

To the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt

200 Questions about Schoenstatt

by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus

inspired by “*150 Preguntas sobre Schoenstatt*”
by Fr. Rafael Fernandez

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Acknowledgments: *Cover, centerpiece:* painting of Schoenstatt Shrine (Florencio Varela, Argentina) by Elizabeth Schultz of Pewaukee, Wisconsin, used with permission. *Cover, small pictures:* (top left) MTA picture, archive; (top right) Fr. Kentenich, archive; (bottom left) close-up of Unity Cross, Luis Ignacio Marín (Santiago, Chile); (bottom right) Ver Sacrum light in shrine, David Jentz (Brookfield, Wisconsin). *Chapter heading icons:* Matthew Fenelon (Cudahy, Wisconsin), used with permission. Cover layout: Thomas Bruckbauer (Waukesha, Wisconsin).

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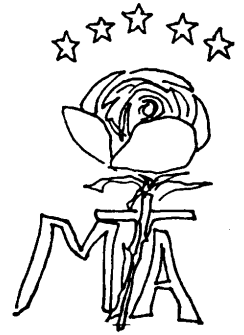
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allow the soul time to *presavor* or *taste in advance* the likely course of the day and how it might affect me. I seek the vantage of Divine Providence again, this time with a question like: “God, what do you want to accomplish through me today?” In this way I allow my soul to breathe the clear air of knowing that whatever happens, it will be in God’s hands.

Some of the fruits of this method of meditation are a greater deference to God’s will and trust in God, an increase in integration of faith and life, growth in trust in God’s providence, more inner fortitude and calm, and an attitude of making no decisions without entrusting them to Him.

Chapter Six

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOENSTATT’S PEDAGOGY



93 What is pedagogy and why is it important?

See *Gaudium et spes* 4-10 (challenges of our times).

The word “pedagogy” refers to one’s *educational style and approach*. It encompasses one’s *philosophy of education, methodology, and interaction with the persons being educated*. It is directly influenced by one’s image of God and of the human person and community.

A sound pedagogy is important because objective truth is transmitted through the subjective process of contact between teacher and student. Even the Gospel and the teachings of the Church depend on the personal work and witness of evangelists and catechists to transmit the faith. Many of the obstacles to the reception of the faith today are rooted in difficulties which the modern person has in assimilating basic values, including the lack of key experiences on the natural level (such as a stable, permanent relationship with father and mother). How to overcome such difficulties is, properly speaking, a pedagogical question: how can I prepare the soul for objective truth through foundational subjective experiences?

The enormous changes of the last 100 years have led to major shifts in the way people understand themselves, relate to others, and make commitments. For instance, the strong tendency today to understand oneself in terms of career and economic value makes it more difficult to open oneself to a vocation in the service of God. Or again, pleasure, success and “doing what everyone else does” (collectivism, *U* 30) have become so dominant that they impede the ability to relate to God (who cannot be grasped with these categories). Even our tendency to see and solve social problems using complex systems (itself a good) is a change which lessens the accent on the personal and unique, sometimes which gives impersonal (“it”) problem-solving the priority over concerning oneself with the personal “you.”

Unless such shifts are taken into account on the pedagogical level (that is, on the level of educational approach), one's attempts to open the soul to a permanent relationship to Christ and Church will bear little fruit.

94 How can one characterize Schoenstatt's pedagogy?

Schoenstatt's pedagogy can be characterized as
deeply natural,
deeply supernatural,
and deeply natural-supernatural.

In other words, it seeks to totally relate to the human person and the human condition *as it is*, embracing everything about man as he has been created by God and as he is found in modern life. At the same time it seeks to be totally related to God and his work, faithfully unearthing the vast riches of the supernatural reality for those Schoenstatt serves.

And finally, it seeks to be *natural-supernatural*, that is, building the bridges for a healthy and vibrant interaction of natural and supernatural, nature and grace, man and God (Ü 105). At times Fr. Kentenich described this process using the words of Albert Weiss, "First human, then Christian, then totally human."

95 From which sources did Schoenstatt's pedagogy develop?

Schoenstatt's pedagogy grew from its Catholic roots and its unique history.

Its Catholic roots allowed it to draw on the wealth of insight and experience gathered in the Church over the centuries. Biblical and doctrinal roots can be found, as well as the example of great saints like St. Francis de Sales and St. Therese of Lisieux. The sacraments and interaction with the worldwide Church also helped shape its approach.

Moreover, much of its unique flavor comes from the particular accents of its history and spirituality: the central place of the covenant of love with Mary, its desire to shape the "new man in the new community," its constant attention to life and the challenges presented it by self-education and the apostolate.

In a very direct way it also grew out of the teaching charism and educational understanding of Fr. Kentenich. For him, education was the generation and service of life. He was not satisfied with merely transmitting

doctrine or knowledge, but felt it must connect with life. Because of this he sometimes called Schoenstatt a "liaison" or "intermediary" between faith and life, between theory and practice. For similar reasons he often spoke of Schoenstatt as a "movement of educators and education," working to realize in many practical ways what the Church teaches and believes.

96 On what image of the human person and the educator is it built?

Crucial to Schoenstatt's pedagogy is
its image of the human person and community
and its image of the educator.

In its *image of the human person and community*, it sees man as created in the image of God, indeed of the Triune God. Man is neither a utilitarian object to be manipulated at will (such as through advertising that only appeals to the lower senses), only to be cast aside when he is no longer useful (like a worn part in a machine), nor a collective being who must understand his value according to how others see him. No, man is *an image of the Triune God*, both as an individual (three persons) and as a community being (one God). Man must, therefore, be treated with utmost respect as an image of God, already on the natural level. All the more so on the supernatural level when it comes to the cultivation of the divine life of grace. The education of an image of God must take into account the features of a child of God, called to both unique individuality and the wealth of attachments in healthy, sustaining relationships.

Secondly, the *image of the educator* is crucial. In Schoenstatt the image of the educator is ultimately read from the image of the three divine persons. The Father, who begets all life, is the model for the fundamental attitude of the educator as "father" and "mother." Fr. Kentenich often spoke of this role of the educator as that of "priestly fatherhood" and "priestly motherhood," referring not only to the generating and nurturing of life, but to the "priestly" service of constantly serving as the go-between for both the natural and supernatural life of those in one's care, leading them to God and to man. The Son, who as the Good Shepherd gave up his life for us all, is our visible model of this kind of education, "selflessly serving the life of others." The Holy Spirit, who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son personified, is the model for the educator as the "great lover who never abandons his love" for those God has entrusted to his care. To be an

educator means that one's own interests recede into the background in favor of those whom God has given to me. One is therefore not the "owner" of their life but merely an instrument of God, participating in Christ's prophetic, priestly and pastoral task.

Being an educator therefore means working on one's own self-education in order to be a completely useful instrument of God. It also means prayer and a living relationship with God, recalling Fr. Kentenich's insight that prayer is the greatest educational power in the world (see *Education and the Challenge of our Times*, p. 2-14). For Fr. Kentenich, the "educated educator" is one who awakens life not merely by a word or lesson, but by authenticity of life – both natural and supernatural – and the sincere power of love placed at the service of those one is called to educate.

97 What are the two foundation stones of Schoenstatt's pedagogy?

The two foundation stones of Schoenstatt's pedagogy are love and freedom.

They correspond to the most central values in God's plan. God is love and has created us to love him. To love him fully we need to grow to the heights of the "freedom of the children of God" (Rom 8,21).

Schoenstatt's core experience is a covenant experience – not based on fear or obligation, but *love*. In fact, one's very belonging to a movement is a free choice. While my salvation depends on my belonging to the Church, my belonging to a movement is an additional act of religion not required by the Church. Hence the strong experience of *faith as something I freely give to God*. Thus it is only fitting that Schoenstatt's pedagogy would be one that is built on love and freedom.

98 What principles guide Schoenstatt's pedagogy?

Schoenstatt's pedagogy is guided by a broad range of underlying principles. Three of the most important are:

First: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*, that is, *the order of being is the norm for the order of action*.

Discerning God's plan of love and freedom requires attentiveness to God's voice. This is found in Scripture and Tradition. It is also found in the *ordo essendi*, the "order of being" – that is, natural law and the way each person and community has been created. This can have practical pedagogical consequences: for instance, because the different states in life (priests, women, men, couples, etc.) have different educational needs, Schoenstatt's organization creates space for each state to generate life according to its own uniqueness. Or again, by being attuned to the uniqueness of each person, Schoenstatt does not promote a "one-size-fits-all" list of spiritual obligations, but encourages each one to develop a schedule that fits his own mission, temperament, etc., respecting the distinct "order of being" which God has given him.

Second: *Grace does not destroy nature, but presupposes it; grace builds on, elevates, heals and improves nature*.

Spiritual formation depends on a proper balance of natural and supernatural, nature and grace, primary and secondary causes (Ü 188). Grace must build on nature, while nature needs the power of grace to reach its full potential. Fr. Kentenich was keenly aware of how our ability to open up to the supernatural reality depends on natural pre-experiences such as the experience of our natural father. On the other hand, the healing and elevation of the modern soul, so downtrodden by the traumas of our age, is dependent on the vigorous action of grace. Only grace, properly integrated with action on the natural level, can elevate man and society to the level it desires when it speaks of the ideals of human rights, freedom and the dignity of the human person.

Third: *Love is the fundamental and universal law of the world*.

This axiom is a summation of the teaching of such great saints as St. Francis de Sales and St. John Bosco. Schoenstatt has always considered love the "fundamental law" and driving force of world history. Behind this is the conviction that *the strongest drive in the human person is not fear, justice, pleasure or even survival, but LOVE*. Love not only is the greatest power in heaven and on earth, but also the greatest creative force in the work of education. True and authentic educators must be geniuses of love. Just as God does everything through love, for love, out of love, so too must the educator strive to do all things through, for and out of love.

99 What are the five “guiding stars” of this pedagogy?

Schoenstatt’s pedagogy seeks to transmit a natural-supernatural experience of love built on freedom, thereby helping create the new person in the new community: fully able to love (God, neighbor, self) in committed Christian community (carried by genuine family spirit).

To reach this end, Fr. Kentenich stressed five “*guiding stars*” as essential features of Schoenstatt’s educational approach. They are

attachment pedagogy (Û 100)

movement pedagogy (Û 105)

covenant pedagogy (Û 112)

and

a pedagogy of trust (Û 117)

a pedagogy of ideals (Û 121).

The “foundation stones” of love and freedom are captured in the “guiding stars” this way: love in the first three points, freedom in the final two.

100 What is “attachment pedagogy”?

Attachment pedagogy is the part of education to love which promotes and defends attachments to persons, places, things, ideas and values. Attachments are the fruit of love and the way to love. At times Fr. Kentenich would allude to this by quoting St. John Bosco:

“If you want to be obeyed, see to it that you are loved... Do you want to be loved? Then you must love. And that alone is not enough. You must go one step further. You must not only love your students, but they must know it as well.”

In other words: build an attachment on love and education of the whole person if possible. This can be done on many fronts: in personal relationships, in the experience of being at home, in customs or rituals that remind the soul of previous deep experiences, etc.

Attachments not only involve the mind or will, they specifically engage the *heart and soul*, reaching the deepest part of the human person. A vibrant spectrum of attachments is necessary to fully develop one’s capacity to love (see “organism of attachments” Û 22, 102). But not everyone has a vibrant set of attachments; many people today are extraordinarily weak in their attachments, leaving them spiritually and emotionally weak, living dysfunctional lives or, in extreme cases, lacking the ability to function

normally in society. It was Fr. Kentenich’s lifelong conviction that modern man’s deepest malady lies in *the inability to attach*. He goes through life drifting from one relationship to another, from one house to another, from one fad to another, but never sufficiently sets down the roots of the soul to experience what it means to love and be loved *unconditionally*.

An effective attachment pedagogy must therefore promote a wide variety of attachments – to persons, places, things, ideas and values. It begins with the attachment of the educator to the educated, a genuine interest in the life of another. Often just by welcoming someone, by listening and taking in what is important, one can break through the cold indifference of mass society and give the other the courage and freedom to attach more deeply. Aids to attachment include outward signs, the way one makes a house is made a home, or symbols, music, art and ritual that help to break the indifference of place or time and give the soul a chance to grow roots. Time is also important – time for relationships, time for quiet reflection, time for God – so the soul can set down roots. At times attachments must be actively defended from vices like immodesty or greed, which tear down healthy attachments in the race for worldly gratification.

Schoenstatt’s own experience of attachments helps realize this pedagogy. It has its rich experience of attachments – to the Shrine, to the MTA, to Fr. Kentenich, to many symbols and songs, to its history, etc. – to refer to and encourage it to keep working at promoting healthy attachments.

Attachment pedagogy also depends on healthy thinking. Modern thinking belittles and likes to tear down attachments which may have taken years, decades or even centuries to build up. This “mechanistic thinking” (Û 103) needs to be explicitly countered with “organic thinking” (Û 104). This was the danger that caused Fr. Kentenich to risk his life’s work on May 31, 1949 (Û 187). Attachment pedagogy works hand in hand with movement pedagogy (Û 105) to help create a culture of life in relationship; both make best progress when they take concrete shape in explicit covenant experiences (see covenant pedagogy, Û 22, 112).

101 What difficulties does attachment pedagogy face?

Attachment pedagogy must face many difficulties. Some are rooted in the *person*. This may include the inability or lack of experience in entering into attachments. Here one needs to begin with very small and simple steps and

patiently try to lead the soul to a greater growth in attachments. Mechanistic thinking can also be a difficulty (Û 103). Or one might be too much under the influence of modern “mobility” and be a spiritual “drifter”; it can take great patience to lead such a soul to deeper attachment.

Some difficulties are rooted in our *society*. In the name of efficiency, productivity or even survival one may be forced to change jobs, homes, or one’s homeland. Because stability of place and friendships is so important for the rootedness of the soul, we must do what we can to overcome this tendency, though this may ask great sacrifices. Also, our society’s self-centered view of friendship, marriage, sexuality and family poses great risks for establishing, cultivating and protecting the most central personal attachments in our lives. The tearing down of cultural safeguards (such as common courtesies and moral norms) can actually endanger gains already made. Hence the importance of a certain *preferential option for attachments*.

Finally, there are difficulties which arise from *the nature of attachments themselves*. Fr. Kentenich spoke of the three-fold function of created things. By this he was referring to a basic observation of God’s plan: 1) created things (including persons) were created by God to *attract* us, that is, to arouse our wonder and draw us away from self to the other; 2) because of original sin, we are always in danger of becoming enslaved to the things of this world, therefore God also gives these things the function of *disappointing* us; 3) finally, they have the function of *pointing beyond themselves to God*. The difficulty inherent in this is that we often do not understand the disappointment as a positive gift of God and then fail to use the attachment to maximum benefit as a stepping stone to God.

102 What role does the “organism of attachments” play?

Attachments are not isolated but have a context – the “organism of attachments” (Û 22). This insight is central to an effective pedagogy of attachments. Bear in mind how the various kinds of attachments (or lack thereof) may help (or drag down) each other in the attempt to lead someone to a fuller ability to love. Also recall the “organic” side of working with attachments, such as the laws of organic growth (Û 107). Nor should one forget the important interaction of personal and community attachments and experiences to the development of the organism of attachments.

Families, groups, communities and nations also have their organism (network) of attachments. As with individuals, the cultivation of attachments is important for the community experience. The danger today is that community attachments are only cultivated in very shallow or disjointed ways, often without reference to God or higher values.

Attachment pedagogy demands a willingness of the educator to open his heart and “join the organism of attachments,” that is, become attached. The ability to accept attachment from others in a healthy, positive manner can go a long way toward fostering their ability to love. Moreover, becoming a greater transparency, or reflection, of Mary, Christ, God the Father, etc. increases one’s ability to lead upward to the heavenly covenant partners, giving greater impetus to the growth of love. All in all, if education establishes a network of healthy and stable attachments with God and others, it can grow and develop in a healthy manner.

103 What is mechanistic thinking?

See *Gaudium et spes*, 43 (separation of faith and life); Pius XII, allocution for the men of Italian Catholic Action, October 12, 1952; John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 4, 88; *Fides et Ratio*, 45-48, 86-91 (separatistic thinking).

Definition. Fr. Kentenich began to use the term “mechanistic thinking” (or “separatistic thinking”) in the 1930s to describe a major blight on modern thinking. What he meant was a thinking that habitually separates, takes apart and analyzes without maintaining context, connections and synthesis. In other words, it draws false conclusions about God, man and life because it artificially separates things that belong together. Fr. Kentenich pointed out four main areas of separation:

1. the separation of ideas from life,
2. the separation of God from secondary causes (Û 188),
3. the separation of life processes that belong together,
4. the separation of ideas that belong together.

The word “mechanistic” puts its finger on the false assumption underlying this thinking. It assumes that one can think of persons, personal relationships and organic realities (including the supernatural) in the same way that one thinks about a machine: in a purely analytical and impersonal manner.

Examples. Because life is not a machine, the total organic context is crucial to correct thinking. For instance, to think of a person in isolation from family, friends and colleagues might seem the best way to reach the “essence” of the person. But can a *person* be understood without knowing

his friends and family? Yet this is what mechanistic thinking does when it proposes that best “thinks” the “essence” of Christ by removing the “distractions” of such central and vital relationships in his life such as Mary and the Church.

In moral and ethical questions, mechanistic thinking is prone to think only of what *can* be done, making light of how one process (such as biogenetic experimentation) affects other related organic processes like *how* it affects persons and society and our respect for life and *whether* it should be done. Pragmatic considerations create a convenient blindness to the consequences affecting the sum-total of human life and our responsibility before God.

Effects. Mechanistic thinking affects attachments in two ways:

1. It is generally blind to the importance of attachments, or is satisfied with their minimal cultivation. But much of what makes us human is a vibrant interaction of many kinds of relationships. For instance, although mechanistic thinking might see no benefit in cultivating a personal relationship with Mary or the saints (“I can go straight to God!”), it misses the richness of having many ways to go to God in the face of many different challenges in life.
2. It belittles and destroys values and sacrifices needed for attachments to take root and grow: respect for God’s laws on marriage, the primacy of parenthood over career, persons are more important than material goods, respect for traditional forms of faith and piety, the need to invest time and give up self-centeredness if one wishes to grow closer to God, spouse, friends, etc. Marriages fall apart, families suffer, priests and religious mock proven ways of popular piety, society loses a meaningful connection to God. These are just some of the ways mechanistic thinking destroys lives and culture.

104 What is “organic thinking”?

Definition. Fr. Kentenich coined the word “organic thinking” as the counterpart to “mechanistic thinking.” It is the healthy thinking which opposes and heals mechanistic thinking. As the word “organic” indicates, it is a thinking which *respects life as an organism*, that is, in its living context of attachments and relationships. Hence, it is an *integrated* thinking: integrating nature and grace, head and heart, faith and life, God and world. Instead of separating, it unites the aspects of life that relate to one another:

1. related ideas and life,

2. God, the Primary Cause, and all secondary causes (Û 188),
3. life processes that belong together,
4. ideas that belong together.

Organic thinking *synthesizes*. Fr. Kentenich often described it by use of some simple Latin vocabulary – it is an “*et... et...*” (both... and...) and not an “*aut... aut...*” (either... or...) thinking. By this he meant that organic thinking does not play off realities one against the other (God and world, faith and reason, Jesus and Church, Scripture and Tradition, liturgy and popular piety, Christ and Mary, etc.), but seeks the ways they relate to each other. An essential help to organic thinking is *symbolic thinking*. Through symbols one can better grasp the sum total of life and organic realities than through analysis alone.

Organic thinking, loving and living. Fr. Kentenich stressed that the healing of mechanistic thinking is not just a matter of correct organic thinking, but also of *organic loving and living*. He equated this with everyday sanctity (Û 88). In 1955 and thereafter he used this term to describe the mission of May 31, 1949 – it is a “crusade of organic thinking, loving and living” (Û 187). The organic quality of Schoenstatt’s life is also inseparable from its spirituality (Û 80, 83) and pedagogy (Û 105-107).

105 What is “movement pedagogy”?

Movement pedagogy sees education as a dynamic process of growth, movement and life. A favorite saying of Fr. Kentenich’s was, “Life begets life,” meaning more can be done through life contact than through lectures. For him education involved welcoming, awakening, fostering, healing and challenging life. This dynamic of growth applies to both individuals and communities.

Integration of life. Schoenstatt is an ecclesial movement (Û 2). Its style and charism require being attentive to and actively fostering a dynamic approach to faith, spirituality and Christian commitment. Modern dynamic approaches, however, tend to overemphasize natural goals, goods and “movement” at the cost of other key features of life. A sound movement pedagogy therefore seeks the integration of all the levels of life in both the individual and the community. It seeks

- natural growth (including emotional, instinctive and physical growth),
- rational growth (including the growth of mind and will),

supernatural growth (including the growth of grace and love of God). This integration is also a central feature of everyday sanctity (Û 88).

Working with Life. Integration of life requires knowing how to work with life and organic processes. This includes appreciating and fostering life on its many different levels, and working with the levels as they interact, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Fr. Kentenich elaborated a four-step way of observing and reflecting on life (Û 106) and the “laws of organic growth” (Û 107) as helps to a more effective working with life. Experience helps us know when to trust life and be patient (for instance, when it needs to mature) and when to challenge life (for instance, when it becomes inbred, stale, complacent or self-centered) even while respecting the mystery of God’s plan which is behind each person and community. Other typical Schoenstatt accents in working with life are fostering independent initiative and creativity (to assure the attachment of those involved with the life that is in them and in their community) and fostering a style of community which respects diverse identities and missions and sets down roots in a unity based on the God-given life found in the community.

Working with Lifestreams. To truly lead and form life, however, one must also know how to inspire, cultivate and respect larger movements of life called “lifestreams.” A lifestream (or life current) takes place when certain events, desires or trends (either of grace or thought) flow together to touch life in a deeper way. It is typical of lifestreams that they “strike a chord” in many people, motivating them to “join” the lifestream through a feeling of identification and actively partaking in some initiative or commitment. They “grip” the heart and lead to a new infusion of spiritual vigor or apostolic/community fervor. Lifestreams can be long or short in duration. A long-lived lifestream in Schoenstatt is the crowning lifestream which began as a single crowning of the Schoenstatt Sisters in 1939 (Û 176), but was then taken up by some of the Girls Youth in 1940. It struck such a chord in the larger movement that the MTA was soon being crowned by many groups and individuals to personally acknowledge Mary’s might and kindness and to entrust specific needs to her. It is a lifestream that has continued unabated into the present day. A short-lived lifestream could be a jubilee or apostolic initiative that genuinely “grips” the heart and leaves a mark on those involved even though it might last but a year or two.

A leader using movement pedagogy will look for ways to integrate, inspire and promote life, especially through lifestreams. This is especially impor-

tant in a world dominated by mass communication, marketing and fashion. Engaging persons and communities through trends and currents can be used for the spiritual and moral formation of the person, provided that the core of the person is respected and promoted, building on human freedom and the dignity of being a child of God. Here one must be aware that the application of movement pedagogy demands patience, creativity and a firm faith that the deepest life is stirred by God and genuine encounter with him. At times a lifestream may develop more or less on its own. In such a case one must take care to foster it. At others times, one may need to try different things until something “strikes a chord” and grasps the hearts. But once a lifestream is found, it can engage the whole person in a greater and more sustained way than any theoretical lesson or isolated activity. An outstanding example of working with lifestreams is the community ideal in Schoenstatt (Û 127).

106 How does one observe “movement” and life?

Fr. Kentenich used and taught a four-step process for observing and reflecting on life. It is similar to the “see-judge-act” method, but places a greater accent on grasping the underlying principles. The steps – observe, compare, reduce to the final principles, apply – are also criteria for discerning the voice of God in the times (Û 24).

1) *Observe.* I observe the life around me, especially in the persons and/or communities entrusted to my care. What inspires this life? Where does it come from? What enthuses it? What discourages it? What crosses does it bear? In which direction does God seem to be leading it? How does God seem to be involving me? Crucial to this step is the ability to listen, both to life and to God’s voice speaking through this life. It is essential to treat life with respect and make an honest effort to get to its roots. Rash judgments or a “know-it-all” attitude can short-circuit the process.

2) *Compare.* I consider parallel cases from my experience, from the experience of others and from history. To what extent is the life entrusted to me unique, and to what extent do certain laws seem to be at work? The purpose of comparison is not to put down (they are better than we, we are better than they), but to better grasp the underlying plan of God for those I serve. The comparison shows similarities and differences, and should bring into sharper focus the voice of God speaking in the specific features of the life entrusted to my care.

3) *Reduce to the Final Principles.* In the third step I give careful thought to the principles underlying what I have discovered through observation and comparison. A surface evaluation or mere list of symptoms may be satisfactory to the behaviorist mentality of our times, but not to an effective movement pedagogy. If life is truly to be led according to God's plan, one must try to come to the real sources and causes, the real metaphysical definitions. For instance, in questions of work, unemployment, etc. it would be insufficient to define "work" as "what one does for a living"; instead, one seeks a definition that reveals both the natural and supernatural contours, such as, "work is participation in the creative activity of God."

4) *Apply.* Finally, I seek to respond to life on the basis of the underlying principles. For instance, in issues of work and unemployment, the definition of work as "participation in God's creative activity" might lead to initiatives for unemployed workers to do meaningful tasks that allow them to act creatively, even when out of work. Or it might challenge employers in a time of labor unrest to consider if they are treating their employees fairly and in keeping with their dignity of cooperators in God's creative activity.

107 What are the "laws of organic growth"?

The "laws of organic growth" are an essential category for any movement pedagogy and effective cultivation of life. They have a long tradition in Schoenstatt and are rooted in the observation of life and growth. Although there are many observations which one can make about "organic growth" (for instance, its often cyclical nature), the most important ones in Fr. Kentenich's teaching are the following:

Life grows

1. slowly,
2. from within,
3. in all parts simultaneously but not at equal rates,
4. from one organic whole to another organic whole, and
5. with periodic bursts of growth (in stages).

As an example: to effectively cultivate the local attachment to the Shrine, one must know that such attachments take time (grow slowly), must be allowed to grasp the person from within (and not just be imposed from the outside), and are part of a larger process of life (this attachment may, for a

time, take the back seat to the growth of other important attachments such as the attachment to the Eucharist), and that all growth must maintain the integrity of the person as a whole (never forcing a person to be someone he is not). Finally, in spite of the general tendency for life to grow slowly, there can be times when it bursts forth and makes sudden, remarkable progress, like a "springtime" or "I suddenly understand" experience.

Part of the reason why understanding these laws is important is because of the mass nature of modern society. Because of the constant flood of impressions and experiences, real growth on a deeper level is often stymied, like a field flooded by too much rain. The objective of movement pedagogy is not superficial movement, but the movement of the whole person from within, and this requires time and space for experiences to grow into attachments and beliefs to grow into convictions.

108 What is the "law of creative tensions"?

Dealing with life means dealing with tensions. Or: Where there is no tension, there is no life. Every person, community and plan of God involves the interaction of many different factors, motives and perspectives. For instance, all life has both a "conservative" side that seeks to preserve itself just as it is, and a "progressive" side that seeks to grow and change and become something greater.

As a genius of movement pedagogy, Fr. Kentenich knew how to bring together persons and groups with differing styles, ideas and goals. He did not try to eliminate the tensions, but to bring them into creative interaction. He knew and cherished the way tensions can propel life forward in the play of God. He therefore spoke positively of the *Spannungsprinzip* or "law of creative tensions." This law is very evident in God's way of creating the universe: the polarity of atomic particles (positive, negative, neutral), the motion of the planets and other objects (centripetal vs. centrifugal force), man and woman, the different temperaments and interests of people, even the often competing interests among the faculties of the human person.

A special case of the law of creative tensions is the "law of the un-lived life," where changes of leadership or focus of striving allow previously untapped energies and persons to step forward. While uniform leadership helps keep life more organized, it can also gradually suffocate initiative and lead to resignation, dissatisfaction or rebellion. Hence the importance of

periodic changes of leadership and the willingness to take on new challenges, so that life does not become stagnant.

Crucial to an optimal use of the law of creative tensions is the personal anchoring in a community, however loose, and in an accepted moral authority. Greater tasks generally require the more formal structures of a juridically recognized community, but at times great tasks can suddenly take off “by way of movement,” that is, as a great lifestream suddenly engaging many people with little organization. Here, too, a creative tension must be found to give such movements of life enough structure to maintain momentum, but without stifling spontaneity.

Effective leadership rooted in true moral authority will go a long way toward unifying and coordinating the tensions brought about by life. The leader’s role is to respect the different dimensions and tensions while directing them positively, keeping them from spinning out of control or devolving into rancor, rivalry, envy over conflicting plans and perspectives. It is also the role of such figures to help keep the tensions focused on God’s will and not merely on the human will of competing factions.

109 What is the “law of the open door”?

Movement pedagogy is rooted in practical faith in Divine Providence (Ü 23). Of particular value is the “law of the open door,” a principle frequently used by Fr. Kentenich and witnessed to by St. Paul (see 1 Cor 16,9; 2 Cor 2,12; Col 4,3; Acts 14,27). In this law, God’s wishes are discerned by observing the “doors” or possibilities that He opens to us, as well as those that he closes (the “law of the closed door”). They are seen as a way that God gives His input in the government of individuals, families and nations. They respect human freedom, but invite us to trust more in God’s wishes and will.

Whether one follows the open door is till a matter of discernment, but some open doors are so striking that a deeper divine purpose seems evident. Those attuned to Divine Providence are generally predisposed in favor of the open door (why else would God have opened it?), but still let the other voices of God (Ü 24-26) weigh in for a well-founded decision. The discernment also requires an evaluation after having passed through the open door, called the “law of the creative resultant” (see below).

The law of the open door has been an integral part of Schoenstatt from the beginning. The founding in 1914 took place because Fr. Kentenich perceived an open door being offered by God to invite Mary to dwell in the Shrine. For a movement pedagogy both the open and closed doors play a crucial role in giving God a broader voice in both the processes of education and of government.

110 What is the “law of the creative resultant”?

This is the principle which follows up the “law of the open door.” It applies the words of Jesus, “By your fruits you shall know them” (Mt 7,16). Because open doors can come from various sources – divine, human, even diabolical – one must make a follow-up discernment in order to know whether the foundations one has laid are good or not. The matter is made more complex by the fact that not all open doors can be discerned as being from God before one must choose whether or not to pass through the door.

The measure of discernment is relatively simple. If the result of pursuing an open door is ordinary and accounted for through earthly causes, one can speak of an “ordinary resultant.” If, on the other hand, they clearly exceed what can be attributed to the earthly factors involved, one can speak of a “*creative resultant*.” In such a case one can conclude that the open door was of divine origin and one becomes more attentive to the voice of God leading in that direction.

Fr. Kentenich often interpreted the creative resultant using the criteria:

- 1) the greatness of the difficulties (or aims),
- 2) the smallness of the instruments,
- 3) the greatness of the success.

In other words, if the difficulties were, humanly speaking, insurmountable and/or the instruments were, humanly speaking, too small to account for the fruitfulness, and the success went well beyond the expectation of all human calculation, it must be the hand of God (Ü 42).

This law is especially important is in discerning whether a decision or phenomenon is of God or of the Devil. In the latter case, the converse of this law will show itself – the “law of destructive resultant.” If the negative results of a decision or chain of events clearly go beyond normal expectation, exceeding the evil that merely human hatred, envy, etc. could accomplish, one must conclude that the Devil is at work.

III What is the “law of opposition”?

A further law which is often used to assess the next necessary step in a movement pedagogy is the “law of opposition.” Fr. Kentenich stated it this way in the Second Founding Document (1939):

“What may Divine Providence expect in the near future of the family ...? (...) We turn to the ideas and institutions in Schoenstatt which have been the focus of greatest controversy. We are guided by the thought that God permits such challenges in order to draw our attention to the things which He wants us to emphasize and make effective in a special way” (No. 49).

In other words, the path of growth *desired by God* is not necessarily the path of least resistance, but rather, the path of *taking up the challenge raised by opposition*. God often uses adversity to bring a person or community face-to-face with its weaknesses and need for conversion or its previously overlooked treasures. God may have in mind the stirring to a real decision and hence a real step forward in growth. Or he may be beckoning to heroism and sanctity. In any case, guiding persons or communities through times of opposition is not necessarily lost time, but can become precisely the moment which opens up new movement and growth.

III2 What is “covenant pedagogy”?

“Covenant pedagogy” brings the elements of attachment and movement (organic growth) together with

concrete
personal (mutual)
commitment.

To be effective, the process of education must help the human person grow from essential first attachments into *concrete core relationships*. The modern experience is very much aware of the vulnerability of relationships, but is lost when it comes to commitment, especially on a lifelong basis. Here the difficulties in forming attachments (Ü 101) plays a role. This is further complicated by the modern flood of information and experience, leading to a universalism that finds it hard to commit to just one person or state in life. As Fr. Kentenich would say: “Universalism without particularism is nihilism,” meaning that embracing the whole world without following through on *one particular ideal, relationship or commitment* leads to failure to successfully form even one part of the world. It is ultimately

the same wisdom which the saying points out: “It is easier to love the whole world than to love my brother.”

In addition, this part of Schoenstatt’s pedagogy seeks to mediate the experience of *personal* relationships, both natural and supernatural, that can support the person in a deeper way than the style of superficial relationships typical of an impersonal mass society. Moreover, if this personal relationship can be *mutual*, it can strengthen the dignity of the person as both one who gives and receives love, awakening all the abilities of the soul to love God, fellow-man and self.

Schoenstatt’s covenant pedagogy therefore tries to lead the person from basic experiences of attachment to the experience of concrete, personal commitments – to the *experience of the covenant*. The basis of this pedagogy is Schoenstatt’s own core experience, the *covenant of love with the MTA* (Ü 22, Chapter 4), hence a central accent on leading to a concrete, personal covenant with Mary. Whether by leading to this covenant or by encouraging other concrete, personal commitments (for which the educator has a keener appreciation through his or her own covenant of love), Schoenstatt works to realize this element of its pedagogy.

III3 How does the covenant of love relate to covenant pedagogy?

The covenant of love with the MTA, the founding and central reality in Schoenstatt’s spirituality, is an outstanding means of helping many people grow in concrete personal commitment. By beginning with Mary and the Shrine, they seem to grasp more easily the inner secrets needed for all personal commitment.

The key to this covenant pedagogy is the appreciation of two great truths:

1. (from above) God’s chosen method of reaching out to man is *covenantal*, be it in the covenant of the Old Testament, the New Covenant of Jesus or our personal integration into the New Covenant through baptism. God ordinarily makes us capable of the covenant with him through *secondary causes*, that is, through covenant commitments with others.

2. (from below) Man is created not to live in isolation, but *in relationship*: “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2,18). Certain relationships in our lives must be binding and lifelong to fully satisfy and form us for eternity. The earthly pilgrimage is a journey of experience and growth

through earthly covenant to the covenant with God – a *covenant history*.

Based on these two truths, a covenant pedagogy must both *shed light on the objective reality of covenant in God's plan* and *find concrete ways to remove the obstacles and offer positive experiences of committed personal relationship*. Ideally, this should enable the person to grow in all areas of attachment and commitment and to appreciate his story as covenant history leading to God.

What Schoenstatt offers is both *its* concrete covenant (with the MTA) and a *concrete covenant community*, the Schoenstatt Family, a place where many experience the effects of covenant commitment even before making the covenant of love their own. Hence, Schoenstatt's covenant pedagogy works to lead many people to the covenant of love with the MTA in the Shrine. It also works to pave the way to a more covenant-oriented Church and world to the extent it exemplifies the effects of living a motivated covenant in everyday life.

Educators given the charge of leading others to any covenant will find the need for preparatory steps, involving attachment pedagogy and movement pedagogy. Part of the “movement” needed is motivation: reminders that covenant commitment, even with the sacrifices it demands, is ultimately more satisfying than modern non-commitment. Part of the “attachment” is to one's own history as not just “random” but “covenant history,” a history with God. But in the end it involves the challenge of decision: *Do I want to make this concrete, personal covenant of love?*

As one grows into the concrete covenant of love in Schoenstatt, all of one's covenant realities in life tend to be enriched. Indeed, this is a principle aim, pedagogically speaking, of the covenant of love. It should help us live our covenant with God, neighbor, spouse, family, etc. more fully, fruitfully and faithfully.

I 14 How personal is a covenant pedagogy?

While covenant pedagogy is built on certain general principles, it is ultimately a very personal pedagogy, for the point of covenants is to draw us into *total* relationship – with everything that we are and have. This is most definitely true of the covenant of love with Mary. The sealing of each covenant, even while integrated into the one covenant of love of October

18, 1914, reflects the uniqueness of the person and/or group making the covenant. This is clear from the unique way each person comes to the covenant of love. It can also show in the uniqueness of each covenant prayer and in covenant songs or symbols.

Pedagogically speaking, the covenant of love can also be the beginning of a unique covenant way, leading one to discover the *covenant quality of other key relationships in my life*. It gives an experiential foundation for daring to become more concrete and personal with the supernatural world: such as in a covenant of love with God the Father, Christ or the Holy Spirit. It also gives graces and a new, more concrete approach to living the earthly relationships God has given us: with my spouse, my family or group members, with the Church. One can find such nourishment in the world of Schoenstatt that one is drawn into new covenant steps with the MTA or Fr. Kentenich. Or I might find that my covenant seeks expression in a covenant place, such as a deep love for a particular Schoenstatt Shrine or in a home shrine.

I 15 Why is Marian education important?

It is a fundamental principle of covenant pedagogy that, when God leads us to a *concrete covenant partner*, it is because *that person will be a primary instrument in leading us to heaven*. This is true of marriage. It is also true of Mary's role in Schoenstatt and the Church (Ü 17, 79).

Schoenstatt therefore emphasizes not only the importance of covenant education, but also of *Marian education*. The more that we come to know and love Mary, the more our soul is enabled to live in covenant. The qualities of her person – fully redeemed, Christ-imbued, listening to the voice of the Father through the action of the Holy Spirit – become more our own as we grow closer to the “blessed among women” (Lk 1,28.42).

In educational conferences in 1950, Fr. Kentenich pointed out various reasons why Marian education is important. Primary among them is:

“Marian devotion is not merely to be used as a principle of form, but as an outstanding *forming principle of all our education*” (*Grundriß einer neuzeitlichen Pädagogik*, p. 250).

In other words, personal relationship with Mary gives education not only a form, but a *soul*, a *person whose heart and soul reaches out to the heart and soul of those who love her*. If this happens, it leads to a quantum leap

in education. The person is then educated – not in some superficial, hit-and-miss way – but in a way that reaches the depths of the whole person.

As Fr. Kentenich moves from this thought, he points out three further benefits of an education based on a covenant with Mary:

“It gives us:

1. a personal openness for the divine and a receptivity, sensitivity and sense for the values of God,
2. a great objective ideal which answers the great difficulties our times have in understanding the human person and living in a fully human way,
3. the surety that we can live this ideal” (p. 251).

All in all, forming of the type of Christian needed on the “new shore of the times” is difficult, if not practically impossible in our depersonalized and secularized age without a strong Marian education.

116 What is the aim of Marian education?

The aim of all Marian education is to reach the goals of Catholic education in a deeply personalized, heartfelt manner – completely forming disciples of Christ by the swiftest, shortest, surest way (Ü 17, 80). As Fr. Kentenich pointed out in 1950:

“Where Marian education is integrated into the organism of Catholic education, the goal [of Catholic education] is given an expanded form: The aim of Marian education is to enable and prepare the members of Christ and children of God to grow autonomously and by their own initiative from as perfect a Marian attachment as possible to as perfect a Marian attitude as possible, or, to as distinct a Marian style of living and working as possible” (p. 266).

In other words, its aim is not the creation of weak and dependent personalities, but of true disciples in the spirit of Mary and in attachment to Mary who learn from her how to shape their lives in the spirit of the Gospel.

117 What is the “pedagogy of trust”?

The “pedagogy of trust” refers to the fundamental importance of trust in all education. Because Schoenstatt’s method of education seeks to form the whole person from within (as opposed to external “training” or a “cookie-cutter” education blind to the uniqueness of each person), the trust between educator and educated is crucial. Fear and lack of freedom in the educated

will obstruct this process, as will educators who control too much or show little faith or interest in those they educate.

The foundation of this trust is God’s power, wisdom and love expressed in the Divine trust shown to us to educate ourselves and educate each other. Just as he trusts us, we must build on trust for one another. It also involves a deep trust in the inherent goodness of human nature, even when all else speaks against it, in the laws of organic growth (especially that my trust will, eventually, awaken trust in others and aid their growth to inner freedom and maturity), and in the power of grace to heal and elevate, including those parts of nature wounded by sin and lack of love.

118 What are some methods typical of a pedagogy of trust?

Two methods typical of a pedagogy of trust are
education through challenges and responsibility,
cultivation of childlikeness before God.

The accent on education through challenges and responsibility (German: *Bewährungspädagogik*) refers to a style of education which shows trust in the educated by giving them tasks and responsibilities which require them to reach more deeply within themselves to grow. It is the opposite of an education which opts to protect and shelter those being educated to a degree that their growth is stunted or parts of their personality never get a chance to blossom. Challenges and responsibility must be given wisely, aware of the limitations of the one being given the task and when they might break, but also unafraid to push someone “to the edge.” This is where the experience of the educator is important: not only in knowing the right degree of challenge, but also in the value of failure and experiencing one’s limitations for the total growth of the person, including the experience of necessity of God and others.

Childlikeness before God (Ü 89) is also a typical ingredient in Schoenstatt’s pedagogy of trust. The ultimate source of trust is trust in God and God’s trust in us. The experiences of trust on the human level help open up the soul to trust in God, which in turn places human trust on firmer ground as a transparency of divine trust. To grow into the reality of God as a loving and caring Father is of great benefit to the total growth of the person, as does the gradual grasp of the purpose of crosses and suffering as challenges which God allows so that we grow beyond ourselves to the high

ideal he has for us. Trust in God also gives flexibility to our human experiences of trust, for the transparency function which trusted persons have (reflecting God's trust in us and our trust in God) is imperfect and the ways that they can eventually disappointment or even hurt us must be seen in the light of God's total plan where disappointments keep us from forgetting that God is the ultimate anchor of our trust.

119 Can one speak of a “pedagogy of freedom”?

As already noted (Ü 97), freedom is one of the foundation stones of Schoenstatt's pedagogy. Among the five guiding stars (Ü 99) it expresses itself especially in the pedagogy of trust and of ideals.

In a pedagogy of trust one cultivates a deep respect for the freedom of the other(s) entrusted to my care. This is all the more important because of Schoenstatt's conviction that the ability to fully give oneself to God means one must be able to give oneself from the fullness of freedom. This shows in the cultivation of ideals (Ü 121-127), the work on embracing cross and suffering in the name of inner freedom (Ü Blank Check, 76, and Inscriptio, 77), overcoming the “mass man,” and fostering the ability to make and carry out one's own decisions.

Freedom and trust are also seen in relationship to the cultivation of the spirit of generosity or *magnanimity*. Given freedom, a truly noble person will feel the desire to give more than has been received. Schoenstatt tries to give room for this experience by placing less emphasis on “what I must do” and more on “what I may do.” This is in keeping with one of the famous principles underlying Schoenstatt's spirituality and organization: “freedom as much as possible, obligations only as much as necessary, cultivation of the spirit as much as possible.”

120 What is “education through attitudes”?

Along with the themes of trust and freedom comes Schoenstatt's accent on “education through attitudes.” This means that Schoenstatt tends to stress not so much the forms (important though they may be), but the spirit behind the forms. In other words, the cultivation of attitudes is very important, be it such basic virtues as faith, hope, love, patience, loyalty, purity and joy or special elements of Schoenstatt's spirituality such as childlikeness before God, covenant love of Mary or love of the Church. Other attitudes serve

as hallmarks of Schoenstatt's style of education (even more than any one educational “program”): personal love and commitment to each student, seeking a living contact with the inner life of the other, selfless service, showing trust, leading to freedom and initiative, seeking God's will, remembering that I am an instrument of God.

This preference for cultivating attitude over merely prescribing forms comes to light in the way Schoenstatt encourages its members to pray: not through a given slate of prayers (although we have favorites, Ü 91), but by encouraging them to find prayers and spiritual exercises best suited to their individual needs. Another example is Schoenstatt's work with annual mottos. Mottos seek to motivate the year's life in the movement with a reminder of some basic theme, attitude, or attachment (such as the Shrine). It is generally left to the freedom of each group or area to find ways to put it into practice. The benefit of this method is to engage a maximum of free initiative from the members and groups. At the same time, it helps create a very flexible kind of community centered around a common spirit.

In matters such as the liturgy, the pedagogy of attitudes stresses the importance of the underlying values of the liturgy. With regard to the forms of the liturgy, the proper authority of the Church is respected. Schoenstatt would not see its primary contribution in this area to be the reform of the outward liturgy, but rather the constant filling of those forms with the proper spirit.

121 What is the “pedagogy of ideals”?

See *Lumen gentium* 7-10; CCC 543, 2013 (Christian vocation).

The fifth “guiding star” of Schoenstatt's pedagogy is the pedagogy of ideals. It applies the theology of Christian vocation to the specific identity and mission foreseen by God for each person and community. Fr. Ken-tenich liked to challenge his times with the calls:

“Become what you are!” and

“Let me know your great idea!”

Behind this is the twofold function of an ideal: It affirms the unique calling to singular greatness (ideal as mission) while underscoring dynamic growth from the present into the future (ideal as identity).

In Schoenstatt's understanding, the ideal involves both an objective and a subjective side. For instance, there is an objective ideal of the married life

or the priesthood, or of being a man or woman. The more one has command of this “ideal of state,” the more fruitfully one can live one’s state in life (“Become what you are!”). But there is also the unique subjectivity of who I am, what gifts and limitations God has given me and how he concretely inspires and leads me (“Let me know your great idea!”).

In our times it is important to elaborate the subjective side of the ideal. In life we face not only the usual times of apathy and lack of motivation which needs an ideal to urge it on, but modern mass society (Ü 30, 93) tends to stereotype and gloss over the deeply unique features of each person and community. In such a setting, the effort to find the “bedrock” of one’s ideal helps to live one’s life as *the person I am* and *the person God made me to be* – not hidden behind a mask or living as I suppose others want. This gives an invaluable inner compass for decision-making not based on exterior pressures or whims but on inner freedom and who I am in the eyes of God.

Cultivation of ideals is also of social benefit. Being aware of my ideal should help me realize that not everyone is like me, and that the different temperaments and talents of others are essential to the total building up of God’s kingdom (after all, no one person or community can realize the whole Gospel alone). Respect and appreciation for cultural and generational diversity will also benefit; I will not view those who differ from me as inferior or rivals, but as partners. In this area community ideals are especially valuable, for they shed light on the unique accents God allows to rise up in each generation, helping us grasp the immense creativity of God and the complementation of the generations needed for fulfilling God’s mighty plan for our times.

Ideals are, of course, “idealistic.” Without them we would lack the impetus needed to take on the dizzying heights of the Christian vocation. The heroism of the Gospel is beyond reach without a strong desire for the ideals of the Kingdom. But ideals must also relate to reality without becoming tyrannical or disillusioned. This requires *trust in God* and *concrete deeds*. In fact, every pedagogy of ideals must be linked with *concrete efforts to realize the ideal in daily life*, be it in family life, apostolate, work or prayer. Even if one seems to fail more often than succeed, one should not become discouraged. More greatness comes from the concrete striving for what God wants me to be and do than from many “successes” in meaningless or merely self-gratifying activity.

Special applications of the pedagogy of ideals in Schoenstatt include the “law of exemplary cases” (Ü 122) and, especially, the use of the “personal ideal” (Ü 123-126) and “community ideal” (Ü 127).

I22 What is the “law of exemplary cases”?

The “law of exemplary cases” (Latin: *casus praeclarus*) is a special application of the pedagogy of ideals. An exemplary case is a concrete person, community, place, event or project which embodies an ideal. It allows those who come in contact with a good example to experience first-hand aspects of the ideal in a real context. Although reality always falls short of the ideal, having such an embodiment makes it much easier to transmit to others both the ideal and ways in which it can be realized.

For instance, to teach someone about Schoenstatt merely through reading material will transmit something of what it is, but it is nearly impossible to truly grasp it without a living encounter with one of the Shrines, some part of the Schoenstatt Family, or some special event. But as soon as one has been in contact with some exemplary case of Schoenstatt, one intuitively grasps a great deal, certainly much more than through a book alone.

In the same way, Schoenstatt has ideals which it would like to share with the Church, including the aim of an Apostolic World Confederation (Ü 36). The best way to explain this to others and help realize it is to create a small-scale confederation with similar features. In this case, Schoenstatt essentially does this through its own confederative structure – not only through a theory or teaching, but by exemplifying a style, spirituality and structure which can make this ideal a real possibility for the Church.

I23 What is the “personal ideal”?

The personal ideal, or “P.I.,” is the ideal or mission which God gives to each person. Every person has a personal ideal, even if one is not explicitly aware of it. In this sense it is nothing new. Today, however, when it is so much harder to define and assert one’s identity in the face of a much more complex society, it becomes very much an urgent matter to seek out and define the “guiding thought” of God’s plan for me.

Schoenstatt speaks of three definitions of personal ideal. The first is the *philosophical* definition: “God’s unique idea of me which he has carried

from all eternity.” This definition is called philosophical because it looks at the metaphysical connection between me and God (independent of any declaration of faith). The second is the *theological* definition: “The way I am a unique manifestation of the perfections of Christ.” It is called theological because it presupposes my belonging to Christ and my cooperation in the work of salvation. The third is the *psychological* definition: “the fundamental tenor and temper of my soul (which, if correctly cultivated, leads us to the full freedom of the children of God).” As a psychological definition it focuses on the intrinsic features of the soul; instead of looking at the ideal from “above”, it looks at it from “within” myself.

124 How do I find my personal ideal?

How do I discover my P.I.? There are many ways. One is to observe the working of Divine Providence in my life. By reflecting on the way God has led me and the interior direction that it indicates, I may detect a particular purpose which God has for me. Because God has a plan of love for each of us, we know that our personal history will contain clues from God about which mission he has in mind for me. After a certain amount of discernment I may then be able to formulate the great contours or most pronounced feature of this mission, hence putting in words my P.I.

Another way is to follow the more “psychological” path. This involves observing the fundamental nature (tenor and temper) of the soul and discovering its strengths and weaknesses. Such a process can be aided by the study of the four temperaments or some other personality analysis. Still, the main thing is not the discovery that I am a “choleric” or the like, but the ensuing dialog with God about his plan for me given the gifts and limitations now more clearly seen.

Still another way is more intuitive, beginning with a favorite prayer, perhaps, or a great saint or role model who seems to capture everything I long to accomplish. Or again, it can happen that a strong religious experience through a pilgrimage or encounter with a person God sends my way opens my eyes to the world and ideal which God has placed in me.

125 What are the possible forms of a personal ideal?

A personal ideal can take on one or several of many forms. It can be in the *long form* of a descriptive paragraph or prayer. It usually has some kind of

a *short form*, something like a name or motto (e.g. “Tabernacle of Christ,” “Joyful Ambassador of Mary,” “Living Witness in the Service of Others”) which is easy to remember. It may be in the form of a *daily renewal* of a few lines. Or it may take the form of a *symbol* which I feel grasps my mission in life.

126 How does one live the Personal Ideal?

It is a common practice in Schoenstatt to renew one’s P.I. daily and allow it to gradually become “second nature” to me. In the first phase after finding one’s P.I. it can be especially fruitful to choose one’s Particular Examination (Ü 130) to consciously cultivate certain elements of my ideal, making me more attuned to the unique mission God has for me.

Over the years, the P.I. will continue to grow. In particular stages of life it may even seem necessary to reformulate or adjust the ideal on the basis of how God has led me over the years. This can certainly be done, and it can help me appreciate how God guides me over the course of my lifetime.

127 What is a “community ideal”?

In Schoenstatt there is also the practice of finding and living “community ideals.” These are ideals chosen by a group of people who are together for a time or for a lifetime, corresponding to the belief that God does not place any group together at random, but also with a particular mission in mind, even if it is only for a short time.

Some of the most common forms of the community ideal are group names (by Schoenstatt groups), home shrine names (by couples, families, etc.; although formally not a community ideal, the home shrine name often strikes so close to the identity of the family that it becomes, *de facto*, a community ideal), course ideals (by the permanent group structures of the federation and institutes) and branch ideals (such as the “Living Monstrance” ideal of the Schoenstatt Mothers League).

The ways of searching for a community ideal parallel the ways of searching for the personal ideal (Ü 124).

128 Why does Schoenstatt work so much with self-education?

As a movement of renewal, Schoenstatt has always emphasized how essential self-education is to any renewal of Church and world. Without a personal effort to discover oneself and who one is in the eyes of God, to form this self and overcome weaknesses, sins and failings, the action of grace will generally encounter too many obstacles to effectively change the person and, through the person, the Church and world.

Self-education is, of course, only part of the total package of renewal, which includes the work of other educators and the work of God, the Divine Educator. Nonetheless, because God has given us more freedom and opportunity to shape our lives than any other generation before us, it is clear that we must make a genuine effort to grow in the talents needed to use these gifts well.

129 What are some of the practical pedagogical tools which Schoenstatt offers to help our self-education?

Schoenstatt encourages the use of the many helps for self-education which the Church offers to us. These include the deep sources of grace found in regular participation in the Mass and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the support of one's parish community. They also include the insight and vitality of the Church offered in her teaching and in the events and lifestreams of the local, national and universal Church.

Schoenstatt also offers practical pedagogical tools from its own experience to help promote spiritual life and growth. These include the personal and community ideal (Û 123, 127), the particular examination (Û 130), the spiritual daily order (Û 131), the monthly report (Û 132), spiritual reading (Û 133), belonging to a Schoenstatt group, personal and group symbols, and other practices and customs (Û 134).

130 What is the “particular examination”?

One of the tools to help give direction and form to our personal growth and striving for sanctity is the *particular examination* (or P.E.), sometimes called the *special resolution*. This is a method whose roots go back to St. Ignatius of Loyola, who encouraged not only a daily “general examination”

of conscience, but a “particular examination” of one point of choosing where I want to make progress in the spiritual life.

Schoenstatt picked up this practice early on. It was soon accompanied by the “written control,” namely the practice of taking a moment at the end of each day to ask “Did I do it?” and to briefly note “yes,” “no” or “incomplete.” This provided the needed backbone for the resolution to not just remain wishful thinking but to be actually carried out. Fr. Kentenich also gave lessons on the nature of these resolutions: they should be concrete, daily and controllable – not just “I want to be patient,” but as concrete as “I will be patient with my friends when they tease me about my red hair,” and one to which I can give a clear yes-or-no answer when I ask myself “Did I do it” at the end of the day.

This same form has proved to be so effective that it remains essentially unchanged. A frequent way of using it is to review one's P.E. on a monthly basis, often in connection with a monthly confession. One then considers what a next step of spiritual growth would be and seeks a new P.E. (concrete, daily, controllable). Perhaps the old P.E. did not work well, or failed because it was not specific enough; then I may wish to try it again in a different, more concrete form. Or perhaps I noticed it worked very well and that it would benefit me to do it for a second month. All of these are possible scenarios. The main thing is that the P.E. helps keep us focused on spiritual and personal growth, not in generalities, but in real, concrete action.

131 What is the “spiritual daily order”?

Another pedagogical tool which Schoenstatt makes much use of is the *spiritual daily order* (or SDO), sometimes called the *spiritual schedule*. This tool also has roots in the broader tradition of the Church, but was used from the beginning in Schoenstatt to accentuate the need for each person to be so attuned to his own spiritual and personal growth that he would decide for himself which points needed to be on the SDO. The criterium for this selection is not “which religious practice is objectively most important,” but “which religious and other practices, if secured in my daily order, give me the necessary strength and flexibility to live my faith in my state in life.” For one person daily Mass may be so important that it keeps his spiritual life vibrant and supple; for him it belongs on the SDO. For another person the key may be the rosary, or spiritual reading, or 20 minutes of prayer in

the quiet of the morning, or even a healthy breakfast. Whichever point or points are key belong on the SDO. My regular obligations, like the Sunday Mass, may belong on the SDO if I have trouble keeping certain ones, but on the whole the list should not be too long. The P.E. will also normally belong on the SDO.

Crucial to the practice of the spiritual daily order is the written control at the end of the day, for this gives it the “bite” needed to keep us aware of where we need to keep working. It is also a way to overcome forgetfulness. At the end of the month, a well-kept written control gives us a tool to evaluate our spiritual health, especially if the points on the SDO correspond to true lynchpins of my spiritual well-being. In all honesty we will then be able to judge where we need to improve, and the P.E. can be put to work on improving the most urgent items, one month at a time.

It is also a tradition in Schoenstatt to connect one’s striving in the SDO with the shrine and the capital of grace (Ü 74). Hence one often finds at the top of the SDO sheet: “My Contributions to the Capital of Grace of the MTA.”

I 32 What is the monthly report?

The monthly report is another tool designed to help guarantee progress in the spiritual life and in the growth toward sanctity. It consists of a monthly report to a spiritual director or superior on selected points in one’s spiritual striving.

The form varies from community to community. The Institute and Federation members have persons within the community to whom they give their report. In the League, members who give the report normally do so by mentioning the following at one’s monthly confession or in a brief report to one’s spiritual director:

- my Particular Examination and how it went,
- one representative point from my Spiritual Daily Order.

The practice is designed to keep one’s striving from becoming formulaic and is a monthly reminder that sanctity is reached in concrete steps taken one month at a time.

I 33 What role can spiritual reading play?

Schoenstatt also encourages spiritual reading as a tool which can help one grow spiritually. This can be a daily habit or at other intervals such as during a time of adoration. All good Catholic authors are of value, and the love of Mary inspires many to read more about the Blessed Mother. Special merit has been found by many Schoenstatt members in the regular reading of Schoenstatt literature, especially the works of Fr. Kentenich.

I 34 What other practices and customs does Schoenstatt have to help promote spiritual and personal growth?

In its way of working with lifestreams, Schoenstatt has gradually developed many practices and customs which help promote spiritual and personal growth. Some of these include:

- *renewal of the covenant of love* on the 18th of each month, on the anniversary of one’s own covenant, or in a time of special need,
- local traditions with contributions to the *capital of grace*, such as having a jar or basket to collect them in the local Shrine,
- individual, family, group or community *crownings of the MTA*, often with a special intention or as part of a special time of growth,
- being implanted in the *Garden of Mary* (or *Mariengarten*) as a way to discover a deeper sense of community or being a child of Fr. Kentenich (Ü 180),
- the home shrine and personal, family or group traditions which may develop there,
- the Schoenstatt Hour (the custom of many Schoenstatt couples to reserve one hour a week just for themselves as a couple: to talk, to pray, to be in touch with each other).

I 35 What is the goal of Schoenstatt’s pedagogy?

The goal of Schoenstatt’s pedagogy is to *shape life* in fullest accord with God’s plan. Given the unique charisms and mission which God has given Schoenstatt, it also seeks to *realize Schoenstatt’s three aims* (Ü 28), including the formation of the new man and the new community.

Inherent to this pedagogy is the goal of *promoting the all-around growth of the Christian individual and community*. It seeks to help that growth take concrete form in a coherent and practical *Christian lifestyle*. Such a

lifestyle can then increase the possibilities of persons, groups and families to reach the *baptismal call to sanctity*, even canonizable sanctity, in the midst of the world of today.

With regard to society, this pedagogy seeks to assist in *forming a Christian culture and social order* (Ü 136). Because culture has such a profound power to form and educate the members and groups of a society, it is the Church's interest to shape it in the image of Christ. Such a process of growth and permeation could be greatly aided by applying the five guiding stars (Ü 99). Seen from this perspective, the ideal resulting culture would then integrate all the essential elements of the Christian social order, and still maintain an open and effective dialog with all the diverse persons and positions in our modern pluralistic society.

136 How can one foster a Christian culture?

See *Gaudium et spes* 53-62; Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* 18-20; John Paul II: Audience with the Schoenstatt Movement, 1985, 5; encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, May 1, 1991, 50-51; Letter to Artists, April 4, 1999; Benedict XVI, *The Europe of Benedict: In the Crisis of Cultures* (2005).

Schoenstatt's spirituality and pedagogy offer perspectives for forming a Christian culture. Its experience as a movement and a family of communities also helps to feel how values and identity can be fostered in the fluidity and pluralism of the modern world.

Here are contours of how the development of a genuine Christian culture can look (these steps will often overlap and take place simultaneously):

1. Culture is always rooted in concrete *experiences* – of individuals, communities, social groups and nations. One therefore takes note of the broad spectrum of experiences being made by groups and subgroups in society and also seeks to cultivate genuine Christian experiences.

2. From experience one must progress to concrete *attachments*, binding the individual and groups to persons, places, things, ideas and values (see attachment pedagogy, Ü 100-101). This creates a basis for shared identity, common growth and history. Working with *lifestreams* (see movement pedagogy, Ü 105) is another helpful method.

3. From these basic attachments one tries to foster a comprehensive *organism of attachments* (Ü 102). This gives both individuals and the various social groupings an overall way of relating to one another and to a larger identity and mission. A broader cultural appreciation for persons,

places, things, ideas, values, etc. results.

4. As this nascent culture awakens to greater self-awareness, it actively cultivates *a world of values, convictions and customs*. In dialogue with God and nature, it seeks ways to *express its inner identity* through such forms as language and vocabulary, gestures and rituals, art and symbols. It enters the dialog of journalism, politics, media and fashion and should become more and more evident in literature, music, art, science, ethics, law and popular piety. The developing set of traditions and ideals creates a distinct mentality and lifestyle.

5. Finally, this world of values, convictions and customs matures to totally permeate all areas of life. Hence, *mature culture* is attained, *with a distinct identity, dynamic and soul*.

To attain the goal of a genuinely Christian culture, the process of experience, attachment, etc. must be in constant touch with vibrant faith and the life of the Church, integrating religious experience and attachments and Gospel values and ideals.