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**A PEDAGOGY FOR AN INDUSTRIALIZED
AND REVOLUTIONARY TIME**

**by
Joseph Kentenich**

**(A Four Day Conference for Schoenstatt Women
Educators¹, June 10-13, 1930)**

CHAPTER 8 (8th Talk June 12, 1930), pp. 209-218.

**THE WAGE EARNER
AN ANALYSIS OF HIS ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL REALITY**

We are facing a critical question. And it would delight me if you would not shove aside the key practical issues. We do not want to leave here until you are clear about what is needed for our Girls' Youth Movement truly to become fruitful.

¹ Prior to Hitler "the public schools" in Germany funded by the State had a religious orientation, either Catholic or Protestant, depending on the area. Schools in a Catholic region were staffed by Catholics, schools in the Protestant regions by Protestants. Most teachers were male. Women who taught did so at considerable personal sacrifice and were generally unmarried. Teaching was their whole life. This four day conference was for women who had made a radical commitment to teaching and were also directly involved in or interested in the Schoenstatt Movement. When Hitler came to power he eliminated the religious character of "the public schools" and religious instruction ceased to be part of the curriculum.

So today let us work together to at least provide a full and complete answer to this key question, so that tomorrow we can make further progress.

8.1 Causes of the Current Conditions of the Modern Wage Earner

Guiding Idea: Industrialism

Central Focus: The Economic, Social, and Spiritual Reality of the Modern Industrial World.

We are continuing our reflections: *How did the condition of the modern wage earner come to be?*

In order to understand the children of working class (wage earning parents), we must provide an answer to this question. Our answers thus far have focused on two driving forces: the economic revolution and the modern understanding/critique of religion.

I have reviewed and indicated the guiding ideas that appear to be steering and directing our entire cultural and economic life for the foreseeable future. These are the concepts of modern industrialism and of the modern industrialized human being.

I have already reviewed for you the spiritual transformations of the preceding centuries that drove the development of modern industrialization. Modern humanity dances around the golden calf of industrialization. Modern industrialism strives to displace God and to put itself into the place of God. Thus the forces of industrialization have become a god (an absolute) to modern human beings. As I have already discussed this morning, this god is a fearsome and cruel god, an all-powerful god. I will not go over the details of how this has predisposed modern human beings, but I will review them sufficiently to make you more familiar with this state of affairs.

I repeat: The god of industrialization is a fearsome god. Do you know the name of the principal cult in modernity? It is Business. Everything today is reduced to a matter of business, is mechanized, and has lost its soul. Thus people today speak of “the business of work” and even “the business of life”.

Think about this. Haven't we already made far too many sacrifices to this modern god? Haven't we reformed our entire lives to meet the demands of business? The business of work. The business of life. This is how the cult of business demands to be understood (as an absolute, a god). This god is horrifically cruel. How many human sacrifices has it not already demanded, sacrifices not just from the simple industrial workers, but also from the leaders of industry.

We do not yet have a full and complete picture of this historical process. That is why I talk about the tendencies of modernity, tendencies that finally led to the processes of industrialization. Simply recall the old man Hugo Stinnes (1870-1924). To what did he fall victim? He allowed his entire life to fall subject to the gravitational forces of the development of the economy. He sacrificed his entire life to this idea. It is true that he lived his (personal) life in extraordinary economic simplicity.

Do you understand how a human being can become utterly captivated by the god of economic progress? Everything is dominated by business and thus has no soul. Nothing is truly growth producing. There is only quantitative increase, only the multiplication of things. And how many of our leading industrialists have fallen prey to this god? It is as though someone had somehow set his hand to a wheel from which he could no longer get loose. He must keep turning the wheel over and over until finally he is tortured to death.

There was a saying common among the people of the old Hanseatic League, a people who were masters of commercial traffic on the seas. “When we devote ourselves entirely to sailing ships, then we become blind to what is important for life.” (It is as though they unconsciously allowed the following maxim to rule their lives.)

It is a matter of necessity that we navigate the seas, but there is no necessity to attend to life.

Can you grasp this? (Can we claim truly to have lived) if all we do is navigate the seas and constantly labor so that all the wealth and possessions of the whole earth come our way? But this is how it is today with the god of industry. This is how the god of industry and economic development dominates all our thinking.

It is important for us who seek today thoroughly to penetrate these questions, to reflect on the extent to which we, by the way we conduct our own business, have also fallen prey to the god of industry. (Haven't we lost our sense of vocation, of calling, so that all) our work is simply business? Hasn't this caused our labor to become soulless? Our sisters at the Covenant House in Vallendar laugh and apply all of this to themselves. There everything has become “businesslike”, everyone is worshipping the god of industry. Clearly, this is unhealthy. How many at Covenant House have already become victims (of this god)?

The Second Point: The god of industry is an all-powerful god. He makes use of time to subject to himself all relationships, every human being, and all the circumstances of life. The only significant point of reference becomes obedience to the demands of the god of industry. Thus we can say today that the god of industry rules and dominates our world. In addition to the Economy, even the State, Politics, and Religion, all of these today are subject to the demands of industrial development and to the god of industry.

When you carefully examine modern statements about life, everywhere you encounter the same basic idea. Then you will well understand why the State today is so helpless. It is itself a victim, the State too has fallen prey to the god of industry. Who makes the decisions today? Is it the wealthy men of industry, or the industrial giants, or the legislative arm of government? If the industrial giants won't cooperate, then what can we do?

If you have the time and desire to do a thorough study of this, you can read about it in Hochland 1924/25: *The Origins of Industrial Man*. This is a scholarly study by Dr. Eschweiler.

Our generation is both witness and executor of an immense transformation. It is now the technical understanding/imagination that transforms and reorganizes the earth and humankind. Everything is grounded in the mechanistic understanding of three hundred years of scientific study and thoroughly implemented to serve the economic motivations of the 19th century economy. This has poured over the threshold of the (First) World War to cover the full breadth of our times, penetrating even to the most intimate levels (of our existence). The governance of our world has fallen to the giants of an industrial economy. It is these industrial giants who have transformed their being in harmony with (the rules) of technical thinking.

Even the State has been placed into question because the State has become dependent upon the Industrial Economy. And so it continues. This all powerful god is the dominating power of our time. He subjects to himself every condition of life and all the relationships of life, including all human beings. This includes not only the simple wage earner, but also the capitalists.

With this I come to the second question. I have answered the first question to your satisfaction. *How did the simple wage earner come into existence?* We recognize the driving forces and the governing ideas. The ultimate governing concept is that of the industrial economy.

8.2 What do we see when we do a careful examination of the modern wage earner?

Now the second question: *What are the living conditions of the modern wage earner?*

Are you aware that I have already answered this second question? I need only to carry through with what you heard in the first section. I told you that the Industrial Economy subjects to itself not only the wage earner but also the wealthy capitalist. Now I must reverse this and say, not only the wealthy capitalists but also the simple worker, the wage earner. With this you have the basic situation of the wage earner.

What is the life condition of the wage earner? He is first of all enslaved to the capitalist. Secondly, he is enslaved to the industrial economy.

This provides you the fundamental description. Now you can take the reins in your own hands and further develop your understanding drawing upon your own abundant experience and reading.

I want to interconnect these elements more closely. Then, so far as possible, I will endeavor to lead you back to fundamental principles. Our picture of (the life situation) of the wage earner, what does this look like? He is a slave of the capitalists.

- 1) The facts will serve as our proof of the extent to which the simple wage earner is the slave of the capitalists.
- 2) The analysis of these facts. This is extremely important.
- 3) Then finally, a short but thorough summary of the causes of this enslavement.

8.2.1 The Facts

This will make my task easier. I could refer to your life experience, but I would rather allow the people themselves to speak from their life experience.

Here is what a simple worker writes. This article is taken from a Protestant weekly: The Christian World.

The firm for which I have worked for the past twelve years is a joint stock company. It is owned by 25 shareholders. More than half of the stock is in the hands of a Berlin Bank. Thus it is able to control the entire business. When the chief financial officer of the Bank comes to a shareholders meeting of the firm, it is as though a king were visiting his kingdom. All the shareholders bow before him, the Director of the Firm as well as all the other shareholders.

Now understand that the shareholders are not yet (fully) in bondage to the god of industry. That is why I have said that we cannot yet provide complete picture, but all life relationships and life commitments are straining after the outcome I describe.

“Who is it that produces the profits held by the corporation? They are produced by us, the workers, and the salaried employees of the firm. For our hard labor we receive between 60 or 65 pfennigs per hour, at most 70 pfennigs per hour. In the previous year the business distributed a 2.5 million mark profit.² The Berlin Bank alone took 1.3 million marks. The

² * There are one hundred Pfennigs in one German mark.

remaining 1.2 million went to the other 24 shareholders. On average each of them received 50,000 marks. However, none of them did any work for this money. Is this just?"

But who then gets the profits? And what do they provide in exchange? Simply their personal wealth. It is this that works for them. They have as their own possession the means of production. You see what a distorted reward system is in charge in the world, between one factor of production and the other. Can the material means of production work without workers? No! You see to what extent the contemporary industrial economy builds itself on an injustice that cries out to heaven. Now reflect on what the wage earner receives, what he is left with to nourish and care for an entire family. Then you will be humble in your relationships with the children, with the simple people. If a simple laborer is to be faithful to the demands placed upon him, he must be a saint. Also when our children want to be as good as we were at an earlier time, they must also be saints. Who performed the labor? The approach of the modern industrial economy is to say that it is the capital that has done the work.

Now to the other factor of production: *Work and the Worker*. The situation of the worker now comes to this-- what people have learned to call "the rationalization of labor."

The previous meeting of the Directors resolved to rationalize our labor. To achieve this goal they appointed a new technical director. He discharged 100 workers and from the remaining 450 he demanded the same levels of productivity as had been previously accomplished by 550.

The poor people seek only to retain what is needed for their daily bread. Isn't this a form of slavery?

When this goal was not achieved, the new technical director increased his demands by another 10%. Then a fearsome exploitation began. The total production of the personnel rose even above the production of the 550 workers. In response another 50 workers were discharged.

Although we do not have the complete picture here, still this kind of use and discharge of people is a great injustice.

In another department they employed women because they would work for less and were more submissive than men. The boss would stand for hours behind particular workers driving them to the limits of their physical capabilities. (When they still couldn't satisfy the quota) the boss would reduce it. But some of the workers tormented in this way still couldn't fulfill the reduced requirement. This was especially so for us older ones. The others, however, slaved away as though the devil himself

were sitting behind them. And being driven in this way they would again exceed their previous performance. And so another 30 workers would be discharged. Among them were all the older workers, including me.

Do you want yet further details? I remind you again that these observations of the current conditions under which the laboring classes must work are still an incomplete picture. This is why I can only show you the general direction in which things are going. We may need to discount some of what we hear, but in other cases things are even worse than they have been described. This is why it is so difficult today to give a totally clear and accurate account.

As one of our Fathers has written, *what is really important is that we finally come to understand the life experience of the working classes.* “The children will chirp the same sad songs they hear their parents singing. “

We must not misinterpret why we (the representatives of the Church) have so little influence. The workers view us as an embodiment of the capitalist system. Their hatred of the capitalists also extends to us. We should really wonder that they don't think about us and relate to us in even worse ways than they do. This is the only correct way to think about the relationship to us of the workers and their children. But here again, we still have an incomplete picture.

There are children whose life situation is far worse than anything we have described. We must open our hearts to these realities. Look how well off all of us are. We must think about this so that we learn to empathize with these parents and their children.

Note that all these things we've described drive the wheels of the socialist critique of the current economic order. The more the economy is in chaos, the more difficult it becomes to maintain morality and nobility in the family. Then the socialists triumphantly declare, “See! The family has out lived its usefulness!”

Today it is simply not possible for even a moderately zealous Christianity to maintain a moral life in families living under these sorts of social conditions.

CHAPTER 9 (12 June 1930)

The Homelessness of the Modern Wager Earner, pp. 229-233.

Human beings have become homeless. Unfortunately we must concede that this is also happening in our Church. Our huge, impersonal parishes no longer provide a sense of home. Three points are important here.

First, workspaces are not the same thing as living spaces. The technical designation “work space” notes this correctly. No spiritual and personal relationships come to be here. Everything is focused only on meeting the

demand for the maximum possible output. There is nothing that would make one feel at home in such a workspace.

But the workers are also homeless at home.

Unfortunately, the same sense of homelessness extends to many workers' living space. We feel this when we visit their dwellings and experience the cramped quarters and severe lack of living space. But the sense of homeless in these dwellings is far more spiritually damaging than the lack of living space. Obviously, this does not mean that the lack of living space can be ignored.

Those of you who work in the industrial areas and are involved with the children know what this lack of living space looks like. Is this a worthy environment for human beings? Can the moral life of the family be maintained when an entire family must make do with two and often only one room? All the circumstances of life must play themselves out in this cramped space. Cooking and sleeping occur simultaneously in the same space. Birth, sickness, death all occur in this same cramped space.

How difficult it is to maintain any sense of moral purity, how hard to preserve a sense of the dignity of motherhood in such circumstances. Add to this the terrible example of those on the top of the social hierarchy. What a wretched immorality reigns there! *Do you grasp how the lack of living space is a direct cause of immorality?* Do you understand how this can bring about the problem of incest? Can you also understand that in time the simple worker will develop a terrible fear of confession? This makes it so simple for them to cut away their last connection with the church when later something else untoward happens.

When we visit these families we cannot help but see these things. We must allow the direct experience of them to have its effect on our hearts. Then we will be able to have more feeling, more empathy. Then a great love for human beings can be entwined into our hearts. Then we will understand the circumstances of their childhood and the conditions under which the children must grow up. Then we can begin to understand our children and young people.

Think about what all this means. During the day our young people are cooped up in offices and workrooms. There is nothing whatsoever family like in these environments. Everything is organized to the maximum around work, the mechanical instruments of work, and maximizing productivity.

When they leave work and go home, what awaits them there? This has already been sketched for you. Add to this that in their dwellings nothing is arranged to make the living space warm and welcoming. This happens because the women have far too little understanding of what must be done to make a dwelling a home. And if there are not even the smallest traces of a homelike atmosphere, this drives them outside and away from these desolate interior spaces.

So it is natural that they move directly from work to seek something that seems more alive and life giving. They want to go out and find something enjoyable, whether it be a movie or anything else. They have no desire to return to the lifeless conditions they have just left.

It is important that we understand how this all happens. We must not disregard these underlying causes. We must learn to understand that the capacity for religious faith is suffocated in this atmosphere. Only those of us who empathize with our poor people and can show sympathy for our youth, only these capacities enable us to rescue what can still be rescued.

Only love can bridge the gap. This is true at least for those of us who have no possibility of changing people's economic reality and work situation.

There is a challenge here for those of us who are Catholic and still have a clear sense of the deathless nature of the soul, and understand the importance of a godly life. We must develop our ability to hear our young people's cry for redemption. They long for this hope of redemption to be wakened in them, they long for their sense of self-worth to be honored. Their desire is not just for bread. It is not just mercy that they want. They long for justice.

What we are saying about the young people also applies to the children. We must not underestimate the importance of what we have seen. We must recognize how blunted their thinking and feeling has been made toward the religious. Can you then understand how for a brief moment they may be enthusiastic about what we share, and then perhaps tomorrow throw everything out the window? Today the children might be "little saints" and then tomorrow or the day after "little devils". It is important to understand this.

(We must spend time with people as Jesus did until our hearts cry out) *"I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days . . . "* (Matt 15:32)

Those of us who grew up in very different circumstances may consider ourselves extremely fortunate. We lived from a lavish table, a table well supplied both with material and spiritual goods. And yet what petty little things get us all distraught during our day, bringing us almost to a nervous breakdown. For example, we have a disagreement with a colleague. This is so petty. Look at what our poor people must bear.

So you can see what they suffer from lack of living space. They are homeless, homeless at their places of work, and even homeless at home.

It is time for us to think about homelessness in a different way. *Homelessness should really be understood as the loss of family life.*

Why should we understand homelessness as the loss of family life? Even if the husband takes joy in the wife and the wife in the husband, is a true family life today easily achieved? Just think about what it means that the whole family, children and parents, must go out to work. Consider how few women know how to make a dwelling feel like a home, a place that is warm, secure and welcoming? This is truly the most important pedagogical task of those educating the people. You must see the critical importance of showing the women by example and instruction how to use very simple things to make the home warm and welcoming. We must place great importance on this in our service to families. Otherwise, we are accomplishing no more than could be achieved by a diligent serving maid.

Add to all of this the terrible diseases suffered by the working classes. Think about the effects of tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. Then truly you have a very bleak picture.

9.1.2 The Underlying Reasons for these Social Problems, pp. 236-38.

Allow me quickly to give the basic reasons for these problems.

The Rationalization of Work

First I will lay out the basic results of “the rationalization of work”. Everything has been transformed into a matter of technique or technical performance. As a result the human being is treated as a piece of the technology, as something that can also be mechanized.

The Increasing Development of Mass or Collective Consciousness

This is the second factor. The emergence of a powerful bureaucracy. You have seen on the posters and have heard how this bureaucratization of business grows constantly stronger, even stronger than the process of “rationalization”. And where is this heading? Everything becomes more and more soulless. And we have human beings who only have a collective consciousness. Human beings are reduced to pieces in a massive collective, they are mechanized, “rationalized” to the very last atom.

Perhaps this helps you better to understand how today our modern youth are being forced more and more out of the life giving “Movements” into collective organizations (that swallow up people’s individuality). Perhaps this enables you to understand why the Boy Scouts today, even when they include our Catholic Youth, aspire more and more to “collective” and imitative behavior than in previous years. Everything presses more and more towards the cultivation of a crowd or collective consciousness, even when good intentions are buried in the background.

But this is why it is so important for us today to emphasize a culture of the whole person. We must cultivate a healthy emotional life, not just for the sake of creating something or taking something on.

Cities of Mammon

Last, the third factor that must be carefully thought through. This is the gradual development of the so-called “industrial centers” in the major industrial regions. I call them the Cities of Mammon. These metropolitan centers develop from the intense commercialization of the huge industrial regions. Can you see how this development will cause increasing homelessness? These Cities of Mammon function in such a way that human beings will more and more feel and find themselves homeless. Now consider how difficult it can be to be a priest or teacher in this sort of social environment.

From an historical perspective, however, it is important to recall that Christianity during the Apostolic era was first proclaimed and introduced into the major metropolitan centers of the ancient world.

Our people’s future, also the future of religion, will be decided in the major metropolitan centers, and by the response of the working class.

9.2 The longing of the modern Wage Earner, pp. 240-244.

Now I come to the third and very serious question. I first explained how the modern worker came into existence. Then I provided you a picture of his life circumstances.

Now the third question. What is it that he longs for? Have you not heard from everything that has been said the piercing cry of the modern worker? What is it he long for? He longs for redemption.

He struggles for the redemption of his thirst for self-formation. He struggles for the redemption of his desire for happiness, for his sense of self-worth. He longs yet again to be valued as a human being. You have carefully followed how he has constantly become an enslaved person.

The cry for the dignity of the human person rings loud and clear across the globe.

He longs to know that his hunger for self-worth is redeemed. He struggles to this end, that as a member of the working class he might be integrated into the organism of today’s economy in a way that gives him equal weight and dignity with everyone else. The modern worker longs to see the redemption of his hunger for self-worth. He struggles for the unfolding of his own creative powers. There you have the three ways in which the drive for self-worth develops. In this you also hear his threefold piercing cry.

He demands, first of all, the redemption of his longing for happiness, now, here on earth. As we have seen, a simple worker has little chance to be happy in his life-situation. I could confirm the correctness of this with a whole host of witnesses.

Beginning a few years back and continuing to the present day, even in the last few weeks, Catholics have begun to change their assessment of Socialism. The workers today increasingly come from Socialist circles and, *vice versa*, we find a large number of workers today in Socialist circles.

And if one is to judge today, after much searching and digging, what might be the taproot supporting the inward and outer activities of Socialism? It is precisely as we discovered. *It is the cry for redemption.*

The Demands upon Christians and upon the Church

Visualize the great mass of the workers, their children, the totality of the working class, appearing now before us. What do they ask of us? Redemption! What do they ask of the Church? Redemption!

For God's sake listen and do not ignore their cry! Today we are inclined to fantasize about the great power of Catholicism. I hope that the pictures I have sketched for you these days have shown to your satisfaction how deceitful such fantasies are. If someone were to seek rigorously to test this claim, and then venture an alternative explanation and assert, "But Catholicism is on the march!" they would be giving expression to an empty slogan. It might strike fear into the heart of some Protestant Pastors, but that would be all.

These are the fearsome facts. For the first time since the Catholic Church emerged in history, a new class or social group is establishing itself as the dominant cultural force, and is consciously, publicly, identifying itself as anti-Catholic and anti-Christian. Historically it was first the priests, then the nobles, then the property owning middle classes, then the peasants who, one after the other, stepped forward and snatched for themselves a dominant position in the cultural life. But all of them at least stepped forward as members of the Christian or Catholic community. But the new class, the class of workers, seeks with energy and astuteness to create a radically new culture. They are beginning this process everywhere.

These social forces in contemporary culture are radically anti-Catholic and anti-Church, if not yet radically anti-Christian. Should this not make us stop and think?

Give some thought to the situation in Russia or in Mexico. Above all consider Mexico. In Mexico virtually 100% of the people are Catholic. How then is it

possible that the Catholics there are so oppressed? Doesn't this give us food for thought? What is at stake here?

We are facing a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church. Look at the vast number of workers and their children. We hear their powerful, shrill, piercing cry for redemption. How will we answer?

We may conceive of ourselves as human beings who live up there, high on the mountain, a peaceful comfortable life. We revel in beautiful words and dive into a godly atmosphere. But there below, deep in the abyss, the mass of workers cry out to us, begging us for light, that we might lift them up.

How will we answer? Will we respond like the priest and Levite in the Gospel (Luke 10,31 ff.)? Will we see the workers and then simply pass them by? What will we do? Is it our desire to look down upon the workers, to threaten them and complain about them? If this is our desire, then we will never be able to raise them up and bring them to ourselves. If this is our desire then we will never be able to share redemption with them.

Only one possibility is left. *We must bend ourselves down to them and listen to them patiently, until we hear all the healthy longings hidden in their cry for redemption. Then we must answer this cry.*

Here we have a great deal to learn from Socialism, also from socialist workers and their children who raise their cries to heaven. How should we respond to them? Should we respond with threats? We may damn Socialism, but not the socialists. We also may not damn their children. What then must we do? Should we move into the socialist camp? This is what the workers want. We may neither threaten them nor move into their camp. Neither of these choices is acceptable. Only one response is possible. We must study Socialism, reflect on how socialists seek to respond to the workers cry for redemption. Then we must seek to discern what we should do drawing upon all the richness of Catholic thought. It is there that we must find our answer.

CHAPTER 10 (10th Talk, June 13, 1930)

10.1 Reflections on our women educators' self-assessment, pp. 245-250.

Let me first attempt to remove an anxiety from your hearts. Some of you, and not the least admirable among us, are telling themselves, "So all of my previous educational efforts were misguided. For years, even decades, I sacrificed myself for the children, and now suddenly I see that all my efforts were wrong."

This is not true.

You must see (the two dimensions) of what we call “feeling with the Church” and “feeling with the people, with the simple people”.³ Feeling with the Church, this refined empathy that is a deep growing into God’s spirit and into the spirit of the Church, must over time come to express itself ever more in an extended empathy, a sharing in the suffering of the people, a sharing in the suffering of the workers.⁴

Today when things are so fearfully complicated, when nearly every week we perceive a new turn in what is experienced by our people, it becomes self-evident that we always have something new to learn. And it is clear that it is much better to have a noble feeling of responsibility for what we have failed to do, or what we could have done better, than the feeling of the self-righteous who always put themselves above everyone else. When your intentions are good and you work hard to be a mother to our children, then it is wrong to say, “Everything we have done was misguided.” At most it is appropriate to say, “Now we can do even better.”

I hope that this is what you will say after each conference and after your daily meditations. It is important to distinguish here an ascetical feeling of guilt and a moralistic feeling of guilt. Our ascetical feeling of guilt is always justified and should always urge us on to become more selfless, to seek and to find ways and means to meet all of our children’s needs.

All in all it seems to me entirely justified that in the future we seek a greater personal simplicity, that we seek to become more gracious, more motherly, and that we constantly seek to come to a deeper understanding of our children.

We must also seek to learn in the future how better to share within our community what has been successfully integrated into our pedagogical practices and adaptations. We can never exhaust the learning possibilities in this.

We must always be seeking better ways to understand our children, to be more patient and kind, and to apply ultimate truths and values so that they enter more fully into the lives of our children. How can I demonstrate to the children that I truly understand their needs and feelings, and precisely in the manner and way that they themselves express them? It is simply not possible to do more than this.

Later, in the third section of this talk, I will explicitly address the question: What must we do in particular cases? For now I will simply anticipate the distinction

³ *Sentire cum ecclesia* and *sentire cum populo*, *sentire cum plebe*.

⁴ See the opening words of Vatican II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, written in 1965 some 35 years after this conference: “The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.” (GS, 1)

between an ascetical and a moralistic feeling of guilt to avoid a conflicted consciousness. An unhealthy feeling of guilt will in time make us ill. A healthy feeling of guilt keeps the soul fresh and alive, constantly urging it forward into a joyful spirit of sacrifice.

Today there are simply too many of us to do this. Otherwise, it would have been of value to sit and reflect together. *How can we draw upon our pedagogical and psychological insights to make the rich understanding of Catholicism the personal possession of each individual child? How can this be presented so it is more accessible to the thought world of children?*

Of course, nothing final and definitive can be said about this. This is why I always reject any demand that I provide a final and definitive pedagogical program. I cannot provide this. Neither can you begin your efforts with such a program. You must be clear about the basic direction in which to proceed. Then connect this knowledge with the intentions of a good heart and make adjustments from case to case. The best one can do is to give suggestions and indicate what has sometimes worked for oneself in similar situations. One simply cannot systematize and provide a template for everything. Life is simply too complex. You will simply cause more harm if you go home with the idea that now you have a solution to everything.

What we must have is a clear understanding of the important, ultimate principles. And to this we must add a great motherly heart that is anchored in God.

Some of you will continue to accuse yourselves saying, "Everything I have previously done was totally wrong. I made too few home visits."

I think it would be worth the effort if you would sit down together and share some of your experiences. To the best of my knowledge some of you have made home visits for years. Others of you had a lot of anxiety and resistance to this. You were anxious because you told yourself, "If I go to them with empty hands, with nothing to give, what then?"

It is altogether unnecessary always to go with full hands. Our people are truly thankful when we graciously allow ourselves to be at their level and simply extend our hands to them.

Perhaps you can better understand this from the following. The people, our working classes, instinctively have the feeling that we belong to the capitalist classes. This is the reason they set up defenses against us. For the same reason they do change when we allow ourselves to be at their level and are gracious to them.

Be careful not to misinterpret the principle: “Feel with the Church.”⁵ (This misinterpretation leads to an artificial attempt at equality that is perceived as demeaning.) The important lady came by and deigned to extend her hand to us. It must not be this way. Our reaching out must express an authentic, heartfelt, and genuine joy in the other.

To achieve this our entire effort at self-education must emphasize much more those moments which create a consciousness of our oneness with all human beings.

This is the (mystical) unity of the deathless souls of all the children of our heavenly Father. We should all long to be children of God, or at least long to have the capability to become the children of God. This is why our outreach must display an authentic, heartfelt desire for the well being of the other and a true joy in their presence. The people are genuinely appreciative of this.

I remember well a story a parish priest told me sometime ago. He wanted to go into the workplace to meet someone. However, the person wasn't there. As the children were leaving he offered them his hand. One of them said, “I am a Protestant.” The priest responded, “That doesn't make any difference, you are also a human child.” The child was very grateful that the priest offered him his hand.

We are so ignorant of our people's sensibilities. We need to look into this far more carefully. When it is possible for us to assist them, we should. When this is not possible we may not say, “I simply can't go. I have nothing to offer the parents or their children.” Of course, there are also boundaries here that we must respect.

And it is absolutely not right for you to think when you hear something that troubles your conscience, as the best among us constantly do, “All my efforts were worthless!” No. You must take care to form healthy attitudes and feelings. *Give credit to the many good things in your spiritual life.*

There is no clear template we can apply to all these situations. But we must see clearly the general direction we are called to go. There is nothing else we need bring home. A little more gentleness, motherly empathy, and motherly understanding, these are the main things. Today there is nothing more essential that we can offer.

At least in your local groups it would be well worth your effort to thoroughly discuss these things. Many of you have for years made these home visits. Share with others how you did this, and how this or that worked. Then everyone can confirm for themselves the basics about which we have spoken. And the others,

⁵ *Sentire cum ecclesia.*

who previously have not made home visits, perhaps they will be freed of some of their anxiety and their feelings of inadequacy.

But I repeat that it is important that you don't do these things at the cost of your health and at the expense of a healthy religious and ascetical life. Above do not do this at the expense of your health.

How can you possibly expect to accomplish all the following: complete your duties at school, take care of the material needs at home, be the leader of various organizations, and also regularly make home visits? We should have more faith in the Ideals of Christianity and, so far as possible, carry them out on a practical level. We should not be running around frantically trying to do everything.

I will ask and encourage you in one more thing. When you have time, share with one another the important practical questions and give each other encouragement. Do this in your local meetings. It is simply not possible to do this in our large gatherings. And you should not return home only with big ideas.

Reflect carefully on what can be practically achieved in your daily life.

CHAPTER 11: The Capitalist Economic Order and the Church, pp. 279-92.

The main question and the short answer.

- 1) Identifying the main question.
- 2) What must we do?

11.1 The Capitalist Economic Order and Its Practical Effects

I will begin by reading from a letter by one of our (Schoenstatt Movement) priests. This will help to bring us to consensus.

Our people still possess a great childlikeness. When we discover this, it should make us rejoice. To establish an intimate relationship with them I simply allow them to share their personal stories with me and I share mine with them . . . In doing this, above all, one must have great patience.

The priest who wrote this is a rather withdrawn personality. It took him a long time even to write this, and then to begin to step out of himself.

Previously I had only two people who regularly attended the Sunday liturgy, and some who no longer even made their Easter communion. In light of this, I sought to rebuild a foundation and to bring them back to a healthy relationship (to God).

This is the important guideline: He labored not to restore a “churchy” atmosphere, but to restore a basic sense of Christianity. He doesn’t ask, “How long has it been since you’ve been to confession?” He is concerned about people’s personal relationship with God. The people want to know about God. They are not concerned about how they stand with the representatives of the Church.

When I am able to contribute in some little way to their joy, I don’t do it in a calculating way, but out of love. We must take delight not merely in their souls, but in their total humanity.

He is so right about this and these guidelines also apply to our work with young women. Our attitudes, words and deeds must be entirely free from any indications of disrespect. This is critical for our educational work with young girls in trouble. *Nothing from disrespect, everything out of love.* We may not rejoice only in the soul, we must show love for the whole human being.

We must be able to demonstrate this to them, they must be able to feel that we rejoice in them and take delight in showing care for them.

This is how it is with the people. They must be able to feel this. We must also stay physically pure. And it is crucial that we don’t get sentimental about these things. Otherwise we will achieve the opposite of our intention.

An additional gain from this approach is that it finally enables us really to know the people. We are so estranged from the way most people feel. We are clueless about this. And precisely because we have no understanding of them, they are unwilling to come to us in their spiritual need.

Our shared effort during this Conference is an important venture. The people we attempt to rescue simply no longer exist. And meanwhile, we remain utterly ignorant of those who do actually exist.

I am disappointed that you (Fr. Kentenich) advise against uttering a single harsh word about the present capitalist economic system. More than ever I am persuaded that the system reigning today is a devilish system cursed by God. I don’t know if you would not judge things differently if you had regular contact with these people and heard them singing the same song of misery in constantly new variations.

He is correct that I do not use harsh words. We must remain clear about our principles even as we continue to act in gracious ways. It is important to be very clear conceptually. We must not, as often happens, allow our hearts to generate all manner of mental turmoil and confusion.

One could claim that my judgment flows primarily from my heart. But isn’t this our greatest sin, that for so long we’ve remained so heartless—for so long we have so patiently and so silently discounted all this misery? If

the great mass of humanity is not to turn its back on Christianity, then we must quickly venture some great and daring initiative.

And he continues on in the same vein.

11.2 The Imperative of De-industrialization

Now the question: What should we do? This is very complex. What should we do? What do you think our efforts at a resolution should look like?

First an honest and humble acknowledgement. These questions are so huge, so complicated, and so much depends on the answer. The whole world order is currently so unstable that it is not possible today to say something definitive and final. There is as yet no tried and true, universally valid answer. So we really must ask the decisive question, *“Is there anything at all that we can do?”*

First allow me to lay out a general approach. I will speak somewhat like the scholars about this, but not excessively. This is what the scholars say. First, we must de-industrialize our human relationships. Second, we must de-industrialize our individual ways of thinking. These two things are intimately connected: *the de-industrialization of social relationships and the de-industrialization of individual ways of thinking*. Third, we must restore the rightful value to persons in all relationships within the Church.

11.2.1 De-industrialization of Individual Ways of Thinking and of Human Relationships

This is the first great task. *De-industrialization of individual ways of thinking must be understood as an intense experience of the value of the individual and as a De-industrialization of relationships in the community.*⁶

There you have it. Can you do something with this? Admittedly, this is still a very general plan. However, in putting it before you we have really said everything. We can trace this back to some basic catchwords, but they correctly address a whole range of ideas.

This is the first task: *to re-personalize human relationships.*⁷ To express this more clearly, I will first raise some preliminary questions. Completing our scrutiny of these questions will grease the rails to a thorough consideration of all the underlying issues.

⁶ To de-industrialize individual ways of thinking and human relationships is to re-personalize them. It is to treat human beings as persons rather than things. It is an active individual decision no longer to treat people as replaceable cogs in a machine.

⁷ Here and in the following material the term “re-personalize” is used as a synonym for what Kentenich meant by “de-industrialize”.

Principles and Their Application

What are the preliminary questions? Listen yet again to the general plan. The re-personalizing of social relationships and the re-personalizing of individual ways of thinking.

First of all we must yet again recall the relationship between the economy and human ways of thinking, and the relationship between the economy and religion.

Here it is important to hold to two principles.

The first one we speak about so often: *grace presupposes nature*.

The general rule is that human beings are open to the supernatural when the ordinary means of life are reasonably secure. We may not demand more than this. To demand more requires heroism. It is not appropriate to demand heroism from people.

This understanding must be deeply impressed on us. We can only demand heroism from those of us gathered here who have demonstrated our ability to live this way. It is unthinkable to demand this consistently from others.

We must hold fast to this: *grace presupposes nature*. For this reason we must prepare ourselves, so far as possible, to provide our people with economic assistance. When we are unable to do this, let us at least understand why the people have become so utterly deaf in their relationship to us and to the Church.

What does this mean for us? When can and should we provide economic assistance to the children? When the possibility is there we must maintain a relationship that helps them to improve their position in life. This does not mean increasing their worldly possessions, but taking them under our wing to help their education. We maintain this relationship not for the benefit of our community, but simply in order to serve those entrusted to our care. This constitutes true motherliness.

We don't just think about someone's soul. We seek to understand the total circumstances of their lives.

I rejoice that I live in the present times. If it were otherwise, I would be bored. Therefore, maintain a peaceful and clear head. Above all, a peaceful head. We still have faith in Christianity. It will eventually triumph.

So we seek to the greatest extent possible to understand the whole person. And we rely on those in a more favored position to assist us with their worldly goods in our efforts to help others. But best of all is to help others so that they can help themselves.

So I seek (the healthy benefits of) a relationship with the world of commerce. But we must never forget, no matter how someone's economic situation improves, the social question remains in every historical period. Serious social problems can never be fully removed from the world. This reality is diametrically opposed to what we hear proclaimed today by (utopian) Socialism.

What is the basis of our assertion? It is original sin. This should not be ignored! So long as human beings are sinners there will always be economic misery.

Can't this also be case even with our Sisters of Mary? Isn't life in (a religious) community always an experience of concentrated original sin? Concentrated original sin is concentrated suffering. Isn't it also this way even in our Federations?⁸ Don't we find these same problems among our novices? Why do you think there is concentrated original sin even in the best of families? We know this is so. Therefore we must be sober thinkers and acknowledge this as something self-evident. Wherever there are human beings, wherever they live together, even when they live alone, intense original sin is never lacking. Wherever we find human beings, we will also find serious problems.

The Relationship of the Church to the Economy.

Now the second preliminary question: the relationship between the Church and the economy. I will give a brief summary although there is a great deal that could be said.

How are we to think about this? There is a direct and an indirect approach.

(In relation to individuals) the direct task (of the Church) is to promote a flourishing godly life.

In relation to the economy the Church has a twofold task.

First, she must proclaim the (divine) laws of justice and love. Second, out of her inner (spiritual) richness, she must help to form human beings capable of intervening in the hustle and bustle of economic life. There is no obligation to intervene directly except in the ways I describe.

So how should the Church assist people with their economic lives? There are three applicable laws.

⁸ One of the more formalized organizational structures in Schoenstatt is the Federation. This includes communities for diocesan priests, men, women, and families. The other formal structures are the Secular Institutes of the Schoenstatt Fathers, the Schoenstatt Diocesan Priests, the Schoenstatt Brothers, the Sisters of Mary, the Women's Institute, and the Institute for Couples.

The first law: Because the Gospel does not mandate a specific type of economic system, neither can the Church decide for one exclusive type of economic system. This is not her right and she may not do this.

The second law: What then can the Church do? She can certainly say in specific cases that a type of economy that protects the laws of justice and love is closer to perfection the more it fosters the earthly well being of people and secures the moral law. She can make decisions about this. She can say that a given economic system is more in harmony with the Gospel, but she cannot make this economic system obligatory on everyone.

The third law: This concerns cases when the Church is deciding between different economic systems. One case is a more restrictive economy where the individual drive to acquire possessions is more constrained in order to provide greater benefits to the community. If this is also a type of economy that preserves the right to a healthy drive to acquire private property, then it is appropriate for the Church to be more favorable to this more restrictive economy than to one in which a more unrestricted drive to acquire material possessions is dominant. In such a case it is appropriate for the Church to decide in favor of the more restrictive system. But more than this she cannot do.

These are the two preliminary questions. You have been provided a norm that gives you tools to help answer such economic questions.

11.2.2 Re-Personalizing Economic Relationships

Now to the real issue: the Re-Personalization of economic relationships. Again I will divide the question into two parts.

How far may and should this process go? Can it go so far that we must absolutely destroy the current economic order? Must we take things so far as the priest seems to suggest in his letter referring to the current economic order as “a cursed system”?

We can ask this same question in a different way. Is the current economic order in any way a moral system? The question is identical to our previous question. Is the currently accepted concept of private property in any way moral? This places before us two of the most important questions about the current economy. Today these two questions churn up the public scholarly controversies to their very core.

I will make a quick effort to lead you clearly and in plain language into the conceptual world of these controversies. Listen carefully to how things are interrelated. First I ask *what can be done to restore a sense for the value of each individual caught up in the modern day economy?* Must we take things so far that we completely reject the current economic system and concept of private property? Second, if we don't do this, then what should we do?

So, to the first question: *Must we totally reject the current economic system and the concept of private property?*

The Capitalist System

I will speak carefully about this. Here is the question. *Is the capitalist economic system in any way moral?* Before answering this, it is important to draw some distinctions. Please listen carefully.

First I distinguish between the spirit of Capitalism and the capitalist economic system.

The spirit of Capitalism is similar to the spirit of Mammonism. With a little thought you can see where I am heading. I am allowing for a distinction between Mammonism and Capitalism. *What I mean by Mammonism is the unrestricted development of the drive for material possessions.*

When I speak of Capitalism it is again important to make a distinction. We can talk about Capitalism in an abstract or concrete way. We deal with it abstractly as a concept, an idea. We deal with it concretely when we describe how it plays out in practice.

If you grasp this distinction, then you will understand my effort to answer the question (whether Capitalism is in any way moral). My answer lies in the following assertions.

First, when the spirit of Capitalism is the spirit of Mammonism, then it is in every case immoral. Then it is an unlimited desire to possess and we must fight against it as a heresy of the Christian life, just as Socialism is a heretical departure from Christian teaching. However, we should never forget that *the spirit of Mammonism may be concealing itself in each of us*. In this sense we should always struggle against the capitalistic spirit in us. This is the spirit of limitless egoism.

Second, the capitalist economic order is in itself neither moral nor immoral. To demonstrate this in detail would take a great deal of time.

When I claim that the capitalist economic system is in itself neither moral nor immoral I am focusing on the following: What constitutes the essential elements of the capitalist system? This is the distinction between two economic factors, labor and capital. (There is nothing moral or immoral about this distinction.)

The driving force of the capitalist system is the desire for personal property. Clearly this is something morally neutral, but it can be misused. For this reason I claim that the capitalist economic system, *as an idea*, is morally neutral. It can

be either good or bad, depending on how things play out. This is also the teaching of the papal encyclicals.

But now let us consider the capitalist economic system in the concrete as it actually works today. The basic question here is still the same. *Is the drive to acquire personal possessions lived out on the practical level in a healthy way?* Or do we have here a push towards Mammonism?

Did you understand yesterday when I spoke of the two ideas dominating our cultural life today? Where is everything heading? They are headed to an ever greater industrialization. And what is the driving force behind this? Ultimately it is the unrestricted desire to multiply personal possessions. This is Mammonism.

It is important to reemphasize the following: *To the extent that the contemporary economy tends towards industrialization, it tends towards Mammonism.* And to the extent that the capitalist economic order embodies the spirit of Mammonism it is the work of the devil, *but only to this extent.*

This is a distinction that seldom appears in publications. How then might we respond on the practical level? We would do well to acknowledge that Mammonism is often a very powerful force in our cultural life. But we must also acknowledge that with regard to particular cases we are far too dumb to pass judgment. And we remain far too dumb no matter how much we've studied these things. *It is simply too difficult to see deeply enough into (the human heart to pass this judgment).*

The second question concerns the position we should take on the basic elements in our economic system.

Private Property

Let us turn our attention to private property. Today a storm rages even among Catholic theologians about the old concept of private property. I am very progressive about other things, but when it comes to basic principles, I am very conservative. In these matters I don't back off, even at the price of my head. This is also the case here. It must first be demonstrated that the old concept of private property is wrong. But it is not wrong. It is only wrongly applied.

First I will lay out a definition consistent with the old concept that also brings out its transformations. The right to private property is encountered in ancient Rome. The concept there is: *When I have this right, then I can do whatever I choose with it. I can even destroy the thing. This is my right.* On the whole this has also been the case for the Church's teaching on private property. However, in this case there were some built in limitations. These must be more strongly brought out in the definition.

Private property is the God given empowerment of a person over a thing within certain divinely determined limits.

What does this mean? This power over things is given by and dependent upon God. Can someone then do whatever he chooses with his own property? No! This has always been the case according to the Catholic concept. God is the ultimate owner. I may not preen over one thing while allowing another to go to ruin. I cannot simply say, "This is my property; let the world go to ruin. I shred my dollars. I have so many houses I can let this one burn. I can allow whatever I choose to go to ruin." This is wrong. *We must see and present more clearly the social dimensions of private property.*

But why is the concept of private property linked to social responsibilities? Ultimately because this is God's will and thus a natural law.

What does it mean to say that something is connected to natural law? Can one profiteer or practice usury? No. This is always forbidden because it goes against the natural law.

Ultimately it is because our social interconnectedness (entails basic social duties). Imagine all of us in extreme want and with nothing to eat. And there is an immensely wealthy capitalist. He has everything and enough to spare. May we steal what we need? Of course! This has always been the case.⁹ Why? I will give you the quick and definitive answer.

What is the ultimate purpose of possessions? What is the ultimate justification for private property?

The ultimate purpose is to provide human beings the earthly goods they need to live.

This is the ultimate right. When a human being lacks even what is most essential, then the unqualified right to private property ceases and the ultimate right comes into play. In itself this is self-evident. This is why I may take something. It is not stealing. I am taking something that belongs to me.

Now let us reverse the situation. In cases of extreme want is the capitalist obligated to share his possessions? The moralists are not clear whether this obligation is a matter of justice or a matter of charity. In either case it follows that a capitalist or owner may never hinder someone from getting enough to eat or from taking something. Were they to hinder this it would be a sin. Does this mean that the right to private property always entails social obligations? Without a doubt. And we must place more emphasis on this.

⁹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed.*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, Paragraphs 2408, 2446.

Now it comes about that the Church's traditional understanding of private property has died out among most people. So the State steps forward and claims, "The owner may possess only so much. It is the old Church teaching that has prepared things so that we (the State) are now well able to resolve all these difficulties. "

For this reason, so far as I can see, I think we can confidently hold on to the old concept of private property. However, the social obligations (that are part) of this social construct must receive more emphasis.

We must take a position that enables us graciously and gladly to give away some of our possessions.