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Fr. Joseph Kentenich

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Excerpts from

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Conferences on Education, 1931

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INTRODUCTION

The following texts¹ are taken from talks given by Fr. Kentenich at a conference on education held in Schoenstatt, Germany in 1931. Most of the educators were women and teachers, and were engaged in the education of girls. As a result, much of the conference focuses on the formation of girls. However, most of the principles apply to boys as well.

In terms of the educational development of the person, one could say that these talks are concerned with the “second phase of life” (whereby infancy and childhood are the “first phase”). Meant are the pre-teen and especially the teenage years, with some overlap into the early 20s. This transition from parental predominance to self-initiative and self-engaged personality formation is quite distinctive, though many of the principles discussed here obviously have a broader application to all stages of life.

The texts are only a small fraction of the larger conference, but have been chosen to give an overview of the main thrust of the conference as a whole and key excerpts covering the main topics. To assist those who wish to compare the translation with the original German, page numbers of “Ethos und Ideal in der Erziehung” are given in braces { }.

J.N. December 2007

¹ Excerpts from Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Ethos und Ideal in der Erziehung*, educational conferences in 1931 (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1972). For the purposes of this text, parts which can be applied equally to boys and girls have often been translated with the general term “youth.”

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Introductory Remarks

{19} This year is the first time that we are holding the annual conferences on education in a larger format². The “fault” must lie with those who have been coming, year after year, for about a decade, in order to gain clear direction for the spiritual battle in our modern times. What has urged them to help break the previous limits of our meeting is probably the awareness that we are a strong community of destiny, that we bear a deep-seated responsibility for our fellow teachers. (...)

{23} What, in more precise terms, *is the topic of our conference?*

I have thought: We will place in the middle-point *the spiritual guidance and formation of our youth*. By youth I will mean our girls from about their 12th to 13th year to their 20th year. (...)

Comment on the Times

{36} We probably all sense that we are in a great era of history. You must not think of it as mere rhetoric to say that today’s times are setting the stage for centuries, perhaps even for millennia to come. How the dice fall today could be how they will remain for centuries.

We are living in times which are tumultuous to the marrow. The only thing we do not know is whether a new time is already dawning, or if we are in the evening or at the midnight hour of the old, profoundly tumultuous transition of the world and times.

If we now quickly and fleetingly touch on the features of the history of the world and times in the different eras, we generally find

² Fr. Kentenich had held conferences or workshops on education as early as 1924 (first course on spiritual direction). These gatherings were smaller in size and directed separately to the Federation of Priests and the Federation of Women. In time, those who did not belong to the Schoenstatt Movement became interested and the format was expanded. The 1931 conference on education was the first one where non-Schoenstatt members made up a significant portion of the audience.

three epochs which come one after another, each posing different challenges to true and genuine leaders and educators.

First, we see that some times are more intellectually animated³. In such *intellectually animated times*, educators can also be those who have only strived for and attained an average intellectual proficiency.

Such intellectually animated times are generally followed by times which are *habit-bound*⁴. And in such epochs educators and leaders tend to be functionaries.

Such more tradition- or habit-bound times are then followed by *times of intellectual anarchy*. These are the times in which we live today, a time of disintegration in all aspects of life. And in such times it is likely that only the *prophet* can be a leader.

{37} *Today these eras, these epochs of time are wrestling [for the upper hand] in individual souls. The epochs of time are also wrestling [for the upper hand] in whole classes of people.* And so you find confirmation of the fact that in the same place and in the same system we may find some educators of the functionary mold, and others who have the features of the prophet. Indeed, even in our very selves the ideal of the prophet wrestles with the ideal of the functionary. (...)

Comment on the Youth

{49} We have tried to bring our thoughts and interests into focus with the question: How do we grasp, shape and form the religiously motivated youth, or at least those who are open to religious motivation, and lead them into the youthful kingdom of the children of God?

The question “How do we educate our youth?” is too broad. The question “How do we grasp, understand, shape and mold the religiously motivated youth, or at least those who are open to a religious motivation, and lead them into a youthful kingdom of the children of God?” is much more focused. But I think we must narrow our topic still further in order to get a truly clear view of things. Towards this

³ German: *geistbeseelt*, that is, with a strong interior purpose or spirit, with an inner character or “soul.”

⁴ German: *gewohnheitsmässig gebunden*, that is, kept on its course by force of habit or tradition.

end let me suggest the following focus: *the general principles of a modern EDUCATION of youth*⁵.

Before we go to the heart of the matter, before we try to flesh out final answers, we want to first take these two words a little bit more into our hands: *general principles* and *a modern EDUCATION of youth*.

1. A Modern EDUCATION of Youth

{50} EDUCATION of youth! We are not primarily concerned here with youth psychology. I will largely presuppose that you know this already. I will only refer to it as much as it helps support our considerations about EDUCATION. Nor am I even thinking so much about the general pedagogy of youth. Here, too, I will only mention the one or the other sound insight which helps support our topic. Our focus is therefore grace-guided formation – not pedagogy, not philosophy, not psychology.

The Modern Condition

A *modern* EDUCATION of youth! What do I mean when I stress the word “modern”? We want to concern ourselves with the youth as it exists today, not the way it once was. That is often a shortcoming of our Catholic pastoral practice, asceticism, and pedagogy – we try too often to deal with people who no longer exist. We go about our pastoral work as if we were still working with some past generation. This may also explain why Catholicism’s natural conservative tendency is gradually showing signs of rigidity and unbendingness. Still: The Church has the commission to go into the whole world and teach all nations, all times, all places! – and all generations! Through it, the Church has received the commission to reach out and shape man as he exists today—with the modern structure of his soul – with

⁵ *Aszese* is being translated here with “EDUCATION” (in small caps). This is admittedly an interpretation, since the usual translation of *Aszese* would be asceticism or spirituality. But in the vocabulary of Fr. Kentenich, *Aszese* is not just “asceticism” in the sense of spiritual discipline. It has to do with the formation of the whole person under the influence of grace and our active cooperation. Hence, “EDUCATION” might also be rendered “grace-filled formation.”

its current troubles, battles, and {51} inhibitions.

If I can and may sketch out a few traits and features of the soul of modern youth, then I suppose I can mention two realities in the same breath:

- ! inner insecurity (even while exteriorly very independent),
- ! a constantly growing interior sense of inferiority.

a. Facing Inner Insecurity and Homelessness

The reason for this *inner insecurity even as one’s exterior independence grows* (...) is to be found in the complete *homelessness* of modern youth.

By homelessness I do not mean the lack of a place to live. Today there are many young women who have a place to live but have nonetheless become homeless into the deepest roots of their being.

Perhaps we are prone to forget all too easily and all too quickly how young women of today have been transported practically overnight into a world completely different from that of the past. Just think of how the rhythm of physical and psychological growth has essentially changed from what it was in the past. At the end of her school years, the young woman of today is often thrown undernourished or poorly nourished into the modern {52} struggle for existence. There she must use all her energy and agility; if not, her strengths will be brutally exploited and manipulated to the very last. She must fight for her very existence. And all the while she is exposed to the modern working world which knows how to suffocate the strong need of the young woman’s heart for life and love. You see, this too is homelessness, because from the very outset a new world opens up to the young woman, a new world in which she will and can not feel at home for a very long time.

Or take *today’s family life*. It is put down in its very essence. In end effect it has been robbed of community spirit, of the value which helps it build community. In the past a young woman went directly, after appropriate preparation, from her parental family to her own family. But today? When can she found her own family? And even while still at home with her parents, the workplace gives her no real affirmation. There everything is only work. Moreover, the indepen-

dence she experiences in the outside world is often not understood by her parents, so that even in the one place where she, by right, has a home, she no longer feels at home. We could probably say something similar {53} about social life. The forms, strongly tied to tradition, which helped support the genuine feminine values in the past, have been pushed aside, so that the young woman, the modern woman, is left hanging without any protection from the desires and lusts of the opposite sex. (....)

b. Sense of Inferiority

If we now take the term “modern EDUCATION of youth” into our hands again and ask what has substantially changed in the modern young woman as opposed to the past, then I can repeat the word: it is a strong *sense of inferiority*. And where does this sense of inferiority come from? In part from interior insecurity and homelessness, but also in part from the unfavorable public opinion which has been formed and created by modern materialism and sensualism.

Materialism as a fundamental attitude—We can differentiate between materialism as an action and as an attitude. Either way it has little sensitivity for the specifically feminine values: for things that are small, for things that go deep, for giving things a soul. The only thing that counts is what can be measured, numbered, counted. {54} You see, little real attention is paid by modern public opinion to truly feminine values.

Modern sensualism seeks to specifically employ the more animal side of feminine attractiveness as a method for advertising. You probably know this better than I do from what you see in our modern magazines and newspapers. In modern fashions you can sense how this two-pronged stream of materialism and sensualism makes the world of girls and women still more helpless. The modern young woman feels helpless and inferior in the face of how little she is truly valued by society for who she really is and what she really loves. This also explains why young women today, on the one hand, have a strong urge and drive to conquer specifically masculine values (hence the drive of women today to become more like men) and, on the other hand, why they have the drive to stress their femininity in

such unbalanced ways. (....)

2. General Principles

{104} We have probably devoted enough time to the term “modern EDUCATION of youth.” So that our standpoint is still more unified and clear, perhaps I can also devote a few words to the term “*general principles*.” You can, if you like, insert other words, like “fundamental questions” of a modern EDUCATION of youth. But do you then know what it means? (....)

{106} [When I speak of general principles,] you must not expect me to constantly give specific examples. The time is too short for that. Nor does it do much good nowadays. For if I solve an individual case but you do not grasp the final principles, you will never gain the skills needed to handle constantly changing situations with certainty and accuracy. Hence, we are dealing with a teaching about general principles, not a collection of individual cases.

{107} Kerschensteiner once defined the aim of education as an “excitability of the youth.” Yes, if we look back over recent years we must confess that gigantic events have excited our youth, our youth leaders, our adults. Other educational conferences have caused us great excitement, but also left us very uncertain. Conferences as we need them today must place much more emphasis on a clear line of insight and not send us home in a cloud of uncertainty. They must rather work out—in the face of all uncertainty about individual questions—the certain, sound, irrefutably clear foundations so that we can take something irrefutably certain and sound back home. And there must be {108} such clear principles, whether in nature or grace, whether we dare to talk about a psychology of the supernatural or of the natural world.

[In a recent conference] in Berlin, a Protestant professor presented his thoughts on the education of boys and young men. His theme always culminated in—as he put it—the “dubiousness” of educational norms. Dubious is—in his estimation—the earthbound foundations of each biblical truth. Even what the Bible says is open to question. There you have in a nutshell what I want to resist: Do not always teach “exciting” and “popular” topics, or how issues are “dubious”!

Honesty is needed, but in the end there must also be clarity. In the realm of nature and grace we must therefore penetrate to the final generally valid truths.

All of this sounds in our ears when we hear the word “general principles” or “fundamental issues of a modern EDUCATION of youth.” With that I think we have reached a clear view of the question facing us and are more one heart and soul in a great unified perspective. We can now proceed to present these general principles.

Which chapters must be included?

I want to express myself in modern fashion, because these things make a greater impact when presented with a modern slant and because we may be able to paint a clearer picture using the modern perspective, giving more adequate answers.

Three Chapters

{109} The new leader of the Prussian Center Party was recently sworn in and gave his inaugural speech. In it he mentioned his two predecessors and stressed how the one had been outstanding as a politician of clear and unswerving vision, the other as a man of unflagging tactical skill. And both had fulfilled their duties with unbending consistency.

You see, the general principles of the modern EDUCATION of youth must include three chapters:

1. clear vision,
2. tactics,
3. and consistency.

We want to go into these thoughts and values in greater detail. Because we are talking about *general* principles, one must be satisfied with broad strokes and lines of thought. They will not be fleshed out in all their detail. As a result, I must keep the chapters brief—perhaps too brief for those of you who are hearing such thoughts for the first time.

CHAPTER TWO: A CLEAR VISION

The first chapter bears the title “A Clear Vision.” In education we must be guided by *a great, clear vision*. While true of all education, it is especially true of the education of youth.

What belongs to such a vision? There are two dimensions which are anchored respectively in the educator and in the youth:

! The vision of the educator is *motherliness*¹.

! In the young person it is the *ideal*.

This gives you the totality of educational wisdom and practice “on a thumbnail.” Wherever these two dimensions of

fatherliness/motherliness

and ideal

are creatively {110} united—be it in a community ideal or a personal ideal— (...) we will find real, honest-to-goodness educators; educators who are sure-footed, able to form and adapt to the modern soul, and imbued with deep-seated, deeply Catholic perennial principles. (...)

A. Priestly Fatherliness and Motherliness

{111} I have already mentioned to you the two major conferences in Marburg and Berlin. Both weighed in on the question of true and genuine leadership. In Marburg the Catholic priesthood was willfully excluded as a recognized form of leading our people. That is at least what the socialist speaker claimed. He called Catholic priests not leaders of the people but great seducers of the people. In Berlin Professor Goldbeck, a non-Catholic, spoke on the same topic, but focused on the psychology of leadership. He summed up his lifelong scholarship and experience using the words: *The essence of true*

¹ Because this conference was held for primarily women teachers, the main thrust is for women (i.e. motherliness), although at other points in his life Fr. Kentenich made it quite clear that the principles also apply to men (fatherliness).

leadership is priestly fatherliness.

It is not my task {112} to explain to you in all detail what he meant by “priestly fatherliness.” I merely want to apply it to how women are leaders. Hence, what is the essence of true feminine leadership? Remember, to be a teacher means to be a leader! *Mutatis mutandis* [with the necessary changes], the answer is

priestly motherliness

(in contrast to priestly fatherliness).

Now let us take these two words “in our hands”—priestly and motherliness. What is meant here by “priestly”? Spoken by Professor Goldbeck it certainly does not mean the spirit of ordained priesthood. For that is not what he was talking about.

Every leader, be he political or anti-Catholic [or any other kind], must bring to bear in himself the fundamental features of true leadership. A man must therefore be in possession of priestly fatherliness, a woman must be in possession of priestly motherliness as the fundamental attitude. You can sense that the term “priestly” is not being used here in the sense of ordained priesthood.

What does Professor Goldbeck want to say? He wants to say that a true and genuine leader must come from another world—a world whose aims and foundations are other-worldly, are metaphysical. The true and genuine leader must stand on rock-solid ground. It does not have to be religion; but there must be ultimate metaphysical truths in which the true and genuine leader is at home.

From this you can immediately deduce that youth leaders who are themselves still youth {113} can never completely be this kind of leader. Why not? Because they are not yet sufficiently at home in this supernatural, other-worldly, metaphysical world. Their whole being cannot, as yet, be carved as if out of stone. A true and genuine leader must have this quality if he is going to be able to fulfill his task. We as Catholics can, of course, quite easily apply this thought to our supernatural world, especially in the area of religious education.

Where must the true religious leader be at home? He must come from an other-worldly, supernatural world. The true religious educator must be entirely at home in a supernatural, other-worldly world,

in the world of faith. Every fiber of his being must be anchored there. It is the source of the strength he needs to stand firm like the Rock of Gibraltar. (...)

{114} When we take the entire complex of this question and how it affects life, and trace it back to final laws [in the kingdom of God], we find that there are two laws at work here.

The first law: *the law of transference.*

The second law: *the law of letting go*².

When we speak of these two laws, our focus turns to the student, the one being educated. In this relationship I am the leader, I with my priestly motherliness, and the one I lead is my student.

If you want to verify whether these laws are true, you will do best to reflect on your own experience. What is it that ultimately binds the student to the educator? And what is it that must ultimately regulate this bond to us as educators? It is these two laws.

The law of transference binds; the law of letting go loosens this bond in the interests of a Higher Third—in our Christian religious setting: God. The law of letting go loosens the inner attachment to the educator and binds and attaches the entire interior of the person to the final pole of our being, to {115} the final content of our being—to God. This is the more scientific way of saying it.

The Need to Be Sheltered

Perhaps we should reach a little more deeply into our own lives and into our own spiritual growth. In that case I must ask: In your own life have you ever really known a genuine spiritual mother? Or if you want to apply the same thing to a man: Have you ever really known a man who has truly radiated priestly fatherliness to you? If you can say ‘yes,’ then, humanly speaking, blessed are you! Anyone who has not had that, has not had that {116} in one form or the other, is to some degree—we can say from the very outset—a spiritual cripple. Normally, every human person must have had at one time or

² The “law of letting go” is in many regards the same as what Fr. Kentenich later coined the “law of transmission.” For an explanation of the latter, see J. Niehaus, *The 31st of May* (Waukesha, 1995), p. 157-167.

another during his life the experience of a grace-filled educator—man or woman—a spiritual mother or a spiritual father.

You must not take these expressions the wrong way. Do you know what, on the deepest level, urges a human being—be it a man or a woman—to such an educator personality and attaches them to him or her? It is not some inclination to submissiveness. Not at all. Psychologically that would be the wrong answer. It is the *need to be sheltered*. That is just a part of every human being, boys as well as girls, even adults of both sexes. This need to be sheltered is simply part and parcel of every human being.

In normal development, at the onset of puberty the child can no longer find adequate satisfaction for this need for shelteredness in his or her natural parents. This is normal for boys; for girls the break in this area is less pronounced. But nowadays we must admit that there are innumerable girls whose need to be sheltered has never been satisfied, never in normal family life. The other way we have said this is: Today there are countless girls—for now we will leave the boys out of it—who have never truly been a child in their lives, a child in the deepest and truest sense of the word. In practical terms: The need to be sheltered has never been fully satisfied.

The Law of Transference

Now come the two laws. First *the law of transference*.

Every soul instinctively seeks a strong support, {117} a person who stands as if carved out of stone, but who is likewise gentle and able to adapt. The soul can only entrust its need to be sheltered, only connect and attach [with a human “You”] where these two features are found! [It needs] the priestly strength which comes from a world beyond and, at the same time, the fatherly or motherly person.

The law of transference.

What is transferred? Our need to be sheltered lets go of the natural parents and is transferred to the spiritual parents, to a spiritual father or a spiritual mother. Applied to us: It is transferred to me as the priestly mother of those entrusted to my care.

You see, this is true leadership. If this interior bond is not there, if it is only an exterior bond, a deeper education is not possible. If we

do not attain this interior bond, we cannot think of accomplishing true education. Not even in religious life, for instance, in the work of a superior. A superior must have this quality of leadership, must develop a priestly motherliness. If she does not do this, she might very well have exterior authority, but the interior bond will not develop.

You see, this applies wherever we work as educators. If the interior bond is lacking, we can forget about succeeding as educators. We might be able to bend bodies to do our will; we might be able to get those in our care to mimic the right thing, but true education is not possible. True education is only possible to the extent that the interior bond develops.

{118} We are not talking here about something that can be measured. It cannot be dictated by the paragraphs of a law. It is not something I can learn by cramming for a big test. No, these are mysterious threads that weave together and unite. From this too you may conclude: If I really want to be an educator, a leader, how firm my personality must be! How much I need a strong personality! Otherwise the need to be sheltered, the drive for shelteredness [in the other] will not be able to connect. If I myself am a wet washrag, if I myself am someone people can walk all over, I can crack the whip all I want on the outside, but interiorly no true education will be possible.

Please do not overlook the fact that strong metaphysical shelteredness and security *alone* will not do the job. There must *also* be motherliness or fatherliness. But also the strength. For if there is only kindness and this kindness becomes like a wet washrag, it will have no strength. Then you can do what you want, but you will never generate a sense of shelteredness. And the law of transference will never take hold in the long run. (...)

The Law of Letting Go

{119} That is the law of transference. What is transferred? The sense of being sheltered, the inclination and need to be sheltered is transferred from the natural parents to the other, the supernatural, the spiritual parents. But then there must also be

{120} *the law of letting go*

What does this mean? When the finest fibers of the soul are personally attached, then the law of letting go begins to go to work of its own accord in the healthy, normal development of the one entrusted to my care. In other words: The law of letting go must slowly and organically unfold in favor of [the attachment to] God; in favor of the personal ideal and community ideal.

Now you must not misunderstand me. The things which I portray here on the ideal plane are in reality so delicate that one must be doubly and triply cautious to avoid misunderstanding them. The way that the education of girls takes place today, one would think that we should begin right away with the law of letting go! But that is precisely the wrong thing to do. I urgently warn against it if someone does not really know how it is done!

A man from a religious community recently told me this story: He entered the novitiate and tried—because he needed it—to connect more with his novice master. The novice master told him brusquely, “What’s gotten into you? We’re not married!” The man who told me this was already old, but the tears still came to his eyes. In that moment the entire fate of his life was wasted.

You must never manhandle these things. I am telling you the way things are on the ideal plane. Unfortunately things rarely are this way in real life; many lay people and religious are sick in their souls because these laws have not been clearly seen or lived. Therefore I repeat my urgent warning against [a malpractice of] this process of detachment. (....)

{121} Do you know why one must be so careful? Perhaps I can go a little more deeply into practical daily life and say to you: This extremely delicate relationship as a child, for that is ultimately what it is—an extremely delicate relationship as a child toward spiritual parents (the terminology may be somewhat unfamiliar to you)—has two good and great advantages, advantages for which there is no substitute. I speak now entirely from the psychological point of view and momentarily ignore the supernatural point of view. What are these two advantages for which there is no substitute? {122} Allow me to use the word “child” or “student.”

The First Advantage

First: A child or student who has truly tasted the parental principle absorbs an entire way of looking at the world through the personality of the educator.

Do not underestimate this at all! I guarantee you: When you, as an educator, become a true spiritual mother to your children, you preserve your children from a great number of difficulties in faith and moral crises. Why? Because all such difficulties are resolved in the child through your personality.

You must not think that this is something erotic or sexual. Not in the least. It is the most healthy thing we can give. In fact, there is no substitute for this ingredient if a girl is to grow up in a healthy way. From this you can conclude: The less they experience such things in life, the less healthy they will be.

Of course you must not forget that such a childlike relationship—when such an attachment, a God-willed attachment, develops in the soul—will include an incredible amount of suffering. I say: It includes a great suffering, especially when we are dealing with very religious personalities. For instance, the fear that “the Heavenly Father doesn’t love me any more!” might develop in a time when our relationship has a hard time. Or, the Blessed Mother “isn’t good to me any more.” These are such delicate laws; whoever does not see and experience them has no inkling of how deep this life process is. You see, this transmission from the spiritual parent to the supernatural reality is something so great that we must use special care in order to assure that this extraordinarily delicate, interior, spiritual attachment one day becomes reality. (....)

That is the first great advantage—Through the educator the student sees the whole world.

The Second Advantage

Second: The student always feels sheltered in the person of the educator. In fact, if I may connect to the final truth: He or she feels this shelteredness for a whole lifetime. Even after the death of the educator it solves all riddles; even after death the student feels sheltered by the educator.

Because of this let me tell you again: Be as careful as you can with the process of letting go! If we are not clear on this, woe for what we can destroy in the process! Perhaps I can also say, however, that an educator can be a spiritual mother or spiritual father for many spiritual children. It is a great mistake if you think that spiritual childhood and parenthood demand vast amounts of time and being together. That would be incorrect. To be sure, there are times we must spend time together, if for no other reason than to make these delicate interior connections. But the time comes for each of us when this need for exterior {124} togetherness is past. Then I, as a child, already feel sheltered in the awareness: I have spiritual parents. (...)

B. Ideals

{182} The great vision which we have discussed so far is a two-fold one: the vision of the educator as a priestly mother [or father] and the vision of the student. This vision is the ideal. (...)

There are at least three trains of thought that we would have to pursue here:

1. Some general considerations about ideals.
2. The application of the principles pertaining to the ideals of the world of youth.
3. The application of these principles to the new teaching plans as we have them in the elementary schools.

In reality this would be more than enough material for another conference. Brace yourselves for another “cloudburst” of ideas. But I want to try, at least at the beginning, to speak more slowly, until you have a chance to listen your way into this unfamiliar material. Therefore, first of all:

1. General Considerations

a. Methods

I want to give this part the title: *The method and importance of searching for ideals and education via ideals*. Here two methods can be mentioned:

{183} the first, a more dogmatic-logical one,

and the second, a more dogmatic-psychological one.

The Dogmatic-Logical Method

Let me first illustrate this method to you with an example. This might help us reach our goal more quickly and surely. Suppose that I want to become a teacher. Then I think about all the values which belong, objectively speaking, to being a Catholic teacher. For instance, I might analyze: A Catholic teacher must have this and that trait, this and that basic inclination. What have I just done? I have used the dogmatic-logical method. This is the dogmatic-logical way of looking for an ideal.

We now turn to education via ideals. In this case the *ceterum censeo*³ I would let resonate with at the end of each talk [I hear] and each meditation the general aim I have in mind. [For instance,] “A genuine teacher must be this or that, have such and such a basic attitude.” If my assigned task is to educate candidates for the religious life, then I must recall this objective goal again and again.

So that you understand better, let me take a simple example from nature. Let’s say that I do not understand much about gardening, but I know that a plant growing in this or that place will need, more or less, a certain combination of nutrients. But I don’t know the exact formula. What do I do? I bring all kinds of fertilizers and heap them around my plant. My presupposition is that from all these nutrients the plant will absorb that which it needs the most, that which it needs to grow... Which method did we just use? {184} The dogmatic-logical way of searching for and educating with ideals. It is the normal way which is used in education if one is even moderately interested in education via ideals. This is also generally the way young religious are formed if there is any sense at all for a reasonable and organic approach. The *ceterum censeo* is this: If I want to become a real teacher or sister or this or that, then I must strive for this and that, for this and that are part of being a perfect sister or a saint.

³ My ceaseless concern. The Latin phrase (“And furthermore, I believe”) is the beginning of the invariable conclusion to the ancient Roman Senator Cato’s every speech: “And furthermore, I believe that Carthage should be destroyed.”

The Dogmatic-Psychological Method

Let me use the same image of a plant, but this time I am an expert in raising plants. I know the plant's needs and its preferred nutrients. I know what it needs most right now. Before me are the plant and all the nutrients, all well-known to me. What do I do now? I don't take the whole jumble of fertilizers, but only this or that element, for I know that this is the one the plant needs right now.

Which method have I just applied? Also a dogmatic one, that is, also an objective one. But at the same time it is also psychological: a *dogmatic-psychological* method. I have adapted to the momentary need. Let us stay with the example of young religious. I keep somewhere in the back of my head the objective ideal which is the ultimate goal. We really need to work a lot with the back of our head. The "back of our head" needs to be quite large, for then we can let just the right thing step forward at just the right time.

Do you see the difference? In the latter case I am very {185} objective in my plans and orientation. But the novices don't need to know that all at once. In their organic development they do not yet have a sense for the full ideal, but only for a little part of the ideal. Therefore: Why confuse it with so much other stuff?! That only causes fatigue and does not make us happy or joyful.

That would be the second way, the dogmatic-psychological one.

Motives for Further Thought

These are thoughts which we should integrate into our practical everyday life. Please do this on your own. Ask yourselves: Have I really been educating with an aim in mind? The question is perfectly legitimate. For the most part you will probably have to admit, "No, I have not been doing that. If I myself do not have an objective ideal, how can I have one for others?"

Secondly, if you have been maintaining an ideal in education, think about whether or not you should gradually change from the dogmatic-logical way to the dogmatic-psychological way. This presupposes, of course, a sensitivity for the processes involved, and a constant contact with the student. Otherwise I won't have any idea of what is presently going on. This explains why so much of what we

do in all of our educational work is wasted. We cast about with so many ideas, but the young people are not capable and mature enough to take it all in. If we would do it at the appropriate time, then you would see how relatively little effort it takes to reach the goal.

These general observations about education naturally also apply to our pastoral work and to the talks we give. A genuine talk always tries to establish contact first. If I do not find myself, nor manage to lead the others who are listening, I may have offered a great deal of material, but it {186} will not be fruitful. I may bear fruit later some day, but probably never.

b. Importance

That is the first train of thought about the method of looking for and educating with ideals. Now comes the second:

The importance of searching for ideals and education via ideals. Here I need to preface my thoughts with the reminder that we can distinguish between:

- 1) the ideal of a particular person, i.e. the personal ideal, and
- 2) the ideal of a whole community, for instance: those of us gathered here today. Now, of course, we are only a randomly formed and temporary group, but if we would say together, then we would need some kind of ideal. We call it a "community ideal."

If I may say something about the importance of the ideal, then it will naturally fall into these two categories: the importance of the personal ideal and the importance of the community ideal.

The Importance of the Personal Ideal

First of all, from the viewpoint of psychology I can stress that the entire meaning of the years of adolescent maturing is nothing other than the development of the personal ideal. The terminology may not be familiar, but the fact is clearly true. To repeat: The entire meaning of the teenage years and the teenage difficulties is the forming and shaping of one's personal ideal. The teenage crisis is essentially resolved when the youthful soul discovers its personal ideal. Modern psychology likes to use a different word to describe the same thing:

the “royal self”⁴.

{187} In the second part of our outline, when we talk about the tactical approach, when I discuss with you the laws of tactics, I will show you how in fact all the ferment and unrest in the young person is ultimately a search for one thing: out of the countless possible “I”s which awaken in the adolescent crisis, to discover and shape the “royal self.”

“Each one has an image
of what he should become.
Until that image is attained
his peace cannot be won.”

It is the grasp and discernment—from all possible “I”s—of the one true royal “I.”

Now do not forget this law of nature: when new life is on its way (at least in the realm of consciousness) it is typically borne in silence, in solitude, in lonely silence and silent solitude. The teenager’s seeking and searching for the many “I”s and the royal “I,” to the extent that this development happens with some consciousness, therefore normally happens under the cover of a very great privacy.

From this, too, you can conclude how crucial the *pedagogy of trust* is. If the youthful soul no longer opens itself up to me, then I cannot know what is growing; I cannot know in which direction the forming and shaping of the “royal self” is going. Hence, we must emphasize the pedagogy of trust again and again. Better to be a little lax with discipline for a while than {188} to risk losing the trust, at least in the teenage years. Later on, when the personality is more mature, it is not so prone to bleeding and bleeding to death in its isolation.

Perhaps this little bit is enough. It helps you to see clearly how important the personal ideal and education via ideals is. (....)

⁴ The concept of the *Königs-Ich* as developed by Eduard Spranger. See *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig, 1924).

The Importance of the Community Ideal

This would be a fleeting word about the importance of the personal ideal, which may not be new to you. But something which could be new to you is the theory and practice of educating with community ideals. There we would do well to work our way into the topic slowly. (....)

{190} The community ideal is quite important. If you dig a little deeper, you find the *psychological reason* for this. It is the radical shift in culture in which we find ourselves. Here, too, we must sadly admit that in education and pastoral work we often keep working as if there were still a common Catholic mentality, as if this radical shift in culture had not taken place. You see, we suppose something that no longer exists. And as long as we do, we will speak into the void and hear nothing back. What we have to do is along these lines: Seriously invest our every effort into the formation of a community atmosphere, a community ideal, a common mentality. Be aware that not everything is found in our old Catholic manuals. There every lesson ends with a resolution. This works as long as there is a common mentality. But when this is not present, these resolutions destroy the formation of such a mentality.

What have we lost? Through the radical shift in culture we have lost the community soul. And the {191} way the community soul expresses itself is through the community ideal.

Am I talking in riddles? Consider the matter from a different perspective. If I say that we are going through a radical shift in culture, then what I mean is this: What we had in the middle ages – this specific Catholic mentality in public and private life – is no longer there. Just listen to how differently we must approach things, depending on which situation prevails. Imagine a family living as an enclave unto itself. Let me exaggerate the situation for the purposes of illustration. Father and mother are completely Catholic. A wholly Christian spirit permeates the family. With the parents, the children isolate themselves from the world around them. The children do not play with other children. What situation do we have? A family in which a pronounced Catholic mentality is at work. This is like the attitude that was at work in the middle ages, in mediaeval Europe.

This was the attitude. Now suppose I belong to this family. What do father and mother have to do to help me become Christian through and through? Actually, not much. They only have to make sure that I absorb the atmosphere that permeates the little family, then in time I will certainly become a true Christians and Catholic, easily and surely absorbing this Christian, Catholic mentality.

Pedagogically speaking, we say that in this case *the Christian ideal of life works functionally*⁵. What do I mean? The organism simply functions. I enter the organism and am immediately integrated as a functional {192} part of the organism. In such a family the mother can simply say, “Children, today is a feastday!” or “Now we are in the season of Pentecost!” and it has no ill side-effects, because the basic attitude is specifically Catholic.

Another example: Suppose you have a family like so many are today. They are more or less Christian and Catholic. But in general they are also swept along by the spirit of the times. How can I make sure that the individual members of the family gain a Christian, Catholic mentality? The answer: They must see the *Christian ideal of life as a task*. I must make the Christian ideal of life come alive again and again in the mind’s eye of each family member and [encourage them to] strive to attain it. In this way the ideal which stands before us as a task gradually becomes a functional part of our lives.

Or take our schools, for instance, our elementary schools. Do all the children come with a clear, specific Catholic mentality? That may still be true here and there in the rural areas. But by and large it is no longer the case.

If we therefore want to educate in a way which does justice to our times, we must have clear knowledge that *we face a radical shift in culture*. (....)

{193} So, what do our schools need nowadays? Something like a “class ideal,” a “school ideal.” And how can we make sure that this ideal really forms the souls of the children as a community? By making sure the ideal is filled with meaning again and again. One

⁵ As opposed to consciously.

way or another, everything that we say to the children must flow back into, flow out into, flow back out of this ideal. The children may forget the individual points – even we forget them – but the educational values which we transmitted in each moment and situation will then reach the root of the soul. This creates and shapes a mentality. (....)

{194} The principles I will still discuss will need to be applied to the forming and shaping and education of new communities under an ideal. In that case our *ceterum censeo* must be: Center everything in the ideal, in the ideal as an expression of the community soul. And if I do my job at least halfway right, if the ideal which I perceive as a task gradually becomes part of the routine functioning of the organization, what effect can we expect? Something like this: New members will be so immediately enveloped, penetrated, and showered by this community spirit that they will be naturally drawn in. This really ought to be the way we educate in all situations, to the extent we are psychologically able. Of course, God can work a miracle and return us to the community atmosphere of the past. But we must not be dependent on this. To the extent that it depends on us, we must strive to educate according to these laws and insights. (....)

{195} That completes the first train of thought: some general considerations about the method of looking for and the significance of looking for and educating with ideals.

2. Application of the Principles to Youth Work

Now comes a second train of thought. At this point we really ought to *apply these principles* to some ideal. If our Catholic Girls Organizations had an ideal, I could easily apply them to our girls organizations. They have an ideal, of course, but it is so vague, so thin... It really ought to have {196} such a form that we can say clearly and without doubt: This and nothing else is our ideal.

The thrust of today’s Catholic girls organizations⁶ comes from the old ideals of the Marian Sodality: Marian devotion, self-sanctifi-

⁶ Of Germany of the 1930s.

cation, and apostolate. But I believe that this is ineffective without a living and vibrant community soul, if the [three] elements are just placed next to one another. It would therefore be worthwhile for those of us working in such organizations to agree to a precise formula. Not as if this formula would have to be repeated constantly, or had to be long, or even presented to the girls.

This is also how I would imagine the reorganization of our parishes. Every priest can preach as he feels is right. But everything must come together in a unified, great mentality.

If, for instance, we take our thrust from the ideal of the Catholic Boys Organization – “the youthful kingdom of the children of God” – then you can immediately sense that this is not something that excites the boys. Boys don’t want to be “children,” they want to be men. So if I want to educate using this ideal, I must keep a lot of things in the back of my head, including the entire method of leading the souls of young people into the “the youthful kingdom of the children of God.” (....)

3. Application of the Principles to Elementary Schools: Prayer and Education Through Ideals

{201} We have one last train of thought that needs to be considered. It is the *application of the principles to elementary education*. (....)

{205} What should be our goal for the eight years we have our children in elementary school? What should be the great central thought inspiring our work during these eight years from beginning to end? In the language of education it is: *the ability and readiness [of the student] to independently and autonomously live the life of a child of God*. (....) In one way or another each year should ultimately contribute to leading the partial values peculiar to each year to the central value – to being a child of God.

Hence, when the children complete school, we must not measure our success by how many religious practices they know. That is not what is at stake. We must make a conscious distinction between a piety built on practices and a piety built on an inner attitude. Alone from the pedagogical point of view, this may explain our failure when

children who were loyal to us in elementary school just cast everything aside when they go their own way. To be sure, other factors may be at work, too. But it is our duty to ask whether we may have over-emphasized a piety of practices vs. a piety of inner attitudes.

What is the goal? That the children be able to independently and autonomously live the life of children of God in keeping with their given age and development. They should gain the skills needed to continue to form and live this life of their own accord and on their own initiative. (....) {207} But how do we go about forming this readiness, this ability?

a. Prayer

We can start by giving two answers: First, *this ability is above all a fruit of grace*. We must therefore pray and encourage prayer. I don’t want to place too much stress on this part of our activity. It is simply a matter of course for us as Catholic teachers. If this is not the case, then we would need to discuss it more extensively. But I will suppose that this is clear to us⁷.

We will not be able to educate without prayer. Such a supernatural fruit can only be picked from a supernatural tree. As a result, prayer must penetrate our entire educational activity. You will even find that all great educators and Christian political leaders have been men and women of an interior life and prayer.

With that I will consider this point taken care of. We will not come back to talk about it. For it is not this part of our educational activity that we want to more closely examine, but (secondly) the purely personal task which *we* must fulfill.

b. Education Through Ideals

[Secondly:] *We investigate how, psychologically speaking, we can help prepare the ground so that it is easier for grace to form this ability*.

⁷ For a more extensive treatment on the importance of prayer in education, see Fr. J. Kentenich, *Education and the Challenge of Our Times* (2nd edition, Waukesha, 1996), p. 2-12.

Here we find ourselves exclusively on the ground of psychology, philosophy, and pedagogy. For now {208} we will set aside the part which grace plays.

Now modern psychology and philosophy tell us that the readiness and ability of the will ultimately roots in a very definite *core attitude of the soul*⁸. Here we must place the accent on the word “attitude” or “mood.” Perhaps I can remind you at this point of what I presented when, in the exposition on the *Kinderfreundbewegung*⁹, we discussed the meaning of the feelings and emotions. Here is the same educational source.

What modern psychology tells us is that the readiness of the will is proportional to the movement of the heart. Decisions of the will must be immersed in emotional movement. In other words (if this is true), the readiness of the will demands a corresponding mentality – as the word is used nowadays – that is, a corresponding core attitude of the soul. The whole inner person must have a motivating criteria for which the heart leaps.

If I were to express this in the language of modern value theory, one could say that each soul needs to be instinctively motivated and enabled by a receptiveness for a very specific value. And this receptiveness will turn into reality just by bringing the soul into objective contact with the specific exterior value.

Do you see how this core attitude of the soul, this *spiritual mentality*, this fundamental attitude and fundamental mood must be viewed? Like a dormant second nature {209} which immediately comes to life as soon as the proper object is brought within its reach.

You will notice that while the theory is new, the fact is as old as there have been men striving earnestly for greatness.

⁸ German: *Geistesgestimmtheit*. To be translated here as “the core attitude of the soul.” The word refers to the core inner mood or atmosphere of the person which determines which values especially awaken his or her striving for greatness. See Wilhelm Keller, *Psychologie und Philosophie des Wollens* (Munich and Basel, 1954).

⁹ The movement of “children-friends” of the German socialists of the early 20th century.

Just take a look at practical everyday life. Name anyone who has strived for and accomplished something great. You will always be able to prove that he had a specific “mentality.”

Suppose our example is a business man. Does he not instinctively have a formal criterion by which he instinctively judges again and again everything that comes his way? “Wait, what does that cost? How can I turn this into a profit?” This is his mentality, a specifically entrepreneurial mentality.

Every saint also had a specific “mentality,” and Our Lord as well. We formally call this “mentality” the “personal ideal.” What is it? Nothing more and nothing less than an exterior form of this interior form. It is nothing more or less than a formula which puts this “core attitude of the soul” into words. (...)

{210} What was the fundamental attitude of the apostle Paul which shaped his every act and deed? It was the great Pauline secret, his great secret in God. And this great Pauline secret in God {211} ultimately flows into the idea of belonging to the mystical body of Christ. This is his whole spirituality, his whole theory. Everything is built on the thought of belonging to the mystical body of Christ: Christ in me and I in Christ. The apostle knows how to lead even the tiniest details back to this thought. And because of this, his life, in spite of its many twisting turns and events, is as if poured from a single mold. He connected everything – in part instinctively and unconsciously, in part consciously – with this fundamental attitude.

We need to have something similar in our own times. Each of us needs a goal to strive for, and consciously so because, for the most part, this fundamental attitude and mentality no longer exists. And when we now say that we want to strive for a definite core attitude of the soul, then we mean a core attitude in the sense of this second nature.

It is the goal of our work as educators to help those entrusted to our care be ready and able to independently and autonomously live the life of a child of God. Then we cannot rest in all the eight years of elementary school until we attain this specifically Catholic core attitude of the soul in the individual child, in the family, in the classroom, and in the community.

By the way, what I am saying also applies to our work in the organizations or other teaching settings, be it in high schools, universities or institutes. For *the essential feature is not a piety of practices but a piety of inner attitudes*. And this mentality must be created.

It's not so bad if a spiritual practice goes undone {212} or somebody makes an honest mistake. To err is human. But we must see to it that this core attitude of the soul is formed. If we notice that errors happen because the core attitude is faulty, *then* we must intervene. Others may make blunders, but if their source is not a faulty core attitude, then we can cut some slack. (....)

Forming the Core Attitude of the Soul

The question we now face is this:

How do we create this core attitude of the soul? (....)

{213} *And how do we create this specifically Catholic core attitude?* I will give you a twofold answer, but as clearly and simply as I can.

1. We must see to it that the predominant idea-complex is specifically Catholic.
2. We must see to it that this predominant idea-complex translates into a predominant value-complex which is also Catholic.

First: *See to it that the predominant idea-complex is specifically Catholic!*

Perhaps I can start out again by expounding on a few preliminary matters.

The first is: *What scope should such a Catholic idea-complex have?* Must it cover absolutely everything? Not at all! It can be a single idea and should normally be a single great idea. Other ideas will, of course, be able to be integrated into it, but these must always be coherent with the central thought. J. Gründer gives the example "At the center of my life is the idea: I am a child of God" and then shows how, starting from this point, the *reality* of being a child of God can become the *experience* of being a child of God. (....)

{214} So what does the idea-complex look like? It does not need

to be big, but it must be a alive and coherent. Some children may be able to instinctively take the thoughts and form them into a united whole. But that is rare. If they cannot do it, I must do it. That is the purpose of pedagogy, of my activity as an educator. Seen psychologically, this is a service in forming the core of the personality. Think about what I said about the logical-psychological method: Everything that I say must be consciously adapted to the needs of the child. The same goes for adult formation. If I give a talk and know what is going on and growing in my audience, I must see to it that each person feels at the end of the talk or course: I have made the main thought part of who I am. I might not remember the exact words, but on the inside I could grow into the world of values it portrayed.

The second is: *What qualities do the ensuing value-complexes take on?* The ideas that take root can be very different, depending on the nature of the listener or the child. Hence, we can properly speak of the personal ideal [taking the lead], even if my personal view has certain accents which are changed by the way the other receives them. {215} Here, too, you can see how essential it is that we work with a pedagogy of trust. This enables us to feel out in the child: What is developing in him? What is his "royal self"? And eventually everything must find its center, organically find its center in this religious "royal self."

Those are the two preliminary matters. Now the central question: *How can such an idea-complex become predominant?*

Here we have a two-fold answer:

1. through frequent repetition of the idea-complex
2. through frequent repetition which associates the ideas to the corresponding values. (....)¹⁰

¹⁰ At this point a significant section is omitted where Fr. Kentenich explores the possibilities of (I.) "repetition" in religious instruction, in everyday life, and in the use of the personal examination (P.E.) and (II.) developing the value-complex through associating words to truths and values, associating secondary values to the corresponding primary value, and unmasking false values which inhibit the healthy formation of the core of the personality.

Bringing Values Close to the Soul

{224} Which brings us to the question: *How can I bring all these values as close as possible to the soul?*

Now comes the psychologist. He wants to grasp the deepest underlying connections. He ultimately asks: How can I bring these truths as close as possible to the soul

1. on the level of knowledge and
2. on the level of the drives?

On the level of knowledge

Let me stay with my example. Think about the question: *When does a truth sink most deeply into my soul as something I know?*

First possibility: I go for a walk or drive and read in the newspaper about a terrible disaster in such-and-such a coal mine. Does this knowledge make a deep impression on me and influence me? Probably not.

Second possibility: I am reading the latest edition of the newspaper. The scenes are described in graphic detail. Will the account make a deep impression on me? Yes. Why? Because the object is brought closer to me on the level of knowledge.

Third possibility: An explosion takes place while I am passing by. In this case the object [of knowledge] has come as close to me as possible and makes, without a doubt, a deep impression on me.

This is also how we want to approach the supernatural truths. We want to make the given [truth-]complexes small enough to bring them as close as possible to the children on the level of knowledge.

{225} Now I would have to show you how this can be done with Bible stories and abstract truths. Study these things, then you will have more certainty! In this way things are brought as close as possible to the children. Think, to name an example, of the scourging of our Lord. The “smaller” and more life-like and vibrantly it is told, the more it is told so that the child can practically relive it, the more it will be absorbed as something they know. Hence, it will have been brought to the child as closely as possible on the level of knowledge.

But, unfortunately, we often overlook one thing; and that is why I am putting it this way: *We must also make these truths come alive*

in the soul on the level of the drives, on the instinctive level.

On the level of the drives

In other words: The truths and values must also speak to the drive for happiness. That is how we are made. [The drive for happiness] is not the highest perfection, but it is a value we greatly desire.

I can remember giving a course some years ago while traveling through Swabia. A priest came to me and said, “I have preached for years about being children of God, but my success has become less and less.” In other words, the more he preached about it, the more his parish fought him. It is important that we present the truths as answering some need. It is natural that people will not be electrified every time they hear the word “God.” We don’t react that way either. And if we do, it is only because the value-complex “God” gives some kind of answer to a particular drive within my heart. {226} We just aren’t aware of it. So the truths and values must speak to something in us on the level of the drives.

To be sure, if we have a complicated system... [like the passions¹¹] (...), we would have to be educational geniuses if we hoped to accomplish something. We would do much better to simplify the system to two passions: pride and self-giving. Then we will be more likely to reach our goal.

What does this mean in practical terms? One person has the drive to love. What does he want to have satisfied through the drive to love and self-giving? The need to serve and be acknowledged. In the other person the main drive is to assert himself. For such a person I must present the entire world of supernatural truths in terms of conquest and accomplishment.

Someone told me that she was once with her spiritual director and he wanted to work with her. He urged her to strive for sanctity. To motivate her he told her to just keep striving and she would one day join the twelve apostles in eternity judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And her response? That’s not what I want! If she had been someone

¹¹ In the classical analysis of the passions there are 11 passions arranged into two groups centering around love (self-giving) and power (pride).

whose main passion was pride (whose desire was conquest and accomplishment), this might have found an echo in her. The apostles were that way. {227} Our Lord knew his disciples. They were men of pride. They wanted to judge, so they would get to judge. It was the right thing for them.

So if I want to be a true educator, then I must know what kind of reactions are possible in the soul. Then I have to see to it that I know exactly which is the need that is present in the soul. That is not hard at all. Why not? Because I know that the soul is either more inclined to self-giving or more inclined to pride. (...)

Picture this: I have class today. I must think out which values Student X. is receptive for. While this is not yet the ideal, this is probably where I have to start. At what point do I as an educator become an artist? When I master the situation. You should therefore make yourselves a little independent of your classroom preparation and review and learn to swim in the mysterious “fluid” [of the life of the children]. It cannot be prepared; one simply lives in it. To be sure, it is still important that we think things out; it serves as a self-review and helps make us more sure of ourselves.

CHAPTER THREE: TACTICS

{229} We are now come to the topic of tactics. What can be said about it? Something quite dangerous. It was no coincidence that I devoted so much time to the twofold vision¹. As I so often said and repeat again: Anyone gifted enough to know how to apply this twofold vision in a constant, healthy manner is an educator who – as far this is as humanly possible – always has an instinctive grasp of what to do next. Speaking about “tactics” will serve more as a verification of what we would otherwise grasp intuitively.

Despite our efforts at reducing these concepts to their underlying principles, you may still say, “Good heavens, what a complicated system!” But please don’t forget that it can all be written on a thumbnail. And what is on the thumbnail? The twofold vision of [fatherliness-]motherliness and ideal. We must always remember these two anchors and pylons.

What do I mean by “Tactics”?

In the end, it is really nothing more than the art of motherliness wisely adapted to the organic development of the individual and community soul. It {230} is nothing more than the art of integrating these two aspects. If you want to pursue the literal meaning of the word, you will sense that the term “tactics” is borrowed from military science. It means the art of deploying one’s forces in the correct number at the correct time and in the correct place.

Not too long ago someone explained to me how our petty officers described “tactics.” It is quite clever. For them, tactics are the “little box” and strategy is the “big box.” For us, the tactics and strategy mean the same. If you prefer a stricter distinction, *tactics* would be the art of motherliness wisely adapted to the organic development of the individual soul, and *strategy* would be the adaptation to the com-

¹ Of fatherliness-motherliness and the ideal. See previous chapter.

munity soul. But as far as I'm concerned, you can use the two terms interchangeably.

Perhaps I can illustrate this thought from another angle. Some time ago someone was telling me about a teacher he once had. He mentioned three things: "What I admired in him was

1. his straight-arrow objectivity,
2. extraordinary kindness and
3. the unique malleability of his entire being, especially of his thinking and will."

What do we have here?

First: *straight-arrow objectivity*.

Where does this come from? From devotion to the ideal, to the personal ideal and community ideal. This is the objective up-front approach whose only desire is to serve the ideal of the other.

Secondly: *extraordinary kindness*.

This is the expression of fatherliness or motherliness.

{231} Thirdly: *this malleability*, this flexibility of spirit.

This is what we call strategy. Again: What is strategy, what are tactics? *The art of motherliness wisely adapted to the organic life of the individual soul and the community soul*.

Listen to the word "tactics" or "strategy" one more time. Your first reaction will probably be somewhat allergic: "What! Let myself be treated 'tactically,' 'strategically'! Then I am only a means to some end! The educator is just pursuing a strategy... a goal to be reached. I am just a pawn in it. This can't be right!"

I think that to do this concept justice and develop a real community atmosphere, we will first have to get over this allergic reaction. Towards this end, the topic of this talk is *tactics – boundaries and possibilities*.

The following talks will then consider *particular tactical laws*. Let me mention three:

1. The art of opening the soul. We all know from experience how important and difficult this art is. What needs to be opened? The heart of the one entrusted to my care.
2. The art of listening, including the art of listening to the person and to the underlying message.

3. The art of enlightened leadership.

These are the three tactical laws. But tonight we will speak of tactical boundaries and possibilities. (...)

Tactical Boundaries

{233} Where are the psychological boundaries for any tactics? The answer is *respect and love*. It is the love flowing from my motherliness and the respect which has its root in my devotion to the ideal of those entrusted to my care.

I think that if these two anchor points are deeply rooted in your soul, the use of tactics will never cause you to use people. We will never use tactics manipulatively or deal with someone "psychologically." That would be totally wrong. (...)

{236} In this context let me ask and briefly answer two questions for you:

1. How do I educate myself in reverence, including toward teenagers?
2. How do I educate youth, including teenagers, to have respect for me?

I hope my answer will not disappoint you. I am not going to give you a "program" for teaching respect as a topic. That will not take us where we want to go. (...)

How do I Educate Myself to Respect Others?

1. How do I educate myself in reverence, including toward teenagers? (...) {237}

First: *Reflect again and again on the true meaning of education*.

What is education? Selfless service to the originality of another person. To educate others, to form and shape human souls is the art of all arts.

Once more: What is the deepest meaning of education? Do not say as Goethe did in his *Prometheus*: "Here I sit, forming others in my image." No! *I* am not the aim of education. The ideal of education is: Here I sit and form others in *your* image.

God has built a unique idea into each person. God wants to real-

ize and embody an idea in each individual person. My task as educator is to discover this divine thought and devote all my energy to seeing it embodied and realized in the life of the child.

Do you understand what I am trying to say? *The more I grasp what true education is, the greater my respect will be.*

Second: *This inner attitude must gradually become practical and tactical respect.*

It must become a respectful approach toward others, a reverent attitude of the soul. I must have respect

1. For each individual
2. For each one's fate
3. For each one's originality and abilities.

In the background is always the reality: I serve the great divine thought [in the other]. God has brought this person into existence to embody a unique idea and wants {238} to see this idea embodied and realized more and more.

First: *Practical and tactical respect for each individual.* Even if he or she is in rags! And if this person were the most crushed, were psychologically and physically extraordinarily sick! Respect for each individual!

Second: *Respect for each one's fate.* And if the fate of the person I have before me has been through the darkest night, through the deepest guilt, I have respect for that fate! I have no idea what he went through as a child. I have no idea which genetic burdens this poor person bears.

If we are honest, if we only step back a little and stay objective, we would have to say: If I had to live in this person's skin, if I had this past, how would I have fared! Respect for each one's fate!

And third: *Respect of each one's originality.* (....)

{240} Third: *We must beware of true respect's mortal enemy.*

Do you know what this is? It is *the cookie-cutter mold.* Whatever you do, do not turn education into a cookie-cutter!

In the Middle Ages, St. Thomas spoke a warning to the prelates: Not too many rules! Not too much red tape! Don't try to force

everything to follow one pattern! For where "one mold" rules, originality dies, individuality and true reverence die.

Do I mean we should not take rules seriously? Of course not! Where there is community, where people coexist, there must be laws. But these laws should be kept to a minimum, and these few laws must be obeyed with all the discipline we can muster. Anyone of noble spirit expects that. But the cookie-cutter means something else.

It means constant conformity, being forced by newly created laws to do and be such and such a way, as in the time of Our Lord with the traditions of the Old Law. A law would be explained and the explanation would become a law. And this explanation was explained and *it* became law. And so on until there was such a wall of laws and rules that no one could even breathe any more.

If you remember that, that will give you some direction for showing and growing in respect for those entrusted to our care.

How do We Educate Others to Respect Us?

{241} Now comes the second question. To outward appearances it could be even more important. *How do we educate those entrusted to our care to respect us?*

When I give you the answer, you will understand even more how broadly I use the word "tactics." It is not something manipulative, but rather the opposite. Someone of noble spirit cannot stand being manipulated.

How do I educate teenagers to respect me? Here too I have three answers:

First answer: *By embodying in myself the ideal of the other person.*

This is a fundamental attitude, not a "program" meant to manipulate the other person. If I myself essentially represent the ideal which the young girl has, just see what respect the girl will have for you. (....)

Second: – and this is very essential – *in all circumstances believe in the goodness of the girl.*

Or put in more general terms: Always believe in the goodness of man. This is not a "program" with ulterior motives. {242} No! Believe in

the goodness of man – to which I might add:

1. in spite of the many disappointments we have experienced.
2. in spite of the many aberrations we have experienced.
3. in spite of the constant battles which we must admit having seen in the lives of our children.

I must not give in to anything which undermines my faith in the goodness of others. Should I give you a reason?

Dogmatic theology teaches us that human nature may have been weakened by original sin, but it was not totally corrupted. There is still much good in man. We are therefore being honest and objective when we believe in the goodness of man. And we are dealing for the most part with girls and children who are in the state of grace, who share in the divine life of grace. This is another reason not to lose faith in the goodness of man. (....)

{245} Then thirdly: *Make ourselves superfluous in every aspect of life, at least as our basic attitude.*

How do I do that? What effect does it have? As soon as I notice that someone can walk on his own, I step back. Let him walk on his own. See if {246} he falls. And if he falls, see if he can get back up on his own. And then let him get up on his own. In any case, you must make yourself superfluous. If you never want to become superfluous, you must always make yourself superfluous.

Therefore, first of all: *As soon as I notice that someone can walk on his own, consciously pull back.* It is better to begin too soon than to begin too late.

Secondly – and this is also critical: *Never curry the favor of a student.* Never say, “Oh, please stay loyal to me...” It is better to be hard: “If you want to go, then go!” How does that sound? I think it sounds very healthy. If you try too hard to curry the favor of someone of noble spirit, they will spontaneously react in the opposite manner. Or they might be outwardly polite, but they soon have you under their little finger. And then you will not be their educator, but someone being educated and led by your nose. (....)

Tactical Possibilities

{247} Tactical possibilities. Are tactics applicable to the organic growth of an individual soul? Yes. That is the point of what we discussed this morning about the dogmatic-psychological method [of the personal ideal]. I must know in which organic stage of growth the soul is; then I can intervene and calmly support the right process. This is a tactic. Nor do I talk today about what is a year away, but adapt myself to the organic development. Perhaps I know what development comes next, but I do not talk about it. It will come on its own. Let God take care of that. The soul should experience it on its own. It will then have much more joy and solidity and certainty. It will then make the right decisions and live more securely and be able to exist when I no longer exist.

Hence, it is self-understood that *tactics are applicable to the organic growth of the individual soul.* By the way, if you want examples of this, there are many in the back issues of our [MTA] magazine. Let me only remind you of Hans Wormer and how he developed his personal ideal. {248} As a little boy he was enthralled with church architecture. And as he matured, he sublimated this value and wanted to be a support of the Church. He still wished to build churches, but in the spiritual sense². The tactic is: Everything which I do [as an educator] must be directed to the service of this one point. A year later he had developed to the next step. We must support this process, too. But we do not need to tell the young person everything.

That would be the application to the organic development of the individual soul. That is simple.

More difficult is *adapting to the organic development of the community soul.* And that is an area where we perhaps know too little, but which is so crucially important and in which there is so much confusion today. Allow me to express this idea psychologically. Thus said, we must distinguish between the individual soul (....), i.e.

² Hans Wormer (1898-1917), member of Schoenstatt’s founding generation. See J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life*, p. 161-163 (second revised edition, 2004: p. 169-171).

the personal, individual structure, and what structural psychology calls the “superindividual structure³.” As an individual I have a structure which is my own, and we together have a superindividual structure. {249} Under this aspect all of us here are an organism. Instead of this word, I use the word “community soul.” But the community soul is more than the sum of the individual souls, just as the ideal of the mass psyche is more than the ideal of the individual.

The masterpiece consists in grasping and forming the community soul. Am I able? If we fail in this, we will make many mistakes with regard to the community soul. In the end, the community soul is grasped and formed by the community ideal. And the community ideal is the expression of the community atmosphere on the level of the soul, the community soul.

Do you know what the extraordinary advantage is – I am deliberately speaking in superlatives here – when we grasp the community soul? In two things: *Whoever knows how to grasp the community soul both separates and unites.*

He separates the community from its surroundings, even when its members lead the life of a diaspora. And we need that because our youth today must face so many dangers in the factories and work places.

If I know how to grasp a community soul, then I create a separation, then I have erected a spiritual wall without removing the person from her work setting.

{250} Whoever knows how to grasp the community soul separates and unites. Whenever there is a community soul, there is community⁴.

* * *

(Supplement)

The Art of Opening Up

{263} Those familiar with modern literature, and those familiar with the normal life of the soul, know that the expression “*aufschliessen*” (opening up) has taken on a technical meaning. Let me use the foreign word for it: Psychoanalysis. But opening up is not only meant as a therapeutic aid for the sick life of the soul. If a soul is afflicted with inhibited emotions, the goal of psychoanalysis is to remove the inhibitions. And those who understand how to open up a sick soul – quite apart from what psychoanalysis has to say – whoever understands how to open up a sick soul – that is, to show it, help it discover for itself where the source of the illness is – will have truly done the soul a great service.

(A significant passage, p. 308ff, is also translated in *The Gift of Purity* under the heading “The Idealism of Youth and Contact Between Boys and Girls”)

³ See the theories of Eduard Spranger (1882-1963), German philosopher and pioneer in bringing modern psychological insights to education.

⁴ At this point extensive sections are omitted which elaborate on the “tactical laws.” They include discussion of such skills as the art of opening the hearts of others, the art of listening well, and the art of enlightened leadership.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONSISTENCY

{355} With that I close the second part of our workshop: tactics and strategy. Now comes the third part:

consistency.

I think I have already spoken a great deal about consistency. I therefore only need to say: *That which you have correctly grasped, you must consistently carry out.*

And with that I stand at the end of our time together.

With your permission, I want to make a *confession* at the end. When you look over the whole thing which I shared with you in these three days, you must admit: It is a lovely edifice, a well-rounded organism, a complete life's work. But with equal vigor we also want to humbly say and admit: Even if we would carry this out with great mastery, do not expect your educational efforts and skill to have an infallible effect. That would be an extremely great error. There is no system, not even a Catholic one – even if it would be perfectly tuned on the inside and outside to the modern human condition – which can promise infallible effectiveness.

Here we become small as educators. Here we feel forced once more by our activity to reach out for grace. Here we learn to get down on our knees and fold our hands. And that is the point with which we began this explanation.

Please do not forget: What I have discussed with you was more of a psychology and pedagogy of the natural reality. To be sure, this has implications for the supernatural reality. {356} But the more we do, the more humble we become and more we must recognize: Unless we accompany all our activity with tender, heartfelt prayer, then we are building on sand. *A true educator is inconceivable without being a person of prayer.*

Without a deep spirit of prayer we will be building again and again on sand. We therefore want the end of our conference to re-

sonate with prayer, that we sincerely pray from all our heart for God to give us the strength to educate ourselves. That he also give the grace and strength needed by the children entrusted to our care. That they let themselves be formed by us and by grace.

It is a very beautiful thing that God has given us this vocation. And in eternity we will one day see what we could do for the Marian transformation of the world in Christ.

After all, we have heard in these days how our times are mightily divided, how great works of progress are being accomplished on all fronts in the formation of man. We too want to keep working in this direction. But we also want to say with all the greater humility: If we want to win the world for Christ, we must be humble and continue to seriously live the spirit of prayer, including an earnest living and striving for sanctity.