also calls the age of the school and reflection. In his somewhat poetic or prophetic terminology, the age of the individual and the school is also 'the age of individualisation' in which man's relationship to himself is central. Self-education becomes the starting-point for general education.

Also with the Renaissance and the Reformation come distinctive changes in the relationship between the three institutions: church, state, and school. The school takes

◀ CONTENTS

on a far greater significance for social education than before. In Grundtvig's view, these three institutions are expressions of three fundamental social relations in life: the church has to do with man's relation to the divine; the state with man's relation to humankind; and the school with man's relation to himself. All other institutions are derived from these three. The concept of the state, for instance, includes the social and legal institutions, while the concept of the school encompasses what we today would call research, as well as educational and cultural institutions.

The immediate purpose of 'the school' is to make people useful citizens, but that is not its ultimate aim. According to Grundtvig, "The school must strive to develop man to perfection". Although as a good Christian Grundtvig rejects the idea that man can perfect himself by his own efforts, he nevertheless propounds perfection as the aim of the school! Man may not be able to save himself, but he can do *some* good. He may not be able to comprehend God, but he can learn to understand *himself* as a spiritual being placed in a created world. In his article *On the Philosophical Century* (1816) Grundtvig declares: "Truly to understand oneself is the great goal of human reason, the apex of human education". For Grundtvig, this 'education' is to be acquired through the union of knowledge and philosophy.

The increasing focus on the individual and self-awareness that characterises the age of individualisation and the school necessitates new conditions for social education. In Grundtvig's view, this means that education must play a much greater role than before in the relation between the individual and society. Where the church previously enjoyed a close relationship with the state, it is now the school that moves to the centre of social education. For all governments, says Grundtvig, "the encouragement of education is the most important affair of state, since the welfare of the state now and hereafter depends upon it". At the same time Grundtvig is well aware that education is a double-edged sword. For how can the necessary bonds be secured between the individual and the community, when education inevitably leads to increasing individualisation and self-awareness? Grundtvig circles around the dilemma, which can be formulated as follows: On the one hand education promotes individualisation, on the other hand it is education and not power that ensures social cohesion. As he says, "'Enlightenment' is a very ambiguous word". It has a Janus face. The state can risk "perishing from enlightenment". This, in Grundtvig's view, is because there exist both a true and a false enlightenment. False enlightenment is that "which always begins with the needs of the individual", and as such "it is a serious danger to civil society in all ages and under all skies", because all societies rest on "a respect for a higher right than the individual's". If enlightenment undermines the individual's sense for the community and the common bonds among people, then the base on which social education rests is threatened. True enlightenment has its origin in the fact that as

◀ CONTENTS