



The following series of texts refers to the historical processes of Schoenstatt's foundation and Fr Kentenich's life. According to his thinking, Schoenstatt is not just a teaching or a systematic spirituality. Schoenstatt's foundation was a life process, which dynamically developed a divine initiative through corresponding human cooperation, and as a result formed a very original system. For Fr Kentenich, history is primary, "our Sacred Scripture", his teaching and system are secondary. The texts that follow keep this in mind as they cast light on history.

10. The Principle of Government

Part II of our anthology starts with a text that at first sight seems very systematic. It is very dense and will only reveal its content through careful study. It can be compared with an overture. Its aim is to show that much that developed later into Schoenstatt's spirituality, pedagogy and organization, was already contained germinally in the founding process from 1912 - 1914. This is without doubt because the process was supported by a constantly observing and inquiring mind that was motivated by a mission for the world, and that was constantly on the lookout for God's plan, in order to recognize and implement it.

The text presented here is taken from a Study written in 1961 and entitled "The Crisis in and around Mau".⁵⁰

The historical background which gave rise to this study is to be found in the leadership of the Branch for Diocesan Priests. At that time – also motivated by Schoenstatt's problematic situation in Church politics during the founder's exile – it was not divided into an Institute, Federation and League, but was governed as a whole by a body of leaders. This led to tensions with the younger generation, which, among other things, was raising questions about the correct 'Leitbild' (guiding image) and structure of the Priests' Branch.

In this Study, Fr Kentenich pursued the history of this crisis. He raised points of view to facilitate critical reflection, and attempted to find a solution.

The method by which Fr Kentenich approached open questions is very revealing. He placed them in a larger framework in order to arrive at points of comparison from history. So he took a look at the Roman patriarchal principle of the 'Paterfamilias', the French Revolution and modern dictatorships. He also quoted Pope

⁵⁰ "Mau" stands for "Marienau", the house in Schoenstatt that was the centre for the Diocesan Priests at that time. It was the residence of Monsignor Schmitz, the leader of the priests before the Branch differentiated into the usual three main sections. The Marienau is now the centre for the Priests' Federation, the Institute and League having moved to Mount Moriah.

Leo XIII. Then he guided his readers to study Schoenstatt's history and become aware of how the polarity between authority and freedom was resolved there. He referred to the Pre - Founding Document and the Pedagogical Courses of 1931 and 1951. With regard to the exercise of authority he carefully differentiated between outer authority (the authority of office as the exercise of power, 'potestas'), and inner authority (to be the author and promoter of someone else's autonomous life).

The selected text has two parts. First of all, there is a systematic explanation of the elements of Schoenstatt's principle of government (p. 8 - 12 of the German publication), and then the suggestion that the readers study Schoenstatt's early history from the point - of - view of the relationship between authority and freedom (p. 62 - 68). This leads us into the historical development of Schoenstatt.

The Study "Crisis around Mau" (September 1961) has been published in, Herta Schlosser, *Autoritaet und Freiheit in schöpferischer Spannung – Authority and Freedom in Creative Polarity – Vallendar 1993*, 8 - 12 and 62 - 68.

For the sake of simplicity, in what follows we will only talk about the principle of government, but the two other principles – the principle of organization and the principle of the individual leader – have always to be kept in mind.

[1. The principle of government – systematic explanation]

It should be well known that because of our metaphysical fundamental attitude, which shows through all the time, and which always aims at discovering the ultimate foundations for our decisions, in order to support them, our aim in this instance is to imitate God's method of government as perfectly as possible.

Theology has coined an axiom to explain how God governs the world, *Deus operatur per causas secundas liberas*. That is to say, God always works through free secondary causes and adapts himself to them. Accordingly he is and remains the *causa prima* – the first cause – who keeps the reins firmly and unshakably in his all - wise, all - kind and almighty hand. Human beings, who are endowed with freedom, are the freely co - operating *causae secundae* in God's government of the world. We could also say that God is the absolutely sovereign master builder (*Werkmeister*), who has drawn up a comprehensive plan of love, wisdom and omnipotence for world events as a whole. He has done so from all eternity. In the course of time he tries to carry out this plan in every detail. In this human beings, free human beings in his hands, are the freely moving instruments united in being, life and work, in two - in - oneness with the infinite, incomprehensible and absolute master builder.

In order to awaken and make the co - operation of these free instruments easier, so that he can use them for his plans for governing the world, the master builder has established the principle of polarity in both the individual and the community. In the individual he has placed it into the polarity between body and soul, and between mind, will and heart. Since the Fall this polarity in people as individuals has been particularly strong, because their drives, their intellect and their spiritual endowment, that is, the animal, the angel and child of God,⁵¹ are polar opposites.

The life of the community is borne by the same principle. It is kept in constant, creative movement by it – on both the natural and supernatural levels.

Without needing to enter into long investigations we can say that on the natural level we encounter the principle of manifold polarities between the sexes and the generations, between the rousing principle of individuation and socialization, as well as in the constantly effective principle of selection and the masses, not to mention the principle of nationality and world citizenship.

In his unfathomable wisdom God knows the infinite treasure of polarities he has laid down in all these principles, so that they can be brilliantly used to carry out his plans of love for human society.

⁵¹ Cf. Schoenstatt's Everyday Spirituality, p. 47f.

The same applies to the relationship between nature and grace and the individual Persons within the most Blessed Trinity. Here on earth God is constantly pursuing the ideal of unity in polarity, which in the *visio beata* leads to a perfectly ordered unity.

We are attempting to imitate God the Father's mysterious method and wisdom of government as perfectly as possible for mortal human beings burdened with original sin. So for our purposes we have formulated the divine principle of governance briefly and to the point as: authoritative in principle, democratic in application. To express this more clearly we could say that in our form of government we base ourselves unshakeably on the foundation of authority, but in the application and effects of this authority – like God – we are extremely sensitive, and take the individual and social needs of human nature into consideration. Or we could also say that we are authoritative in principle, but in applying this authority we are democratic to a very great extent.

In this way we hope, as far as this is possible to human beings, to imitate God's allwise and unattainable method of government. Wherever we are allowed the freedom, we work according to his example and make ample use of the principles of polarity placed into human nature by the Creator and Sovereign of the world.

Let me repeat, we are “authoritative in principle, but democratic in the application” when we are dealing with people and leading people.

It sounds so simple. I might almost have said that it seems innocuous. We have heard about it on countless occasions in the courses, and we have probably used it personally fairly often. However, did we really understand its full meaning? Have we ever really understood clearly that we have here a key that fully explains the manifold branches of Schoenstatt's history from the human point - of - view – whether this has to do with its organization, government, or questions of leadership?

It contains a protest against two irreconcilable extremes – absolutism and collectivism. It is a profession of faith in the God - willed unity of the poles between authority and freedom as revealed in the countless principles of polarity. It emphatically rejects the form of democratism that has been at work everywhere since the French Revolution to bring about liberty, equality and fraternity. This approach has eliminated fathers from the family and princes from the state, leaving an endless trail of havoc in its wake. According to it, any authority based on God has to be set aside everywhere and make way for bland uniformity. Its ideal is simply to make everyone the same. At best it can be understood in such a way that every community is in principle governed democratically, while at the same time taking personal authority into consideration to some extent. In the process, however, it is always in danger, and often succumbs to the danger, of valuing and protecting the personal value of the person in authority, while not valuing the office itself.

In contrast to this, our principle of government, on the one hand, allows personal freedom plenty of scope, while on the other hand, it also opens up the way for attachment to the law, to the office and the person, as is proved by our hotly contested structural principle (*Baugesetz*). Its central element is: “As much freedom as possible”. However, this freedom has at the same time to be bracketed by authority. So the other element of our principle states: “Obligations only, but also, as far as necessary”. If the tension created by this polarity is to become unity in tension (*Spannungseinheit*), the third part of our principle has to come into play: “Cultivation of the spirit”, or education to make the correct use of the freedom of God's children as far as at all possible.

At the beginning of Schoenstatt's history we trod new paths with the principle of government we have described, when we were involved in overcoming a serious crisis of authority, and we have never left them again.

[2. The principle of government as applied in the Pre - Founding Document]

It is left to the reader to discover the timeless elements in the constitution and governance of strong communities, by comparing the laws governing family life in ancient Rome with the Papal pronouncements that have been quoted, and – to the extent of our interest – to trace this back to the essence of human, communal living.

From this point the reader can draw a line to the authentic opinions on the same subject that have found tangible expression in Schoenstatt's history.

Always and everywhere they centre on the same principle of government: Authoritative in principle, democratic in application – no matter whether this concerns a community that has developed in history *in fieri* or *in facto esse*.⁵² Of course, the emphasis differs in different situations.

There is quite enough material at your disposal for comparative studies. You can study the history of our Marian Sodality, or the formations that developed out of it, as a whole or individually: the Institutes, the Federations, or the League. In essence the direction of government remains the same with unswerving consistency.

[...]

It should not be difficult to detect from what has been discussed so far that the authoritative principle – despite all the democratic application – has always been extremely vigilant in the background. At the right moment – although relatively rarely – it has asserted itself unrelentingly, and preserved the democratic application from unravelling, or overstepping the boundaries (*Uferlosigkeit*).

You will soon see that this method of government is a mixture, and hence forms a sort of unity in polarity of every form of government. Even now it should not be difficult to see and distinguish between the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements it contains. So it is evident that the authoritative principle – in its usual formulation – can be divided into two parts: a monarchical and an aristocratic element. In this way the whole method of government forms a field of tension all its own, which, when necessary, moves in its ultimate monarchical head, via sound unity in polarity, to mature and calming unity in order (*Ordnungseinheit*).

In this way it seems to correspond most perfectly with God's practice, and fully takes into account the domestic laws of the families of ancient Rome – as adapted to circumstances today.

For our purposes it is sufficient to use sources that are easily available to everyone. We are referring here to three: the Pre - Founding Document, and the Pedagogical Courses of 1931 and 1951. You can find the Pre - Founding Document, with the history that led up to and followed it, in Fr Kastner's source book, "*Unter dem Schutze Mariens – Under the Protection of Mary*" (First Edition).

If you take all three sources together and combine them to form a whole, you will have a clear description of our principle of government, without the formulation as such being expressly used.

What the Pre - Founding Document has to tell us about our subject can be given the heading: The relationship between authority and freedom. The content of this statement has been compressed in a few, but important, sentences. However, they have to be evaluated against the background of the well - known crisis of authority of that time, because it essentially influenced the document. Since I was dealing with teenagers in a boarding school it is easy to understand the emphasis placed on the students' own activity in forming their characters, while obediently submitting to authority because it is anchored in God.

The young people's wounded, challenged and agitated urge to be free, which I took up, explains the text.

„We have to learn to educate ourselves. We have to educate *ourselves* with *all* our abilities. Later on we will see what those abilities are, and what is the *objectum materiale* of our self - discipline.

We have to educate ourselves to be *firm* characters. We took off our baby shoes a long time ago. At that time we allowed our actions to be directed by moods and feelings. Now, however, we have to learn to act according to firm, clearly recognized principles. Everything in us may be shaken. We can be sure that times will come when everything will be shaken. Then religious exercises will no longer be able to help us. There is only one thing that can help us – our principles. We have to be firm characters.

We have to be *free* characters. God doesn't want galley slaves, he wants free oarsmen. Let others creep before their superiors, lick their boots and be grateful when they are kicked. We are well aware of our dignity and rights. We submit ourselves to the will of our superiors not out of fear or force, but because we

⁵² *in fieri*, coming into existence, in the process of development. *in facto esse*, in a developed state.

freely want to do so, because every act of reasonable submission makes us inwardly free and autonomous.“

From that time until today the ideal of the free oarsmen in the realm of love, as indicated here – in complete contrast to galley slaves – can be followed through the whole history of the Family like a single golden thread.

It is a repetition of St Paul’s slogan, “We have not received the spirit of slavery (in the sense of the slavery generally practiced at that time), but the spirit of childhood in which we call out ‘*Abba!*’” (cf. Rom 8,15).

This ideal found historically important expression in the first part of the Third Founding Document, of 24 September 1944. (Please read the text.) It was the feast of Our Lady of Ransom. According to that document, the MTA transforms Schoenstatt children into valuable children and untiring heralds of the true freedom of God’s children through her guidance and dispensations (especially in the hell of Dachau, the grave of outward freedom).

If you follow up this line of thinking, you will understand that Schoenstatt speaks of authority that is founded on God and always remains anchored in him. Hence it is an authority that does not use its power to break the backbones of the followers, but to lead them to the peak of true freedom. So it has the exhilarating task of setting the free will of human beings into free motion, and guiding it up to the mountain peak – as God likes to do.

Since 1912 the education to respect authority, or to obey with heart and soul, has continuously occupied a large space in Schoenstatt’s education as a whole. Until today it has essentially determined Schoenstatt’s spiritual history and life. However, it is not seen in isolation. On the contrary, it has always to be seen within the total organism of education. Nothing else could be expected of a Movement that proclaims the idea of the organism.

The Pre - Founding Document took place in October 1912. In July 1913 the Spiritual Director gave an account of the first year of his educational work when the sixth form (*Primaner* – most senior class) took leave of Schoenstatt. At that time he said,

„What are you leaving? With the completion of your classical studies, and as you leave this house behind, the most important, the most fundamental period of your lives is coming to a close. Have you laid the foundation so deeply and firmly and securely that it will be able to bear a building that reaches up to the heavens, with massive structures and artistic crowning, even when it is buffeted by storms? In essentials your education for your high calling has been completed. The way you are now, is how you will later be as priests and apostles.

You left your childhood behind you long ago. So you were not treated as bricks, but as builders. To the extent that your education was placed in my hands, I have always seen you as my co - workers. That is why I placed some, indeed the greatest share of responsibility on your shoulders. So the good that was achieved this year is mainly your merit. I want to thank you all, and each individual, most sincerely for your faithful co - operation, in particular the zealous President of our association, [Hubert] Joebges. You know as well as I do how hard he worked for the good cause.

Has our common work been crowned with success? Even if we have not achieved all that we desired, we can still register some small progress; we feel more love for our vocation and a greater apostolic attitude than at the beginning of the year; we have also become more autonomous and mature.

We always kept our common goal clearly in view – education to become free, priestly and apostolic characters. This is what I proclaimed in my first talk, and later repeated on many occasions. We did not want to educate ourselves to become hothouse plants, but men with a supernatural attitude who are prepared for life, who are able to stand on their own two feet, and who do not slouch when they have to stand tall. That is why we strove to find our way into the spirit of the discipline of the house, and freely and willingly looked upon the challenge of the Statutes and prescriptions as a school for our characters. Yes, freely and willingly! This is because only what we freely will can become deeply rooted in the human heart. Only what has strong roots can hold its own against inclement weather.

That is the direction in which you will have to go on working if you want to carry out your ideals ...⁵³“

⁵³ F. Kastner, *Unter dem Schutze Mariens*, Limburg 1940), p. 169f.