

## ON THE NATURE AND VOCATION OF WOMEN

### Edith Stein's Concept against the Background of a Radically Deconstructive Position

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For the last decades more and more women are involved in political decision making and even in the leadership of states. Since 2005, e.g., Germany is being run by a female chancellor for the first time in its history. One could assume that the women's movement has reached its goal in its essential claims by this innovation. Women are no longer barred from even the highest state departments. University careers and leading positions in commercial enterprises are now accessible to women, although still to a lesser degree in comparison to their male colleagues. Yet, despite the developments in the equality of the sexes, the debate about the so-called question; 'What is specific in being a woman?' is far from finished.

#### 1. "SEEING WHAT IS"<sup>1</sup>

"Seeing what is," as an introduction to the subject of womanhood in Edith Stein's doctrine, might be striking at first glance. One might have expected something softer, more romantic instead. The human peculiarity in relation to all other living creatures is his rational nature through which he can gain knowledge. The sentence, "Seeing what is," implies that human beings can perceive something, i.e., that they can truly fathom what exists—in this case the being of women. Human reason is capable not only of creating a concept of things, but of concretely referring to reality in its perception.

This leads us directly to Edith Stein's phenomenological philosophy, which we will consult about the question on the nature and vocation of women. The philosophical concentration on the objective, the nature of things, the impartial view of the world and its objects, this common "spirit" among phenomenologists—as Hedwig Conrad-Martius, a friend of Edith Stein's, described it—served as strong links among the phenomenologists around their master Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

We will now draw our attention to the foundations from which Stein developed her philosophical doctrine on the being, nature and vocation of women by means of the title of my introduction "Seeing what is":

##### *1. Seeing*

According to Edith Stein, philosophy presents an attempt to understand the world.<sup>3</sup> However, this understanding is not supposed to be accomplished by a merely conceptual acquisition of things. In contrast, the actual "fulfillment of what philosophy, as a striving for wisdom, aims at lies in (...) a simple vision."<sup>4</sup> This element of vision renders participation in God's cognition possible, while he embraces all created being during the vision.<sup>5</sup>

The human mind is receptive to things.<sup>6</sup> Edith Stein regards this process of phenomenological vision as a special act of cognition: "An apprehension which reveals those things as actualities [is not identical with] sensual perception, but is a mental act sui generis which Husserl calls *visualization of the essence* or *intuition*."<sup>7</sup> This process of gaining insight into being does not occur in pure reason. Rather, its unifying place resides in the person, thus essentially influencing the human being.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the cognition of things denotes discovering what exists.

This leads us to the second aspect, namely to what actually exists.

##### *2. What*

If we speak of those things that exist, it concerns objective being, i.e., the being of things in themselves.<sup>9</sup> Edith Stein assumes that we are not only conscious of our own knowledge of things, but that the being of the world and of humankind is a priori given to us in each case in a specific way. In accordance with Husserl, she presumes that philosophy concerns objective truths.<sup>10</sup>

The doctrine that being determines consciousness can be found as early as in Karl Marx's theory. However, he did not understand this sentence ontologically but as an expression of a social construction. In opposition to this, Edith Stein holds that the being of things must be approached phenomenologically. It is not the human mind that pre-determines what can be perceived, but being, thus informing us about what the perceived reality is. Skepticism teaches that man is determined and even impeded by his subjectivity to such an extent that he is not able to achieve objective knowledge about the reality outside of himself. This was the great thunderbolt with which Husserl made his entrance into philosophy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: That the mind's referential point is not only the mind itself, but that we must return "to the things." "The *things in themselves* (...), which should be denoted by the meaning of the words, are not singular things of experience, but something general, as the meaning of a word: the *idea* or the *nature of things*."<sup>11</sup>

### 3. *Is*

"Every *I think, I perceive, I want* etc. [is respectively joined by] something thought, perceived and wanted as such."<sup>12</sup> In Husserl's philosophy, the "things themselves" are not the individual objects of our concrete world that are given to us by our experience, but rather the beholding of an object as something general, given to us in the object. This concept of an intentional connection between being and consciousness can certainly be ascribed to Franz Brentano's influence, Husserl's teacher, whose origin is the Scholastic intellectual tradition.<sup>13</sup> Where this question is concerned, Edith Stein quickly distanced herself from her teacher without accompanying him on his later path that brought him back to the field of consciousness. Whenever that which *is* is in question, it refers to—especially in Edith Stein's later phenomenological works—the actual being of things, which can be perceived by us. As Stein reports, most of Husserl's other pupils from his early days were of a similar opinion: "All young phenomenologists were resolute realists."<sup>14</sup>

With this insight into things and the phenomenological training of the mind, Edith Stein turns her attention to the nature of the sexes—not only the nature of women, but also the nature and the accompanied vocation of men are subject of her studies, although not in detail.

Even the more basic question of whether there is a truth about the being of women is considered in the treatment of gender differences and their implications. This aspect includes two parts that must be accounted for: On the one hand, the question of whether truth actually exists must be asked. This question played an important role not only in Edith Stein's philosophy, but also in her life. Accordingly, her struggle with the nature of things is also present in her philosophical search for essential characteristics of female being. On the other hand, this creates the foundation for the actual question asked by Edith Stein when she was suddenly challenged to comment on the basics of womanhood, and on all social questions regarding the role and nature of women: Is it reasonable at all to speak about *the* woman? Or are women too different in their individuality, character, lifestyle and personality to easily filter out anything common? Can—even today—anything definite and essential be said about their nature, how it is or how should it be<sup>15</sup> to be a woman and to live in this world as a woman? Edith Stein attempts to answer these questions. Reconsidering them, she asserts: "It is clear that the question on the species 'woman' is the principal question of all women questions. If such a species does exist, no change in living conditions, be it economical or cultural, nor any independent activity will be capable of altering this fact."<sup>16</sup>

Edith Stein approaches the question about the being, the vocation, the nature, and the possible duties of women in accordance with nature with a critical attitude by means of the phenomenological method. By doing so, she does not claim to have an extraordinary insight into the hidden realities of womanhood or to have special knowledge gained, for example, from a mystical enlightenment. Yet, she claims that she can see what there is to be seen; that she can perceive what there is to be perceived, namely by looking into the world with one's eyes wide open in search for

actual reality and the nature of things, as Scheler describes the phenomenological method of cognition. Husserl is of the opinion that the perceiving intellect can ultimately perceive anything, and that man is capable of perfect insight into the nature of things and of apprehending them in themselves. Stein leaves this optimism of absolute cognition behind.

Rather, she deliberately adopts the position of her second teacher, Thomas Aquinas, assuming that natural cognition is simultaneously faced with natural borders, i.e., that on earth—in via—ultimate insight into the being of things is only possible to a certain extent, although to a real extent. Consequently, she anticipates the vision of *all* reality no sooner than in the *visio beatifica*, the beatific vision of God. This vision also reveals all other secrets and hidden mysteries, for all being is in God.<sup>17</sup>

According to Edith Stein, vision in the sense of holistic perception includes not only a rational element, but also faith, which has become actual and ultimately deepest certainty. Faith must join rational perception in order to render possible perfect cognition of things and people.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. JUDITH BUTLER AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

At present, hardly anybody from the context of the humanities dares to speak of *the woman*. It recalls too strongly the bondage of having to organize one's life in accordance with a general role pattern, as women had to—in the past. In 1975 the American anthropologist Gayle Rubin introduced a new terminology for the idea of the two dimensions of gender. This terminology corresponds to the old idea that gender is divided into a natural-physical “part” and a social role: The term *sex* was supposed to refer to the natural-biological feature, while gender denoted the gender-specific behavior as well as the gender role. Shortly afterwards this differentiation no longer implied a difference between the two parts of gender but a separation: The biological feature *sex* was separated from the role that the respective sex performs in social life (*gender*). A few years ago, this differentiation and the connected separation of the two terms were established in German-speaking countries. The separation of the two parts of man- and womanhood generated a total detachment of the social role from biological-natural being.<sup>19</sup> Among others things, this was followed by political manifestos which intended to improve female gender conditions. Gender mainstreaming and other gender-orientated measures are supposed to secure the possibilities of development—particularly in relation to occupation—irrespective of the particular sex.

The American sociologist Judith Butler<sup>20</sup> has made one of the strongest projections about the gender question since the 1990s. She claims that men and women do not exist: “If we (...) consider the status of gender identity to be radically independent of the anatomic sex, gender identity itself turns into a free floating artifact. Then the terms *man* and *male* can equally signify simply a male and a female body as vice versa the categories *woman* and *female*.”<sup>21</sup>

For Butler, the division of mankind into men and women is merely a relic of a traditionally established metaphysical idea and a product of a patriarchic ruling system that lasted for centuries and that used precisely this differentiation of the sexes to legitimate the repression of women.<sup>22</sup> But how exactly did the sociologist devise a thesis like this that at first sight appears to be exaggerated, namely that men and women do not exist? In order to answer this question, we must take a look at the different epistemological and anthropological premises that ground her concept. “There is not male and female; for you are all one (...).” (*Galatians* 3:28) Leaving out the originally Christological implication of this verse, Butler actually makes the same claim, i.e., viewed on the surface: There are neither men nor women—the distinction is a mere lie or an invention by tradition, expressing an ancient system of conventions that suppresses women. According to Butler, there is no clear evidence of an individual's definite determination of his particular gender (This is a man, that is a woman.) in reality, as is mostly done before birth, or, at the latest, directly after birth. What does this mean? Against all appearance, Butler defines human beings as almost totally undetermined creatures.

As a result, she rigorously rejects the term “gender.” This is so because Butler assumes that, by dividing sexuality into *sex*, referring to the natural part, and *gender*, indicating the social role, one gets the impression that a natural-biological part of sexuality does indeed exist. Taking this to its logical conclusion, it becomes clear that not only is the female role in society the product of social genesis and thus a construct, but also that the biological-physical dimension is not natural but ultimately artificial. A human being is neither man nor woman at birth, but is made to man or woman by means of an attribution by others. This is called a performative utterance according to J.L. Austin’s philosophy of language: Consequently, language, i.e. for example, the joyful utterance after birth “This is a girl!” is no description of what is and can be seen. Rather, it is only the determination that this particular baby is from now on to be considered a girl.<sup>23</sup> Hence, language no longer describes reality but generates it. In accordance with this, Judith Butler defines her theory as the project of “doing or performing gender.”<sup>24</sup> In order to adequately justify this theory, she mentions the case of hermaphrodite creatures, whose occurrence is fairly frequent, as she claims. Their gender cannot be definitely determined at birth, thus being sufficient proof for the fact that human beings can never be determined to a certain gender.<sup>25</sup>

What are the implications for the lives of individuals? One can and must choose one’s own gender, one can change it: today this gender, tomorrow another one. Hence, one can live as a man or a woman as in a game, a masquerade.<sup>26</sup>

This position appears to be so fallacious to many people that it is not considered worth dealing with. But in the meantime this approach within the gender question has found substantial resonance and agreement in sociological discourse. Unfortunately, I cannot go into detail here with regard to those aspects of Butler’s position that are problematic.<sup>27</sup> Yet, I will briefly mention the decisive items which are critical:

1. Butler grounds her position on a concept of man which considers him independent of every natural determination. This approach denies the generally given fact that man is provided with certain conditions through his body alone, conditions in which he finds himself and which he cannot change.<sup>28</sup>
2. The reference to pathological exceptions, such as hermaphrodite creatures, cannot compensate for the fact that, generally, every human being already finds himself to be man or woman in his particular body.<sup>29</sup> Neither fear of a determination by being part of a certain gender nor suffering from being different (woman—man) justifies a general denial of biological and gender specifications.
3. The feminist women’s movement rightly stated that, for example, the suffering of those women is trivialized and almost cynically suppressed who suffer violence in their physical femininity.<sup>30</sup>
4. In the eyes of women this theory means the challenge of their identity as women. It is no longer possible to find gender-specific peculiarities and capabilities for female occupations through which women are distinguished from men.

By means of these extreme positions of postfeminism, it should have become clear that the current attack on gender is rather strong, thus demands a response.

### 3. EDITH STEIN ON THE NATURE AND VOCATION OF WOMEN

By turning to Edith Stein’s approach from 1928 to 1932, one might get the impression that the situation has changed too drastically. Hence, a comparison of her ideas with or their application on our situation and on complex questions might hardly be possible any longer. Yet, we will see that her choice of nature, as the intrinsic starting-point will bring us to more basic questions and also to possible answers. Within the current discussion, these might clarify the problem, become lucid and carry us forward.

### 3.1 Edith Stein's Life as the "Place of the Question of Women's Rights"

By means of a brief biographic overview, we will obtain an insight into Edith Stein's spiritual history, thus receiving support for understanding her statements on the nature of women and of female being.

The basic data of her life are generally known: Edith Stein was born in 1891 in Breslau as the seventh child of her parents. She died of murder on August 9, 1942 in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Brought up in a Jewish family in Breslau, influenced by her mother's example, who was highly esteemed as an entrepreneur after her husband's death, Edith Stein lost her faith at an early age. She writes that she "gave up praying consciously and of her own free will"<sup>31</sup> at the age of fifteen. A long period of renunciation of faith, even of atheism followed. After her graduation in 1911, Stein took up her studies at the university in Breslau: her subjects were literature, history and psychology. However, after a short while, psychology as a science appeared to her "to be in its infancy."<sup>32</sup> Consequently, she began searching for another, more basic science. During a seminar under William Stern in the winter of 1912/13 she stumbled upon Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* in her preparation of a paper.<sup>33</sup> Eager for knowledge, Edith Stein devoured the second volume of this basic work of phenomenology, a fact for which she received Husserl's admiration when they first met in the summer of 1912: "The total second volume? Well, this is a heroic deed."<sup>34</sup>

Owing to this revolutionary approach by the philosopher and former mathematician Husserl, Stein began a course of studies in Göttingen. After a while she became member of the renowned Philosophical Society of Göttingen, being surrounded by Max Scheler, Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Adolf Reinach among others. Her dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy*<sup>35</sup> received a Summa cum laude in 1916, so that Stein was confident of finding further academic work in the field of phenomenology.

What fascinated her in phenomenology as opposed to psychology was the possibility of practicing foundational definition of terms and the capability of the subject to perceive reality, to have access to the things in themselves, and not solely to one's own consciousness. "To the things themselves"<sup>36</sup> was Husserl's "battle cry" of his early times. Objective insight was supposed to abolish the skepticism of a philosophy that is purely immanent in one's consciousness so that the nature of things was revealed to the perceiving intellect.

This philosophy became important for Edith Stein not only in order to "understand the world," as she describes it. For according to her, a philosophy can be considered real only if it renders possible our comprehension of the world that surrounds us.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, this philosophical approach to objective insight, of an intellect that is directed to the things, makes it possible for Stein and other phenomenologists to encounter transcendent reality. The result of this was that many pupils of Husserl's became religious, some of whom even converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. Husserl, who used to be of Jewish faith but converted to Protestantism, commented on this playfully, stating that, actually, he would deserve to be canonized by the Catholic Church for this achievement. Edith Stein and a few other phenomenologists were not alone in having an encounter with the transcendent. *All* phenomenologists around Husserl became religious, as Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Stein's friend from among the circle of philosophers, claimed. Transcendence suddenly dawned on them. In Conrad-Martius' words: "Somehow *all* were touched by the existence of otherworldly spheres, whose nature suddenly came into the center of their attention like the natures of so many other things."<sup>38</sup>

During World War I, Edith Stein became acquainted with the faith of a young widow whose husband, Adolf Reinach, had died in the war: "This was my first encounter with the cross and the divine power which conveys it to its bearers. For the first time, I palpably saw the church, born through Christ's redemptive suffering, in its victory over death's sting. This was the moment in which my skepticism broke down, in which Judaism faded and Christ began to shine: Christ in the mystery of the cross."<sup>39</sup> Although her skepticism broke down, faith had not yet arisen in her. God would reveal himself to her only years later—while she was being prepared by her acquaintance

with these religious people, by her reading of Kierkegaard and other Christian authors, and finally by the life story of Teresa of Ávila. In her story, Stein recognized the truth of Catholic faith and was, therefore, baptized on January 1, 1922.<sup>40</sup>

In 1919 she tried to acquire her postdoctoral lecture qualification (habilitation) in Freiburg. Even though the right to attain this qualification was passed on to women in the same year, Stein's work was not discussed in a faculty meeting, but had been put aside quietly beforehand.<sup>41</sup>

Edith Stein herself became a decisive driving force in enabling women to attain the habilitation. The decree of February 21, 1920 determined "that being of female gender must not be a hindrance to a habilitation."<sup>42</sup> It was initiated by one of the most "influential scientific politicians of the Weimar Republic,"<sup>43</sup> Carl Heinrich Becker, and addressed to Edith Stein and simultaneously to all universities. Her petition from 1919, to which the decree explicitly refers, was the reason for *putting* the admission of women to scientific careers *into practice*.<sup>44</sup> She herself could no longer profit from it. The first reason for the refusal of acceptance of her habilitation was that she was a woman;—the second one was that she was a Jew.

Her further life story can only be briefly outlined here: Stein worked as a teacher in Speyer and Münster. In 1933 she entered the Order of Carmel in Cologne, when she was no longer allowed to carry out her profession owing to the rising anti-Semitism in Germany. In 1938 she had to flee to the Order of Carmel in Echt (Holland), and she was deported on August 2, 1942, to Auschwitz with other Jews, most of whom had converted to Catholicism. There she was gassed on August 9.

For her studies on the being of women, which she primarily pursued during her professional activity in Speyer and Münster, Stein hardly found any support in prior scientific works, as she emphasizes.<sup>45</sup> However, she could look back on several centuries of the women's movement. In her own lectures she frequently pointed to the enthusiastic beginnings of the treatment of and the commitment for "women's issues."<sup>46</sup> In her biographical retrospection, she mentions that she was a radical fighter for women's issues during her university years. She argued for female suffrage and got involved with vocational counseling for female students<sup>47</sup> both at the university and in political parties. From these times she recalls: "The question of women's rights moved all of us hotly at that time. (...) We often spoke about the problem of double profession. Erna and the two friends were very uncertain whether one must give up one's profession in favor of marriage. I alone constantly asserted that I would never sacrifice my profession. If somebody had foretold us the future! The other three married, yet keeping their professions. I alone remained unmarried, but I alone contracted a permanent bond for which I was gladly willing to sacrifice any other profession."<sup>48</sup>

No sooner than at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s did she again consider these questions. In retrospect Stein writes: "As a grammar school pupil and as a young university student, I had been a radical feminist. Then I lost interest in the whole matter. Now I am searching for purely matter-of-fact solutions, because I have to."<sup>49</sup>

In those days, Edith Stein was sought after as a lecturer for international congresses, since she was known in German academic circles for being a philosophical pupil of Husserl's and for being among the first women to have a doctorate. In the Weimar Republic, the question arose of how womanhood should be evaluated owing to the drastic changes instigated by increasing professional occupation of women in larger cities, by altered possibilities of education for girls, and by female suffrage, which had just been enacted by the Weimar constitution in 1919. Suddenly, the existence of women was no longer definitely determined and determinable by the duties of mothers within families or by professional occupations that had been strictly separated from family life. Female teachers of that time had to live in celibacy. If they wanted to marry they had to leave their profession as a teacher. In her lectures, for example, to the traditional and conservative Association of Female Catholic German Teachers, Edith Stein argued against the prohibition of marriage for female teachers. Stein's attitude on the celibacy of female teachers, which was, at her time, more in line with progressive Catholic women's associations, probably resulted in the publication of a lecture in mere extracts. In K. Maunz' abbreviated version, it is exactly this statement of Stein's on the celibacy of female teachers that is missing.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2 What Defines a Woman?—Phenomenological-Scholastic Considerations on womanhood in Edith Stein's Doctrine

In the 1920s and 1930s, Edith Stein extensively treated the question of women's rights and tried to harmonize phenomenological philosophy with the medieval tradition of Scholastic thinking. She studied the works of Thomas Aquinas and John Henry Newman as well as translated some of them into German.

As already mentioned, the question on women's rights was instigated at that time by the upcoming issue of a new identity of women. The previous concept of women appeared to be old-fashioned. Thus, Stein, being a successful woman, was expected to clarify the new vocation of women and its relation to a possibly female nature or a specific disposition of women. Stein attempted to find support in the phenomenological vision which tries to approach the nature of things by suppressing everything contingent and secondary, in order to draw one's attention to the actual, substantial matter.

#### a) *The Unity of Body and Soul*

For this purpose, Edith Stein first of all focuses on the body as the visible expression of human being. Usually it serves as an indicator for identifying a person as man or woman. In accordance with the classical Scholastic principle of "anima forma corporis" (the soul is the form of the body), Stein follows Thomas Aquinas, assuming that it is the soul which provides the body with a specific gestalt.<sup>51</sup> In respect to the question about a possible nature of women this implies that the body is so to speak the image of the soul. It possesses an internal part, influencing it and providing it with a peculiar manner of being. The soul as the internal form is the power that urges a human being from inside to actualize what he already is, what he can be and what he should become, in order to give full justice to his potentialities.

Hence, a certain tentative conclusion on a female soul is drawn by Stein when regarding the female body. Whenever Stein speaks of *the* woman, she is, of course, conscious of the fact that every woman develops her femininity in her own individual way. She nevertheless assumes that the body can offer an indication of something like a common structure of the soul that all women share, irrespective of their differences. "Consequently, the nature of women, keeping in accordance with its determination, might allow modifications without abolishing their intrinsic core."<sup>52</sup>

Edith Stein calls the "giving and receiving of love" the "forming principle of the female soul."<sup>53</sup> She illustrates how this inner forming principle can both be effective and waste away as the forming principle of female life, namely in different and changing situations of life and of personal decisions. However, this peculiarly female capability to love is not an infinite reservoir of affection and empathetic love. As is supported by current works of popular science, the power to give love is mainly wavelike in the case of women: In times of strong empathetic devotion to others, e.g. to partners or children, it is hardly imaginable that this apparently natural affection becomes weaker. Then quite suddenly, and at times also abruptly, this inner power to give love to others seems to cease almost completely.<sup>54</sup> A compensation by human love, through one's spouse or children, is not sufficient, since the whole being of women wants to be fraught with love. In Stein's eyes, this phenomenon is an expression of the necessarily deeper roots of women in God, for her disposition to love can only become stable when connected to the "eternal sources."<sup>55</sup>

#### b) *The Woman as Mother*

What exactly does Edith Stein write on the vocation of women? Using among others the biblical story of creation, Stein comes to the conclusion that women naturally seem to have two vocations: Apart from her vocation to be a human being, namely a particular individual, a woman as woman is called to motherhood and companionship.<sup>56</sup> Her capability to be a mother is primarily the ability to hand on life together with a man, to conceive children and to give birth to them. According to Stein,

this motherly vocation is elementary to the life of women to an extent that she does not mean solely the biological capability to hand on life. Rather, Stein considers the female body to be an indication that the *whole reality of body and soul*, a woman's existence in its entirety, is motherly. How is this to be understood? "The mysterious process of generating a new creature in the motherly organism is such an intimate unity of psychical and physical elements that this unity is part of the imprint of the entire female nature."<sup>57</sup> Women have the special ability to foster a human being's life, to give birth to him. However, this physical-biological capability is merely *one* part of the vocation connected to this capability. At the same time, the capability to be a mother involves the spiritual power to enable another human being to live a real life. This enablement occurs, for example, in the case of a woman's own children, in whom she wants to bring out their best: good dispositions and aptitudes. She hopes that all of the good foundations that are installed in another person are realized without generating one-sidedness, for female being is always geared to wholeness. In this sense, a woman can also give birth to other human beings spiritually.

This female disposition is also important in relation to religion: Women are more sensitive to the religious dimension of reality, which not only facilitates her own access to transcendence but simultaneously make her appear fitting for the role of educator in the field of religion.<sup>58</sup> "If the full meaning of motherhood should be fathomed, it must be interpreted not solely as natural but also as supernatural."<sup>59</sup>

Whether and how man is also capable of promoting the spiritual and religious development of other people—for this is among the topics that Stein speaks about—will be treated later.

We have now dealt with the "spiritual part" of a woman's motherly capabilities, which help her to arouse the good in other people and to make them truly find their way to life. In this life, a human being should actualize and develop what he can and should be according to his own nature.

### c) *The Woman as Companion*

Edith Stein mentions yet another essential capability in connection with motherhood, namely comradeship. What does this unfamiliar word mean? Even today we know the word "companion." This implies something similar: Women are companions by nature. "A motherly disposition is enhanced by the disposition of being a companion. (...) It comes natural (...) to women, who are capable of empathetically and understandingly entering subject matters which are unfamiliar to them and for which they would never care, if personal interests did not make them acquainted with them. (...) Vivid empathy stimulates powers and increases the accomplishments of those to whom it is granted."<sup>60</sup> It is part of her being to be together with other people. In respect for the unity of body and soul, Edith Stein again refers to the biblical story of creation in *Genesis*, in the beginning of which the first man is alone. Then God creates a companion for him, implying that the woman is man's counterpart and not his slave or lap dog. Accordingly, Stein translates the biblical term for companion (*eser kenegdo*) as "a help and counterpart." Women are the "mirror (...) in which man could perceive his own nature."<sup>61</sup>

Again, women are both: external companion and life partner. However, this capability is not restricted to their own life partner. Rather, women are companions and supporters for living righteously, as corresponds to their nature. Being together with others is supposed to help them to be themselves and to (morally) develop in the best way possible. Thus, being together with others not only implies existing together with them, because this could even make them indifferent. Rather, it is true "pro-existence", an existence for others, wanting to be there for the respective other human being<sup>62</sup>: As Edith Stein writes, this refers to him "who needs us most, irrespective of the question of whether he is a relative or not, of whether we 'like' him or not, of whether he is 'morally worthy' of our help or not,"<sup>63</sup> so that "man be not alone."<sup>64</sup>

### d) *Having the Person in View*



This natural vocation to womanhood grounds on special natural dispositions that are peculiarly female. They render the actualization of the two natural vocations possible. At first, this is not a matter of force, of social necessity or duty. It rather corresponds to the female nature and being, and is simultaneously a special gift which turns into a task. The natural disposition which is directly linked to the two basic vocations consists in the peculiarly female sympathy for the lives of others. For, according to Edith Stein, women are (by nature) primarily directed to the personal element. First of all, they are interested in the person and not so much in things.<sup>65</sup> Topics and objects are interesting to them only insofar as they bear particular relation to a person, a human being. Stein finds this phenomenological principle confirmed by studies from her own time, to which she draws reference.<sup>66</sup> This natural female disposition enables women to really see a fellow human being, to empathize with him.<sup>67</sup> This gift of not losing sight of the individual and his needs provides women with a sensor that notices whenever someone must function as a mere machine at his workplace.<sup>68</sup>

In Stein's eyes, this disposition plays an important role not only in marriage, family life, and one's own circle of friends, but also and above all in society and working environments. This is so because women are built that way and not because society needs a fool who cares for others. Women are generally not indifferent to what happens to the people in their environment. In the majority of cases, they are the first to notice if a member of their family or somebody at the workplace has problems.<sup>69</sup> Knowing her time, it is no tiresome duty which Stein imposes on women. Rather, she expresses it in the following way: "It is her gift and her happiness to share the life of another human being, namely by taking part in *everything* that concerns him: in big and small matters, in joy and suffering, and also in tasks and problems."<sup>70</sup> This indicates that women become happy if they actualize this gift of being there for others (pro-existence). By following this natural vocation, they actualize themselves in a good sense.<sup>71</sup>

It becomes clear here how harmful deconstructive theories, such as Judith Butler's approach, can be. They rob women of their female identity, thus depriving them of essential aspects of their happiness.

Edith Stein reports on similar incidences of her time: At the beginning of the women's movement, women were supposed to adapt to men in order to receive the same rights. Ultimately, even all female peculiarities were totally denied.<sup>72</sup> However, this development resulted in the disability of women to appreciate their own value. Instead they tried to be like men *in all fields of life*, an effort which sometimes made them despair of their own life. But this is only part of the problem, for the capability to truly see another human being, to pay attention to the question of whether the human element is missed out in the necessary emphasis of effort and economical efficiency, is lost. If women no longer assume this task, nobody makes this contribution to society.<sup>73</sup>

#### e) *The Female Aspect in its Ambivalence*

In everyday situations, the specifically female element usually does not correspond to the ideal of womanhood, as presented above. In Stein's eyes, an over-idealization of the female character, which existed as early as at her times, results in the ignorance of the reality of actual female life.<sup>74</sup> In opposition to this, Stein argues that female nature can hardly be found in a pure form, as human nature is no longer complete and upright, but deformed, as experience and theology teach us.<sup>75</sup> This becomes especially clear when taking those distortions of female existence into account which mainly emanate from women's special aptitudes. Accordingly, Stein illustrates that the positive disposition of sympathy for the life of every other human being can turn into an excess of interest, commonly called curiosity. This no longer has fellow human beings as individuals in mind, but is reduced to an egoistical search for novelties. In this way, the original gift is disfigured. In order to flee from this tendency, women must purify their natural dispositions or compensate for their supra-personal interest by unaffectedness. Stein thus recommends "efficient unaffected work" as a "remedy for all typically *female* ailments,"<sup>76</sup> for "a spot of male character is antidotal to 'femininity in excess.'"<sup>77</sup>

f) *One in Christ: There is not Male and Female (...)*

As briefly mentioned above, Edith Stein ascribes gifts and capabilities to women which are commonly said to occur in men too. Among them is a special empathy. Yet, in Germany these men are sometimes derogatively called “connoisseurs of women,” namely in order to at least question their manliness.

Stein makes two remarks on this phenomenon as regards content: Firstly, she adverts to the existence of enormous individual differences and specifications of various characteristics both in men and women. Secondly, she refers to a further aspect of vocation, deduced from personhood: “There is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ.” (*Galatians* 3:28) In this context, the sentence means what it is supposed to mean: Men and women have their respective, i.e., intrinsic “peculiarities” in which they are complementary to one another. They nevertheless share the goal of Christian life, namely nothing less than perfection in accordance with Christ’s doctrine: “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (*Matthew* 5:48) In Stein’s eyes, it might be possible for natural, e.g. female, aptitudes to be amended by male aptitudes, *as soon as* a human has reached a certain level of perfection. For, “the higher one rises in the assimilation to Christ, the more similar men and women become. (...) This annihilates the control of gender by means of the spiritual.”<sup>78</sup> Edith Stein continues by illustrating how people who have reached the level of sainthood combine both parts: male audaciousness and courage with, for example, female empathy and general sensitiveness for others.<sup>79</sup>

g) *Women in Employment*

We are now coming to the last field in Edith Stein’s studies on the nature and vocation of women, which fills a major part of her studies. However, it will be treated here in the form of some merely concluding aspects. Considered from the perspective of faith, a profession includes a vocation for Stein, i.e., that someone calls and someone is called.<sup>80</sup> One part of human vocation is an intrinsic part of human nature striving for perfection. The related second part consists in the natural vocation to be man or woman. We have also briefly mentioned a further vocation, namely to assimilate to Christ, to eternal life, and ultimately to the *visio beatifica*. Edith Stein extends this concept of vocation: it even plays a role in professional employment.

Stein assumes that, generally, all women should learn a profession—a view that is amazing if not revolutionary for her time. On principle, there is no profession that women cannot carry out. “No woman is *solely* a ‘woman,’” but each woman is unique and possesses an individual disposition in the same way as men. This particular disposition determines the competence for this or that profession, artistic, scientific, technical etc.”<sup>81</sup> In a certain sense she makes a *positive* restriction: Although women can work in almost all professions, there are certain professions in which the female peculiarity is especially needed and actualized.<sup>82</sup>

Among those professions which suit the female manner in a particular way is the doctor, as Stein suggests. If female doctors develop their natural aptitudes they do not only see the sick organ, but regard man in his entirety, as is more and more done at present through an increasing influence of women in the medical fraternity. Secondly, Stein mentions the profession of the teacher. Owing to their intuition for the individual’s needs and aptitudes, female teachers can support the development of his aptitudes and life.<sup>83</sup> What is interesting is, furthermore, that she refers to the profession of politician, since women might succeed in not losing sight of the essence itself, even beyond the range of their particular party.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The question of the being or nature of women has in many respects the appearance of being antiquated. Since Simone de Beauvoir's plea that women are only *made to be women*<sup>84</sup> or, above all, since Judith Butler, womanhood that exceeds being a mere construct has been irrecoverable.<sup>85</sup> Or is there still a way out? Elke Hasse wrote on the developments in the women's movement as early as 1928: "The nature of women was the least questioned: it had to be made accordant to all new measures. Nature stayed in the background, the will in the foreground, and its outward operating seemed to be more important than inward being, the nature of the female soul, her primary disposition."<sup>86</sup> Edith Stein describes the development in the women's movement in the same way: Femininity as independent being, which also receives a value on its own right, had temporarily left the center of attention. Today the situation is different. The popularity and success of books on male and female peculiarities and differences (e.g. *Why Men don't Listen and Women can't Read Maps*<sup>87</sup>) suggest that there is again an ongoing search for certainty about one's own identity—particularly as man or woman. Moreover, people want to understand others, their respective vis-à-vis. In her writings, Stein provides us with tools that may contribute to a *foundational* fulfillment of our wish to find out something on one's own being as woman or man. Being based on Christian anthropology, her concept sparks interest for current women and gender studies in a renewed concept of woman, emanating from Christian faith and grounding on substantiated anthropology. It thus offers women effective help for their lives in family, profession and society.

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<sup>1</sup> H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz, *Sehen, was ist. Zu Edith Steins Wahrnehmung des Wirklichen* (Münster, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> "The (...) deeply shared manner of thinking and working created—and creates—a link between Husserl's pupils which I can only define as (natural) birth from a shared spirit which is still *no* shared world-view, as regards content." H. Conrad-Martius, "Meine Freundin Edith Stein," *Edith Stein. Ein neues Lebensbild in Zeugnissen und Selbstzeugnissen*, ed. W. Herbstrith (Freiburg, 1983) 82-94; here: 83.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. E. Stein, *Einführung in die Philosophie. Edith-Stein-Gesamtausgabe (ESGA)* 8 (Freiburg, 2004) 14.

<sup>4</sup> E. Stein, *Endliches und ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins. Edith-Stein-Werke (ESW)* II (Freiburg et al., 1986) ch.1, § 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, ch.1, § 4. Josef Pieper calls this manner of cognition a "simple glance of vision" in which those who perceive become aware of reality. J. Pieper, "Muße und Kult," *Josef Pieper Werke*, vol.6, ed. B. Wald (Hamburg, 1999) 1-44; here: 8. Cf. J. Pieper, "Glück und Kontemplation," *Josef Pieper Werke*, vol.6, 152-216; here: 195.

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<sup>6</sup> “Cognition seemed to consist in *receiving* which obtained its law from things, and not—as in Criticism—in *dictating* which forced its law upon things.” E. Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*. ESGA 1 (Freiburg et al., 2002) 200.

<sup>7</sup> E. Stein, “Die weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie,” (1932) *Welt und Person. Beitrag zum christlichen Wahrheitsstreben*. ESW VI (Louvain et al., 1962) 1-17; here: 8.

<sup>8</sup> A difference between Edith Stein’s philosophy and Edmund Husserl’s approach becomes obvious here: For Husserl, the subject of cognition is not a concrete human being, but the “pure I.” In contrast, Stein considers human cognition imbedded in a *person’s* being. Cf. E. Stein, *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*. ESGA 14 (Freiburg et al., 2004) 86.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Stein, “Die weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie,” 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem. According to Stein, “decisive elements of the philosophy coined by Husserl are (...) definitely the striving for essence and objectivity in cognition; the thesis that truth is neither discovered nor created; moreover, the antipathy to all forms of relativism; finally, the important role that is attributed to the intuitive aspect of cognition.” F.V. Tommasi, “‘... verschiedene Sprachen redeten ...’ Ein Dialog zwischen Phänomenologie und mittelalterlicher Scholastik im Werk Edith Steins,” *Edith Stein. Themen, Bezüge, Dokumente*, ed. B. Beckmann, H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz (Würzburg, 2003) 107-133; here: 109.

<sup>11</sup> Stein, “Die weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie,” 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 10.

<sup>13</sup> “It should be recorded here how important Brentano was at the beginning of phenomenology. A Scholastic mind, geared to objectivity, was present in a way that was also impressive to the young Husserl, coming from mathematical studies.” Tommasi, “‘... verschiedene Sprachen redeten ...’ Ein Dialog zwischen Phänomenologie und mittelalterlicher Scholastik im Werk Edith Steins,” 112.

<sup>14</sup> Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*, 200.

<sup>15</sup> “We cannot avoid the question of what we are and what we are supposed to be.” E. Stein, “Christliches Frauenleben,” *Die Frau. Fragestellungen und Reflexionen*. ESGA 13 (Freiburg et al., 2000) 79-114; here: 81.

<sup>16</sup> E. Stein, “Probleme der neueren Mädchenbildung,” (1932) *Die Frau*, 127-208; here: 152. In respect of the soul, Stein asks the question again: “Can one actually speak about *the* female soul? Every human soul is singular; no soul is similar to another soul. How is it possible to speak about this by means of abstract concepts?” Stein, “Christliches Frauenleben,” 80.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. E. Stein, *Was ist der Mensch? Theologische Anthropologie*. ESGA 15 (Freiburg, 2005) 31 and 42.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Stein, “Was ist Philosophie? Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquin,” (1929) *Erkenntnis und Glaube*. ESW XV (Freiburg et al., 1993) 19-48; here: 32.

<sup>19</sup> In respect of the discussion of the term “gender” cf. A. Deuber-Mankowski, “Geschlecht als philosophische Kategorie,” *Die Philosophin* 23 (2001): 11-29; K. Heinsohn, “Auflösung der Kategorie ‘Geschlecht’? Fragen und Anmerkungen zur neueren feministischen Diskussion,” *‘Denken heißt Grenzen überschreiten.’ Beiträge aus der sozialhistorischen Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung*, ed. E. Kleinau et al. (Hamburg, 1995) 49-96.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the works of J. Butler, *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter* (Frankfurt, 1991) (orig.: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [New York, 1990]); *Körper von Gewicht. Die diskursiven Grenzen des Geschlechts* (Berlin, 1995); “Zwischen den Geschlechtern. Eine Kritik der Gendernormen,” *Das Parlament. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 33-34 (2002): 6-8.

<sup>21</sup> Butler, *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*, 23.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. an interview of J. Butler: “Ist ein Mädchen kein Mädchen? Dorothee Nolte im Gespräch mit Judith Butler,” <http://www.information-philosophie.de/philosophie/maedchen.html> (Date of access: 06/01/2006).

<sup>24</sup> Butler tries to “re-understand performativity as a specific modality of power in the sense of discourse. In order for a discourse to be able to materialize a number of *effects*, the ‘discourse’ itself must be regarded as consisting of (...) chains in which ‘effects’ are vectors of power. In this sense, that which is constituted in a discourse is not determined in or by the discourse, but becomes the precondition and the reason for further activity.” Butler, *Körper von Gewicht. Die diskursiven Grenzen des Geschlechts*, 249.

<sup>25</sup> Butler assumes that “around two to three percent of the world population—(...) [are] born with genitals that cannot definitely be identified as male or female.” Butler, “Zwischen den Geschlechtern. Eine Kritik der Gendernormen,” 6. Neither the sources of her estimation nor the question on the range of deformation and abnormality are truly clarified.

<sup>26</sup> This thesis clearly mirrors the “parodic” tendency of Butler’s ideas. Although the particular sex can definitely be determined at first glance, she questions the norm itself by means of a reference to pathological abnormalities. She thereby turns gender identity into a game, a masquerade, in which nothing is what it appears to be, but in which everything is what it pretends to be. Cf. “Es ist, was es nicht ist: Liturgie und Camp,” *FAZ* (12/28/2002): 29. The concept of gender variation and Butler’s commitment for Lesbianism had a broad impact on the American Queer Theory movement, which picked up her approach and generally rejected it. Cf. *ibidem*, 29. It is interesting that opposing efforts can also be found in relation to the question on homosexuality: The search for a respective gene has been going on for years—up until now in vain—in order to be able to range homosexual preferences in the category of man’s natural-biological determinations.

<sup>27</sup> For an extensive analysis cf. my study K. Westerhorstmann, *Selbstverwirklichung und Pro-Existenz. Frausein in Arbeit und Beruf bei Edith Stein* (Paderborn, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Recent research of developmental psychology supports the thesis that man finds himself in his particular sex: “Gender identity definitely [distinguishes man from others]; one [experiences] oneself as being part of one or the other sex; there is nothing in-between. (...) Some female ethnologists who are influenced by feminism claim that the entire sexuality, including anatomic differences, is a social construct. They justify this by stating that there is something like a *third sex* in certain cultures, i.e., people who not only ascribe to themselves female and male features but who also develop a genuinely androgyne *identity*. That something like this might be possible is, of course, an impressive idea for all those who anticipate a remedy for discrimination by the abolition of gender awareness.” D. Bischof-Köhler, *Von Natur aus anders. Die Psychologie der Geschlechtsunterschiede* (Stuttgart, 2002) 214.

<sup>29</sup> Edith Stein considers the question of whether the idea that gender identity presents a dimension that fits man’s nature can be reasonably held, despite the occasional occurrence of “hermaphrodites and transforms.” She assumes that the species of mankind occurs in two forms: as man or woman, while the entire stature of the respective creature carries the imprint of gender determination. Cf. Stein, “Probleme der neueren Mädchenbildung,” 152.

<sup>30</sup> See above all: M. Nussbaum, “The Professor of Parody. The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler,” *The New York Republic* (1999): 37-45.

<sup>31</sup> Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*, 109.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 174.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. E. Endres, *Edith Stein. Christliche Philosophin und jüdische Märtyrerin* (München, 1999) 75-76.

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- <sup>34</sup> Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*, 200.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. E. Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (München, 1980, reprint of 1917).
- <sup>36</sup> According to Edith Stein, “the meaning of words should be achieved” through “*the things themselves*,” and thus “not particular things of experience, but something abstract, as the meaning of words itself: the *idea* or the *nature of things*.” Stein, “Die weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie,” 8.
- <sup>37</sup> Cf. Stein, *Einführung in die Philosophie*, 14.
- <sup>38</sup> H. Conrad-Martius, *Meine Freundin Edith Stein*, 85.
- <sup>39</sup> T.R. Posselt, *Edith Stein. Eine große Frau unseres Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg, 1963) 19.
- <sup>40</sup> In respect of recent results on the circumstances of Stein’s reading of Teresa cf. Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*, 46.
- <sup>41</sup> E. Stein, “Edith Stein to Fritz Kaufmann,” (11/08/1919) *Selbstbildnis in Briefen I* (1916-1933). *ESGA 2* (Freiburg et al., 2000) 46.
- <sup>42</sup> “Erlaß des Preußischen Ministers für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung vom 21. Februar 1920,” *50 Jahre Habilitation von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine Dokumentation über den Zeitraum von 1920-1970*, E. Boedeker (Göttingen, 1974) 5.
- <sup>43</sup> T. Wobbe, “Edith Stein (1891-1942): Der Wandel der Geschlechterordnung und Religion im frühen 20. Jahrhundert,” *Religion und Geschlechterverhältnis*, ed. I. Lukatis et al. (Opladen, 2000) 49-68; here: 55.
- <sup>44</sup> Cf. Boedeker, *50 Jahre Habilitation von Frauen in Deutschland. Eine Dokumentation über den Zeitraum von 1920-1970*, 5.
- <sup>45</sup> “There are hardly any other fields about which scholars wrote with so much naive self-confidence, and with a method of which they spoke and wrote about so unconcernedly, as this one. Serious, scientific treatment seems to be in the fledgling stages.” Stein, “Probleme der neueren Mädchenbildung,” 142.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 142-150.
- <sup>47</sup> Cf. Stein, *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie und weitere autobiographische Beiträge*, 253.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 88.
- <sup>49</sup> Stein, “Edith Stein to Callista Kopf,” (08/08/1931) *Selbstbildnis in Briefen I*, 185.
- <sup>50</sup> Cf. K. Maunz, “Die Bestimmung der Frau. Ein Auszug aus dem Vortrag von Dr. Edith Stein,” *Jugendnummer 4. Zeit und Schule* (1931) Edith-Stein-Archive in the Carmel of Cologne, sign.: E I 18. Edith Stein calls the view that female teachers are not allowed to get married a “regrettable aberrance,” since “today we need nothing more than women who again build up real Christian family life.” E. Stein, “Die Bestimmung der Frau,” (1931) *Die Frau*, 46-55; here: 51.
- <sup>51</sup> Cf. E. Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” (1930) *Die Frau*, 16-29; here: 18. Cf. also Stein, “Christliches Frauenleben,” 86. Yet she goes beyond Thomas in arguing that there is a female human form. Cf. Dr. Vierneisel (October 1, 1930) issue of the *Heidelberg Bote*: in Editors Introduction to the English Edition of *Essays on Women* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987), 18-19.
- <sup>52</sup> Stein, “Probleme der neueren Mädchenbildung,” 160.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. Stein, “Christliches Frauenleben,” 85. “Love, gushing out of the divine heart, is the innermost forming principle of the female soul. The female soul acquires this forming principle by means of its closest bond to the divine heart in Eucharistic and liturgical life.” Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” 29.

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<sup>54</sup> Cf, for example, J. Gray, *Männer sind anders. Frauen auch* (München, 2002) (orig.: *Men are from Mars. Women are from Venus*), 129.

<sup>55</sup> Stein, "Christliches Frauenleben," 103. Cf. E. Stein, "Erste Abhandlung: Psychische Kausalität," *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften. Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung* 5 (Halle, 1922): 1-283. (Reprint: *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften* [Tübingen, 1979]: 2-116; here: 76).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Stein, "Das Ethos der Frauenberufe," 18.

<sup>57</sup> Stein, "Christliches Frauenleben," 86.

<sup>58</sup> "The peculiar value of women essentially consists in her special receptiveness for God's operating in the world. It is developed in a pure manner, if we faithfully surrender to this operating without any restrictions." E. Stein, "Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes," (1928) *Die Frau*, 1-15; here: 7. Cf. also Stein, "Das Ethos der Frauenberufe," 25-26; "Probleme der neueren Mädchenbildung," 195. In respect of this, cf. also two literary examples: Friedrich Schiller, for example, wrote on the "dignity of women": "Worship women! They braid and weave heavenly roses into earthly life." Friedrich Schiller, "Würde der Frauen," *Schiller Werke*, vol. II, ed. P. Stapf (Wiesbaden) 138-140; here: 138. Wilhelm Busch once replied on the request by Luise Fastenrath to define "woman": "*The main lure for this world, at best also for the other one.*" Wilhelm Busch, *Was beliebt ist auch erlaubt* (Gütersloh, 1998) 1032.

<sup>59</sup> E. Stein, "Aufgabe der Frau als Führerin der Jugend zur Kirche," (1932) *Die Frau*, 209-222; here: 218.

<sup>60</sup> Stein, "Das Ethos der Frauenberufe," 19.

<sup>61</sup> "Christliches Frauenleben," 58. "Through her view of him and through communication, she grants him access to his own personality as a man, opens him to his vocation, and supports him in his behavior. However, this is only possible, if the woman acknowledges that she is different from men, yet being equal to them, being the 'counterpart' of a man, but not in borrowed masculinity, but in her own, irreplaceable femininity." Jo Croissant, *Die priesterliche Frau oder das Priestertum des Herzens* (Hauteville, 1993) 7.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. my own statements in Westerhorstmann, *Selbstverwirklichung und Pro-Existenz*, 239-243; 286-288. "This life 'for others,' which identifies not only a woman, but a human being as human being (...), does not call for a morality of self-sacrifice, as has for a long time been unmasked by feminist theology as psychologically questionable. Rather, it appeals to those who have become strong and free to make the [sacrificing] love of the Trinitarian God the motivator of one's own life." B. Hallensleben, "Kommentar zum Schreiben der *Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre* über die Zusammenarbeit von Mann und Frau in der Kirche und in der Welt," (2004) [http://www.kath.ch/sbk-ces-cvs/text\\_detail.php?nemeid=30577&sprache=d](http://www.kath.ch/sbk-ces-cvs/text_detail.php?nemeid=30577&sprache=d) (Date of access: 06/02/2006). Cf. also my own explanations in K. Westerhorstmann, "Die Kirche in der Defensive? Das Dokument der Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre zur Zusammenarbeit von Mann und Frau in der Kirche und in der Welt," *Sedes Sapientiae* 10 (1/2006): 34-54; here: 51.

<sup>63</sup> E. Stein, *Das Weihnachtsgeheimnis. Menschwerdung und Menschheit* (Köln, 1965) 54.

<sup>64</sup> Stein, "Die Bestimmung der Frau," 50.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Stein, "Das Ethos der Frauenberufe," 19.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Stein, "Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes," 3.

<sup>67</sup> The topic of Stein's dissertation shines through here, which was put into practice in her studies on the nature of women.

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<sup>68</sup> Wherever man “is in danger of becoming a piece of a machine, thus losing his personhood, the development of the female peculiarity can become a beneficial counterbalance.” Stein, “Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes,” 23.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” 19.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. my own statements in Westerhorstmann, *Selbstverwirklichung und Pro-Existenz*, 239-243; 286-288.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Stein, “Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes,” 2.

<sup>73</sup> When turning this into the positive direction, the contribution of specifically female aspects to society rises: “The entire social life, public and private, could benefit from an increasing contribution of women into the manifold occupations of society, especially if the peculiarly female ethos is perpetuated.” Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” 23.

<sup>74</sup> “If I broke up here, the established demands [in relation to womanhood and female employment] could appear as an exaggerated idealism owing to their alarming distance to an average female life of the present time.” *Ibidem*, 26. Cf. also E. Stein, “Beruf des Mannes und der Frau nach Natur- und Gnadenordnung,” (1931) *Die Frau*, 56-78; here: 69-70; and Stein, “Christliches Frauenleben,” 87-88.

<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Stein suggests that women lead an intensively religious life in order to rediscover and highlight the female specificity, which occurs in its purest form only in the “Immaculata.” Cf. Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” 20; E. Stein, “Natur und Übernatur in Goethes Faust,” (1932) *Bildung und Entfaltung der Individualität. Beiträge zum christlichen Erziehungsauftrag. ESGA 16* (Freiburg et al., 2001) 157-168; here: 167.

<sup>76</sup> Stein, “Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes,” 6 (my emphasis). “Unaffected work provides man with (...) calmness and clarity of thinking, (...) stability in willing (...) as well as with a controlled lifestyle.” E. Stein, *Aufsatzthemen aus der Zeit Edith Steins am Lehrerinnenseminar St. Magdalena* (Speyer, 1923-32) *ESAK*, sign.: B I 39a, 36.

<sup>77</sup> Stein, “Der Eigenwert der Frau in seiner Bedeutung für das Leben des Volkes,” 6.

<sup>78</sup> E. Stein: “Appendix: Discussion of ‘Ethos der Frauenbildung’” (1930), “Transcripts (of the Presentation and Discussion) and Correspondence on ‘Grundlagen der Frauenbildung’” (1930), “Discussion of ‘Beruf des Mannes und der Frau nach Natur- und Gnadenordnung’” (1931), *Die Frau*, 227-254; here: 246.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Stein, “Beruf des Mannes und der Frau nach Natur- und Gnadenordnung,” 77-78.

<sup>80</sup> “Ultimately, it is God himself who calls. It is he who calls: every man to something to which he is called, every single person to something to which he is personally called, and, what is more, man and woman as such to something peculiar.” Stein, “Beruf des Mannes und der Frau nach Natur- und Gnadenordnung,” 57. “L’idée de vocation jette un pont entre ce qui, en nous, est nature et ce qui est liberté: certes, qui dit vocation dit *appel*, mais à cet appel nous pouvons toujours opposer le refus du sourd, ou au contraire, répondre par un consentement empressé où la liberté vraie, éclairée du dedans, trouve occasion de se réaliser.” A.A. Devaux, “L’idée de vocation dans la vie et dans la pensée d’Edith Stein,” *Les Etudes philosophiques* (3/1956): 423-446; here: 423-424.

<sup>81</sup> Stein, “Das Ethos der Frauenberufe,” 22.

<sup>82</sup> “A true female profession is every kind of profession in which the female soul comes into its own right and which can be formed by the female soul.” *Ibidem*, 28-29.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Stein, “Die Bestimmung der Frau,” 52.



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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Simone de Beauvoir, *Das andere Geschlecht. Sitte und Sexus der Frau* (1949) (Hamburg, 2002) 184.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz, "Konstruiertes Artefakt oder leibhaftes, naturtranszendierendes Wesen. Zur Geschlechteranthropologie bei Edith Stein," *Katholische Bildung* 102 (2001): 401-411; here: 401.

<sup>86</sup> E. Hasse, *Der Ruf nach der mütterlichen Frau. Ein Buch der weiblichen Selbsterforschung* (Habelschwerdt, 1928) 8.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. A. Pease, B. Pease, *Why Men don't Listen and Women can't Read Maps: How We're Different and What to Do about It* (New York, 2000).