The Influence of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross/Edith Stein on Pope John Paul II’s Understanding of the Feminine Genius

by

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I.)  

**Introduction:**

According to Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the model of the Universal Church is that of a feminine nature. In her feminine model, the Church is called to be a self-gift for Christ the Bridegroom and to emulate the Blessed Mother of God as her model *par excellence*. In this thesis the author will attempt to articulate this model of the feminine self-gift and the personal and moral influences that St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) had on Karol Wojtyła’s (Pope John Paul II) perceptions of sacred femininity. This paper will articulate the specific influences of Stein’s feminine philosophy on Wojtyla the man, as well as his writings concerning his phenomenological and anthropological perceptions of feminine personhood. This will be done by examining some of the strong feminine influences on Stein herself, in addition to her phenomenological approach to femininity; followed by Stein’s influence on Wojtyla and his concept of feminine personhood and “genius.” This will include, for example, Stein’s arguments regarding feminine ontology as it relates to feminine physiology and how these concepts are found repeatedly in Wojtyla’s writings as the late Vicar of Christ on earth.

Stein’s strong and holy model of the feminine nature influenced Wojtyla while still a young college student. Through his meditations on the mystical beauty of the Body of Christ in the Church and the ontological and physiological natures of feminine personhood, Wojtyla came to understand femininity not in terms of simply a haphazard sexual chance or “state,” but rather in the fullness of the “feminine genius” as it was ordained by God and incorporated into a woman’s actual vocation within the world.
II.) The Personal Influences of Feminine Identity on Edith Stein:

In approaching a genuine concept of what composed the feminine reality for St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, or Edith Stein as she was known prior to receiving the Carmelite habit, there is the necessity of first approaching the influencing realities and people that so profoundly influenced the life of this magnanimous woman. Without such a basis it would be impossible to adequately grasp the impact that Stein had on the person and experiential perceptions of Karol Wojtyla. Likewise, such an understanding greatly enables one to perceive how these influences from Stein ultimately affected the anthropological perceptions of Karol Wojtyla. Wojtyla’s understanding of feminine personhood is intrinsically an experiential perception based largely on his own experiences of femininity and one which includes an ontological nature which is interwoven with the physiological nature of womanhood. Stein wrote and lectured repeatedly on the reality that the entire nature of womanhood included the unique feminine soul, which is manifested in her body. Thus the feminine nature is not simply a physical reality, but includes an emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimension as well. Such a unique perception of feminine anthropology will be later found repeatedly in Wojtyla’s writings as bishop, cardinal, and ultimately as Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church².

Stein has been criticized for leaning too liberally in her understanding of the emotional uniqueness of women, in addition to the critique by some that she leans too conservatively in her perception of the feminine in its complementarity of masculinity and in her strong defense of the maternal/nurturing model of femininity. However, one concept must be initially established when balancing these critiques and when
approaching the truth of who Stein actually was and what she taught with regards to femininity, namely, the *lived* reality of the feminine identity. While understanding the identity of the human person and of womanhood through a distinctly phenomenological lens, Stein nonetheless came to this understanding through both philosophical and experiential methods of learning. This understanding of femininity was grounded firmly in her conviction of both the spiritual and physiological realities that accompany the human person, specifically the person’s search for God. Her life was filled with the real experiences of one who knew firsthand the capacity for sacrifice and strength within the Christian model of womanhood. Be it her widowed mother struggling to provide for her seven children and managing a fumbling lumber business, her relationships with the fellow nurses during World War I, her experience as a professed agnostic, or the sacrifice and faith of Christian women, she formulated her philosophical thought and arguments based on a lived reality of experience, rather than simply through speculation or academic conjecture.  

There were several key moments, people, and arguments that deeply influenced Stein’s concept of femininity, perhaps most notably, her own experience in witnessing the piety and dedication of her mother. Auguste Stein lost her husband prior to Edith’s second birthday and struggled desperately to raise seven children and maintain operations on her husband’s lumber company. While Edith floundered in and out of her faith throughout adolescence, she became deeply impressed by her mother’s profound devotion to her Judaic practices, her steadfast work ethic, and her deep faith. Stein’s brothers and sisters worked for their mother at the lumberyard on most days, while simultaneously looking after the affairs of the household. The matriarch would return
home daily, fatigued after a day of continual manual labor and management, only to say simply to her children, “Ah, my bed is the most wonderful place in the world!”

Stein became accustomed to her mother’s determined yet compassionate tone, and learned from it. While other siblings had been blessed with a capacity for management and arithmetic, by nature Stein had been blessed with a keen intellect as a whole. Always taking above average marks in school and becoming easily embarrassed by the attention thus given to her, she was inevitably encouraged and supported by Frau Stein, and found great solace in her maternal encouragement and strong-willed nature. In her journals, Stein reports that in spite of working all day outside in the lumberyard, her mother would invariably return home with warm hands and ready to do what needed to be done for the children who anxiously awaited their mother. She remarks on the emotional nature of “the Matriarch”:

Being constantly outdoors certainly has helped her to remain hale and hearty at her advanced age. Even on bitterly cold days she would come home with hands so warm that with them she could take the chill from mine. This always symbolized for me that all life and warmth in our home came from her.

While acknowledging that her mother was indeed cheated by unscrupulous venders who took advantage of her generosity, Stein likewise notes that the business as a whole “prospered,” due certainly to the business acumen of Frau Stein and to “being blessed by heaven,” as she herself had said. Stein later notes that after adopting agnosticism and abandoning the piety of her childhood Judaic practices, that her mother firmly, but tactfully lead her to reconsider her position: “She said to me, giving what she
likewise considered a proof of God’s existence: ‘After all, I can’t imagine that I owe anything that I have achieved to my own ability.’”

Stein was born on the Jewish Feast of the Day of Atonement and her mother found this to be especially providential. While the tone of her memoirs do not express an exaggerated reverence for the Jewish piety of her youth, they do very clearly articulate the profundity with which she viewed the Judaic traditions and personal faith of her mother. As Stein would later pen *The Science of the Cross*, the role of sacrifice in her own phenomenological insights would forever manifest themselves in her writings and lectures. This was due, no doubt, in part to the concept of the “scapegoat” which was so prevalent a part of the Day of Atonement:

*I was born on the Day of Atonement, and my mother always considered it my real birthday….She laid great stress on my being born on the Day of Atonement, and I believe this contributed more than anything else to her youngest being especially dear to her.*

Stein witnessed the personal sacrifice of her mother on a firsthand basis each day. This daily “death to self” and ever-constant giving to provide for her family would later shape Stein’s understanding of both femininity and acceptance of the Cross in each one of our lives and the gift of self that each is called to make in his own life. Ten years prior to her own death at the hands of the Nazis in Germany, Stein began to use a term she aptly described as “holocaustum,” in referring to the dying to self and giving of self that is needed for the true Christian to remain steadfast in following Jesus Christ to Calvary.

This would similarly influence her perceptions of femininity as a whole as well.
While Frau Stein and Edith came to a bitter head when she later converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun, Stein reports of the vivid experience she felt of her mother’s warmth and spirit during the ceremony of her final profession of vows in the summer of 1936. Her mother had died at precisely the time of the liturgy and Stein was undeterred in her conviction that her mother was spiritually there beside her. As providence would have it, Frau Stein had as profound an impact on her daughter in death as she did in life.  

Stein was similarly influenced in her perceptions of feminine identity by the German philosopher and father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, known to her simply as “the Master.” Husserl’s ideas caused the pendulum to swing as an entire school of phenomenological thought arose based largely around an opposition to the Kantian school of thought which argued that one cannot know for certain that specific truths actually exist. Husserl defended the argument that one could “know” truths based in experience or phenomenon, a phenomenon being any observable fact or experience. Thus phenomenology, according to Husserl, is the study of how experience is the demonstrator \textit{par excellence} of what man can actually come to know. Stein comments on this time in her life, when “the truth alone was my only prayer,” and while professing agnosticism, she was struck by the profundity of the conversion to Catholicism of Max Scheler (a man she once compared to Dorian Gray by virtue of his handsome appearance). Scheler was himself a convert from Judaism to Catholicism. He possessed a deeply empathetic nature, while similarly having an extremely intuitive approach to reality as well. While adopting the philosophical argumentation of agnosticism, she nonetheless searched insatiably for the truth and what her heart told her
was genuine. This thirst for truth was invigorated after she encountered Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, which lead her to further phenomenological studies. In 1916 Stein became a graduate assistant to Husserl and continued to compile and summarize his works, making it not only more reader-friendly but much more coherent. The Master guided his star pupil through the labyrinth of pre-doctoral thesis work and proudly sat on the review board during the defense of her dissertation, prior to receiving her doctorate of philosophy in 1917.

While the writings and lectures of philosopher Max Scheler profoundly affected her experiential approach to truth, Stein was equally affected by the personal experiences of suffering and the depths of those whose personal struggles affected her directly. In her diaries and journal entries, Stein mentioned two primary experiences which largely impacted her phenomenological and spiritual concept of femininity and womanhood; the first occurred during World War I, when her friend and colleague Adolf Reinach was killed in action in Flanders, France. She was asked to assist his widow in sorting through Reinach’s papers, an undertaking she initially dreaded. Stein was stunned by the acceptance and Christian faith of Reinach’s widow, which ultimately became her first impression of “lived Christianity” put in context of the suffering Christ on the Cross. The widow apparently found so much comfort in the reality of the Cross of Christ that Stein reports that the widow was soon ministering to her, rather than the widow. During this time of Stein’s professed agnosticism, Mrs. Reinach’s trust in divine providence and the evidential and mystical beauty that accompanies uniting of one’s sufferings with Christ, struck a profound chord of truth in Edith’s own search for truth and strength.
among the philosophical realms. Stein would later address such redemptive suffering in her writings on what she referred to as the “science” of the Cross of Christ.

Anyone who researches the life and writings of Edith Stein, the Carmelite mystic, would at some point encounter the influence of her spiritual mother, St. Teresa of Avila. A moment of definitive spiritual enlightenment came to Stein one night after having visited her friend Hedwig Conrad-Martius and her husband. Randomly selecting Teresa’s autobiography, Stein found herself unable to put the book down. After reading the entire book in one sitting, she replied simply, “This is the truth!” She then purchased a Catholic catechism and Bible and began pouring over Church teachings and documents, and ultimately was baptized a Roman Catholic on January 1, 1922, in spite of the personal grief her conversion caused her mother. Stein continued to attend synagogue with her mother, though all the while praying from her Latin breviary and Catholic litanies.

St. Teresa of Jesus would continue to impact Edith’s life both prior to entering the Carmelites, and also during her mystical experiences while absorbing the silence and contemplative nature of the Carmelite rhythm of prayer and work. After translating *The Way of Perfection* into German, Stein grew in her admiration of St. Teresa as a strong-willed reformer and yet as a daughter of Christ, always docile to his mercy:

> And as though I could do anything, or were something, I asked the Lord with many tears and entreated Him to remedy this great evil (apostasies of the time)….And seeing that I was a woman and incapable of doing anything, and as my whole longing was that at least a few souls should be very good, I decided to do what was possible, namely to follow the evangelical counsels with the greatest possible perfection, and to strive that the few nuns who are here together should
do the same…I trusted in the infinite mercy of God…Oh, dearest Sisters, help me to entreat our Lord; for this purpose He has gathered you here, this is your vocation.\textsuperscript{14}

Stein admired the feminine strength of this woman who, while having spent her life largely in solitude, took upon herself and her community a religious reform so immediately necessary in the Reformation-minded Spanish culture of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century.

Stein notes in her journal:

What was it that inspired this nun, who had been living in prayer in her cloistered cell for so many years, with the ardent desire to do something for the cause of the Church? What made her realize the needs and demands of her time with such penetration? Precisely the fact that she was living a life of prayer, that she let herself be drawn ever more deeply into the inner parts of her ‘Interior Castle,’ even unto that hidden chamber where He could say to her: ‘that it was time that she took upon her His affairs as if they were her own, and that He would take her affairs upon Himself.’\textsuperscript{15}

Stein comments greatly in her writings on the impact of other saints and Old and New Testament women, such as Ruth, Judith, and Esther, and, in particular, the Blessed Mother, in noting the unique and profound vocation of womanhood in the fundamental designs of God towards humanity. While acknowledging the specific vocation of the Mother of God as being inherently unique, over time Stein comes to realize that the specific vocation of such other women “is not a privilege restricted to a few chosen ones whose names are preserved in the annals of history,” but that each human person is created physiologically and ontologically unique, while being endowed with a nature that
enables her to fulfill the vocation to which she has been given. In particular, the feminine
time nature of womanhood has, of itself, a specific composition that is ordered to the
fulfillment of her vocation and the fulfillment of God's plan towards humanity through
her vocation. What is unique about these influential people and experiences in the life
of Stein was the profundity of the effect that they had on her spiritual life in particular,
and the extent to which their example encouraged her to probe deeper into the solitude of
her own contemplative prayer. It was at this stage that she began to develop most
profoundly her perceptions of feminine personhood.

Not long after her conversion, Stein accepted a teaching position at a convent
school operated by the Dominican Sisters in Germany. During this period of teaching
young women, Stein began to reexamine her understanding of femininity in light of the
vocation of womanhood by Christ, in addition to reexamining certain fundamental
questions with regards to feminine education. One of her colleagues during this time was
Roman Ingarden, himself a phenomenologist, who would later become one of the
University professors to young Karol Wojtyla, thereby imparting to him the seeds of the
phenomenological insights of Max Scheler (on whom he would later write his Doctoral
dissertation) and Edith Stein, the Christian feminist.

III.) The Feminine Perceptions of Edith Stein:

Within the years 1928 to 1932, Stein traveled throughout Europe, lecturing widely
and, as papal biographer George Weigel notes, “sketched out a distinctively Christian
feminism” which was inevitably a “sign of contradiction” to the Socialist ideology of
feminine servanthood and utilitarianism which began to slowly surface among the
culture at the time. She spoke widely among the circles of university professors
and academic scholars, encouraging Catholic woman to have hope in their dignity and
always to look forward to the future. During this time in pre-Nazi Germany, women
possessed only the rudimentary rights of children and were perceived solely as second-
class citizens. Many critics of women’s rights argued that a woman’s “proper” place was
fundamentally in the home and that a woman’s livelihood should be taken up largely with
child rearing. Such critics argued that women were simply incapable of effectively
functioning in the practical roles of their male counterparts. In protest many within the
feminist movement tended to relativize or deny any differences between the sexes
whatsoever in an effort to accentuate equality, ironically a concept argued by many
radical feminists in contemporary culture in an effort to downplay sexual differentiation.
Stein; however, lectured widely on the reality of sexual equality while realizing certain
fundamental differentiation between the sexes. Likewise, she argued that there is an
essential nature and essential value that accompanies the feminine identity, and when this
is adequately understood, both the sexes come to realize their greater value within their
human personhood. She articulates that when one fully comes to understand this
fundamental identity as being true, unique, and from God, one will therein grow in self-
awareness and genuineness and be able to give of herself completely to her “helper” in
fulfilling her vocational call.

With regards to Stein’s physical appearance, Henry Bordeaux articulates in Edith
Stein, Thoughts on Her Life and Times, that by most accounts Stein was not an altogether
attractive woman by external appearances, yet she was in fact genuine and those she came into contact with realized it and were attracted to her because of it:

Her face was round, her nose somewhat wide, her hair parted in the middle high above her forehead and her eyes sparkled with intelligence…In a word, she was true.

Those around her felt it instinctively and respected her.\(^19\)

Even in her own life she pointed to the fact that a woman’s self-worth is much more than simply physicality. Stein’s humility and intellect were tempered by her feminine self-awareness, a concept found repeatedly in the writings of St. Teresa of Avila, no doubt the result of varied experiences among the women and men of her life, in addition to Teresa’s own phenomenological contemplation of her own identity as a daughter of Christ.

After leaving the Dominican School for girls, Stein searched avidly for a professional appointment as a university professor; however, due in part largely to being a female in a male-dominated career and to her Judaic heritage, she was unsuccessful, though she gave private instruction to university and college level students. In spite of such challenges, Stein earned a considerable international reputation for her courage in addressing contemporary issues of her time, in addition to lecturing widely on the unique vocation of womanhood in the modern world, especially as it confronted the Socialist ideology of the Nazis, which argued that the feminine life should be reserved solely for utilitarian purposes and for “children, kitchen, and church.”\(^20\) In her book entitled *Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family* Josephine Koeppel articulates the unique combination of experiential perceptions coupled with sound faith that enabled Stein’s feminine perceptions to appeal to so many:
She went beyond sociology, psychology, and philosophy...and she did so not by ignoring these disciplines but by placing them within the faith dimension in which she presented and suggested her conclusions. She shared the fruits of both, her years of association with important thinkers, and her wide human experience; and she did this sharing in a heartfelt simple manner as of one who had deep empathy for her hearers and their challenging situations. She awoke the conscience of teachers and parents, but did not leave them without the means for waging their own contest.21

In light of the fact that Stein had few scientific or psychological studies to fortify her argument for the equal but distinct nature of women, she conceded that more “serious, scientific treatment” needed to be given this field of study. By her own admonition Stein generally had one central message which much of her writing, lecturing and arguments revolved back to; namely “how one may go about living at the hand of the Lord,” and in complete dependence on Him. She referred to this message as the ceterum censeo, or central theme. One later finds this element of lived practicality to be a common theme in the writings and thoughts of Karol Wojtyla as well; namely, the arguments as to just how one’s Christian love is lived out and fulfilled in one’s specific vocation. In approaching the theological constructs of Stein’s feminine personhood it must be noted then that she perceived everything through the lens of Christ and one’s entire dependence on him for meaning and continual self-revelation. This divine-anthropological perception would so later influence Wojtyla that this concept would eventually emerge as one of the most repeated themes with regards to his perceptions of Christian humanism. This is clearly seen in his frequent quotations from Gaudium et
Spes, or what was known during the Second Vatican Council simply as Schema 13, regarding Christ’s revelation of man to himself (specifically sections 22 and 24): “Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear (22).”

Due largely in part to her own phenomenological formation, in addition her own experience of being a woman, Stein lectured widely on the dignity of the feminine nature and argued that by their very nature, women are unique and therefore educational systems should be tailored to meet these unique needs of women. The beauty of the feminine nature includes “maternal instincts, in addition to an enormous capacity for interpersonal relationships, and an extraordinary capacity for empathy and love.” Similarly, Stein taught that women are generally more “emotionally centered” than men, and thus they require specific training to better enable them to grow in self-knowledge of this intrinsic nature.

Though she argued that women should be permitted to enter all fields of professional livelihood, Stein similarly exulted the genuine beauty and vocation of womanhood in the home, and in particular, the foundational role that she plays in the formative years of her children. Stein understood the human person in terms of one, who, by her very nature, searches for God. Her essential understanding of the feminine identity is not to be understood, however, in terms of woman being and possessing a solely feminine nature apart from the masculine. Nor is her understanding of the masculine nature to be properly understood as being segregated from human femininity. Within her phenomenological premises, one finds that she understood the unique roles of each of the sexes in terms of human personhood as a larger whole, yet within this whole
lies the division between the feminine nature and the masculine nature, respectively. While acknowledging that there is a tendency in the West to isolate one from the other, she argued that while the identity of each is unique, “all of us have our distinctive individual nature and may realize the feminine and masculine nature to different degrees and in differing ways.” Thus while an individual may possess an inherently feminine or masculine nature within his/her personhood, he/she likewise may possess characteristics of the feminine or masculine natures as well by virtue of the very fact that he/she is a human person. While conceding that in general “males tend towards the masculine and females tend towards the feminine,” Stein is careful to underscore that in spite of the fundamental differences and uniqueness of the natures of each of the sexes, they are united by their human nature overall, and one may possess characteristics of the opposite sex to a greater or lesser degree. She opposed any attempt to approach this differentiation in terms of an essentialist mindset, which would tend to deny any uniqueness among the sexes, and yet completely segregate them as well.

In addition to the aforementioned influences on Stein’s perception of femininity, she was likewise largely influenced by her own studies in feminine personhood, years of teaching, and her own experiential perceptions as a woman rooted in faith and the Judaic scriptural traditions. It is from this perspective then that she argues that the nature of woman is threefold: “her common human nature, her wholly individual nature, and that which is specific to her as a woman.” With regards to the individual nature of femininity and “that which is specific to her as a woman,” Stein points out that there are two fundamentally distinctive aspects of womanhood: 1.) Women tend to be oriented towards what is inherently personal and human, whereas men generally are oriented
towards what is more “objective” or distinctively practical and/or factual. 2.) She argues, “women are directed towards the whole, whereas men tend to compartmentalize.”

In other words, it is natural for men to generally direct their energies and efforts towards a project or a specific discipline of study or work, whereas it is inherently natural for a woman to direct her thoughts and energies towards “living things,” people, and what is fundamentally personal in the lives of herself and others. It is interesting to note that within this understanding of male/female orientations of nature, she argues similarly that by their nature women involve their entire being in the energies that they undertake and towards the people they encounter. Such a full involvement in their vocation and work enables them to achieve a profound development both within themselves, in addition to others and the societal whole, thereby assuming a nurturing role. By contrast, because of the tendency to focus largely on the rational and a specific discipline, men generally tend to achieve only a “one-sided development.”

It should be noted that Stein is not arguing for the superiority of women, or that women are somehow less objectively minded. Rather, as Mary Catherine Baseheart paraphrases, simply that “characteristically women are not content to remain on the level of the abstract.” Stein notes that women inherently and cognitively desire to “relate the conceptual back to the concrete.” In other words, they generally tend to seek to understand how abstract realities can be related concretely to the personal and lived realities of humanity. This “practical” thread of thought is seen enigmatically throughout Stein’s journals, as well as in the phenomenological thought of Wojtyla both before and after his election as Roman Pontiff. For instance, in Love and Responsibility, Wojtyla repeatedly makes reference as to how the spiritual and emotional love of spouses is made
manifest within the conjugal bond, and that within this expression of love the sexual act
not only becomes just, but indeed sacred and sanctifying in that the couple grows closer
to one another and Christ in a Trinitarian relationship.31

Along these lines Stein asserts both in her lectures and writing that the nature of
femininity is oriented towards a loving and enjoying of God’s creation. This loving and
cherishing requires emotional sensitivity of the human person, in addition to an
admiration towards all things living. Thus, she notes, the beauty of the feminine contains
within it a passion for the things concrete and an “emotional responsiveness” to their
intrinsic value.32 Masculinity, on the other hand, can be generally understood in terms of
“bodily strength, the ability for predominantly abstract thought, and independent
creativity.”33 Throughout this phenomenological argument Stein underscores the
fundamental characteristics that one finds in the feminine aspect of woman’s human
nature; namely, the capacity to feel on a profound level, intuition into reality, human
empathy, and true adaptability as necessity demands. Because, as she notes, women are
created to love and care for all living things, the nature of womanhood is characterized by
a “responsiveness to the real.”34 Woman has an intrinsic capacity to respond to the
created reality of God. Wojtyla will later build on this model, coupled with that of St.
Paul, in expanding on the “genius of women” and the femininity of the Church as the
Bride of Christ.

Her critics have argued that Stein’s arguments tend to apply blanket feminine and
masculine traits to each sex, without taking into consideration the reality that certain men
tend to naturally to bare more feminine characteristics and vice versa. Undoubtedly,
Stein went to great efforts to articulate the varied natures that she both observed and
believed to exist between the masculine and the feminine natures. However, as Sarah Borden underscores in *Edith Stein*, Edith understood each sex as being intrinsically unique and intrinsically equal. Likewise, in no way does Stein altogether divide the sexes and their characteristics as a whole. Rather, the aforementioned traits of each sex fall under the one trait of human nature: “The traits in question are primarily human ones, and all powers that are present in masculine nature are also present in feminine nature…Nonetheless, one can talk about a feminine or masculine nature because the human traits may generally appear in different degrees and relationships.”

Thus Stein is not arguing for the exclusivity of solely feminine traits. She thought that each person should strive to obtain the ideals of both the masculine and feminine natures within. However, she does argue, based on her own experience and research, that there are generally certain traits and characteristics that can be assigned to the nature of each sex. Given the hypersensitivity to this issue and to broad generalizations in our western culture, such a point should be clearly understood if one is to properly grasp the feminine concept of Edith Stein.

Because Stein was so outspoken regarding the equality of women as a whole and certainly within the cultural ideologies with which she lectured and taught, she understood that the traits inherent in the feminine nature enable a woman to work almost any and all jobs that a man is capable of doing. Thus there should be no social or legal inhibitors regarding occupations and employment of women within traditionally male dominated sectors of the workplace. Having struggled with this firsthand as a qualified woman looking for employment as a university professor of philosophy, she approached this issue from an experiential vantage point. With this understanding, she is quick to
point out that instead of relativizing the uniqueness of the nature of each of the sexes and their certain ways of doing things, a woman should be permitted accessibility to any male-dominated position. With this in mind she would certainly approach this task with a “feminine singularity” or in the way proper to womanhood. She uses the example of a female doctor, who may inherently be attuned to the entire person who is ill, as opposed to the faulty organ itself. Stein understands this feminine nature, as all human potentiality, as “in need of development,” and not to be understood naively, as it is likewise subject to corruption or deformation. However, with the assistance of divine grace, she insists that achieving one’s potential in nature is certainly possible: “The deepest changes cannot come through external education or formation; rather only the power of grace can uproot and form fallen nature anew; it happens from within, never from without.”

Because she understands the truly feminine orientation of womanhood towards a nurturing nature, Stein points out that women are oriented towards motherhood, a concept deeply debated among some contemporary feminists arguing for the negation of motherly models. Inevitably her own experience of motherhood, though herself not actually having bore children, and her deep admiration for the Mother of Christ impacted this perception. She repeatedly argued that “matter serves form” and that the physical nature of women’s bodies spring from the nurturing orientation of their God-given souls. By their physical and psychological composition, women have a profound and deep connection with God and with their very nature and created personhood. In her argument that the feminine soul is “suited” to the feminine body, Stein assertively points out that a “woman’s soul is present and lives more intensely in all the parts of the body, and it is

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inwardly affected by that which happens to the body.” Thus in her created nature, there is a manner in which the feminine body and the reproductive and nurturing role of womanhood is intrinsically related to the deep union of body and soul within a woman herself. This not only affects her entire nature; it affects all she does and perceives as well. Thus, in both body and soul the feminine nature is oriented towards others and the nurturing of others.

As a point of departure for this argument, Stein points out that the overriding vocation fitting to the divinely created feminine nature is the “full development of human beings.” Thus, this full development for Stein is achieved through the assisting of the development of others because she is oriented towards the fulfillment and nurturing of others first and foremost. Because a woman is oriented, or more precisely created, towards persons and the development of persons, Stein argues that the woman herself becomes a whole and entire person when assisting others to become their fullest as well. One can see this Steinian understanding of this “self-gift” within Wojtyla’s perceptions of the personhood found repeatedly within the documents of the John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council (G.E.S. 22). Within her own culture, Stein called upon the women in Germany to achieve their fullest divinely ordered nature, by assisting the stricken culture to once again gain the values of human dignity, as opposed to human pleasures, which she compared to “anesthetics” which dull the true vocation of femininity.

Coming from a Judaic background and from a largely scriptural interpretation of human personhood, Stein used two images in articulating this “other” role of the feminine nature: 1.) Woman as helpmate: Stein draws from Genesis 2:20, wherein the Lord God mentions that “it is not good for the man to be alone,” and thereafter creates a fit partner
for him.\textsuperscript{40} Thus from the very beginning woman is oriented and created for others and for the man in order to be a helpmate and companion. The helping of the helpmate accomplished by the woman is the role of nurturer and sharing empathetically in the lives of others. Stein underscores this feminine orientation clearly in her lectures: “Where a human being is alone, especially one in bodily or psychological need, she stands lovingly participating and understanding, advising and helping; she is the companion of life who helps so that man is not alone.”\textsuperscript{41} In this context, the feminine nature is greatly Christocentric in orientation as the woman “rejoices with the joyful and mourns with the sorrowful.” Likewise, in such a vision of femininity, one is reminded of the nurturing and courageous presence of the women at the foot of the Cross of Christ, and to whom he first appears after his resurrection.

2.) Woman as Mother: Similarly, because Stein understands the feminine nature as a reflection of the love of God, the maternal nurturing of her nature is a reflection of God Himself. By necessity a mother must not only love her child; she must look ahead to the possibilities of her child’s growth, development, and full potential. She must also cherish the child and sense the emotional and psychological experiences that the child is going through. Such a focus on the nurturing and growth of the child and of others likewise emphasizes both the Christocentric call of service of others, and the inherent nature of the feminine being.

In articulating these images of womanhood, Stein is not implying that all women have a calling to either spousal companionship or biological motherhood. She is, however, pointing out that there is something intrinsic to her nature which enables a woman to nurture and care for those outside herself and of the larger society as a whole.
The roles of companionship and spiritual motherhood can be directed by any woman to any “other” in society. Therefore Stein’s understanding of the divinely ordered feminine nature cannot be said to consist of solely a bodily, emotional, psychological, or spiritual nature. Rather, because she is created for God and finds her fulfillment in the personal fulfillment and nurturing of others, her bodily, emotional, and psychological nature emanates from a soul oriented first and foremost towards Christ as His spouse.  

IV.) **The Influence of Edith Stein’s Philosophy of Femininity on the Thought of Karol Wojtyla:**

Pope John Paul II has said of the fundamental vocation of womanhood that an “indispensable point of departure” for an adequate discussion of the vocation of women must take into account that the reality of the “self-gift,” as he has outlined repeatedly during his Pontificate, and from which he drew largely from Stein’s arguments on femininity. By this he implies that man truly finds himself in becoming a gift for the “other,” and in self-giving, rather than self-taking. Such an understanding of feminine personhood was rearticulated in May of 2004 in a letter promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith entitled *On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and the World*, which repeatedly makes reference to the “other” centeredness of the divinely-ordered feminine nature. This understanding of femininity was again underscored in March of 2005 by Mary Ann Glendon, president of the Pontifical Academy of the Social Sciences as she addressed the United Nations on the tenth
anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women: “The ideal of self-giving has special relevance for women, who through motherhood bear and nurture children.”

This argument for the other-centeredness, argued by John Paul and articulated phenomenologically by Stein, has come under heavy scrutiny by some modern feminists such as Joanna Manning, who claim that the Holy See is both naive in its male patronization of women and that Rome is simply “out of touch” with the lived reality of women in this millennia: “Such stereotyping is only what I would expect when a group of celibate men in an all-male enclave makes pronouncements on the psychology and nature of women.”

In her book entitled *Is the Pope Catholic?*, Manning assaults John Paul II specifically for what she refers to as his treatment of women as second-class and unequal citizens: “The Catholic Church, through its patriarchal and hierarchical structures, has created relationships of dependency and passivity that are in fact dangerous to the well-being of women and children. And while the struggle for women’s equality extends far beyond the confines of the Church, the tentacles of this particular institution reach into women’s lives around the globe.”

In this perception, the biblical understanding of the feminine nature and the beauty of Tradition through the Magisterium of the Church becomes inherently blurred by the radical feminist desire to place herself at the center of creation rather than Christ. Alice von Hildebrand refers to such perceptions by radical feminists in her book *The Privilege of Being a Woman*: “The feminists reading of the Bible is inevitably thwarted by their philosophy; in fact, they are rewriting this inspired book according to their own subjective ‘inspiration.’ In the long run, it leads them paradoxically to place women at
the apex of creation and to proclaim the superiority of the female sex. God becomes a She, and Christ will be rebaptized Christa!48

In spite of such consistent beleaguering with regards to the Church’s, and not per se his, argumentation regarding the beauty of the feminine nature, John Paul II still reiterates that sexual complementarity has a profound meaning in the life and reality of the human person and his/her intrinsic orientation towards the person of Jesus Christ. This anthropological understanding developed within Wojtyla through several primary influences, not the least of which was the phenomenological argumentation of Edith Stein and the writings of St. Paul.

As a young student at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Wojtyla studied under the venerable Roman Ingarden, the Polish phenomenologist who was himself a colleague and friend to Edith Stein. Ingarden’s particular experiential insights greatly appealed to the young Wojtyla, and others who ascribed to this school of thought, such as Edmund Husserl, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, and Max Scheler, who was likewise a colleague of Stein. Though Ingarden was largely critical of Husserl’s transcendental idealism, his insights into ascetics and phenomenological realism (which Stein herself attributes her arguments to) greatly intrigued Wojtyla.49 Ingarden himself once described Edith Stein as a “carrier of the communal life,” making reference to the fact that she inherently perceived society in terms of the communal good of all, rather than solely of self.50 Having absorbed much of the phenomenological realism articulated by Stein, Ingarden taught his students in a largely cyclical pattern, drawing on Stein’s insights into the nature of experience, which tended to probe the question of the true reality of an object from several varied angles and experiences before making any definitive statement.
regarding the objective reality of the object of at hand. It is interesting to note, as George Weigel articulates, that years later as a professor at the Jagiellonian University and Chair of Ethics, Wojtyla tended to approach philosophical arguments and premises in largely cyclical patterns as well, as opposed to a purely linear model of pedagogy. Interviews with his former students tend to underscore this tendency. They note that his method of teaching was similar to a “spiral staircase;” in that he would state the problem, examine it from all angles, and, after returning to where he began, he would again proceed to examine the angles and perspectives still again, prior to stating a conclusive fact regarding the objectivity of the issue. Whether Wojtyla adopted such a cyclical method of thought primarily from Ingarden can perhaps not be stated definitively; certainly, however, the young Pole was affected by such dedication to truth as it relates to experience and Ingarden’s unique methodology in approaching this truth.51

As an active participant in the phenomenological school that was emerging from Eastern Europe in the early half of the twentieth century, Ingarden was familiar with Stein as the primary pupil of Husserl and as a philosopher in her own right. Stein wrote with fondness regarding Ingarden relationship with her and other philosophers noting quietly in her journal, “he was happy when he could speak with us for awhile.”52 He himself confirmed such a relationship after her death in being questioned regarding her character: “Edith Stein would never have written or said anything which she would not have replicated in her actions.” Having received over 150 hand-written letters from Stein, Ingarden found himself being “formed” by the personal and experiential thought of Stein, the phenomenologist, not just the friend. Over time his own faith life became intrinsically affected by this Jewish-convert, rather than simply his intellect or
philosophy. As a fellow Catholic, Ingarden could identify largely with Stein’s personal conversion and understanding of the intrinsic value of human personhood. Many credit Ingarden as the architect of the phenomenological movement in his native Poland; a movement inspired largely by his professional and personal contacts with the person of Edith Stein, and, as he acknowledged, “the spiritual and experiential perceptions that we absorbed from this young philosopher.”

With regards to Stein’s influence on Wojtyla himself, it is difficult to overestimate the moral and spiritual dimensions. He would later describe her moral stature as “towering” and that she had been a “paradigmatic figure” among women of the twentieth century. Ingarden’s own cyclical approach to philosophy, coupled with the profound impact that Stein had on his personal and professional life, presented the young Wojtyla with fertile spiritual and mental soil for articulating the Church’s teachings on the “genius of women.” And in addition, Wojtyla tended to combine Thomistic thought with phenomenological ethics in his later writings and Papal audiences. In his sections regarding the procession and mission of God, in the *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas articulates that it is in the procession out of one person of the Trinity to the other person that each finds his communion. Each becomes a complete gift for the other and has total “self-knowledge” in this self-giving. As articulated earlier, Wojtyla will assume these Thomistic and Steinian models of self-knowledge and self-gift in underscoring the feminine model of personhood in his later audiences as Pope.

After the unprecedented decision by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to beatify Stein in January of 1987, there erupted a great outcry among many influential Judaic organizations against the Holy See, arguing that Stein had died only because she
was a Jew prior to becoming a Roman Catholic. Likewise, many argued that such a
ceremony would only seek to “Christianize” the Holocaust, or that such an event would
ignite a flame of proselytizing by Catholics among the Jews. John Paul responded to
these arguments in the beatification mass homily noting: “Today we greet in profound
honor and holy joy a daughter of the Jewish people, rich in wisdom and courage, among
these blessed men and women. Having grown up in the strict traditions of Israel, and
having lived a life of virtue and self-denial in a religious order, she demonstrated her
heroic character on the way to the extermination camp. United with our crucified Lord,
she gave her life ‘for genuine peace’ and ‘for the people’.”

Having nearly died upon arrival at Auschwitz II-Birkenau on August 9, 1942,
Stein knew firsthand the experience of the reality of the Cross about which she had
written prolifically during her academic career and similarly characterized her own
Carmelite name (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, or “blessed by the Cross”). It is with
this spiritual emphasis that Stein’s distinctive association with the mystical beauty of the
Cross of Christ and with the insights of her spiritual mother, St. Teresa of Jesus, would
appeal so largely to the person of Karol Wojtyla, who had a profound respect for the
Carmelite traditions.

It is clear that John Paul II possessed a profound love and admiration for Stein the
saint, poet, and philosopher over the years. What is it about this relatively obscure
Jewish convert that so touched his heart to such a profound degree? What was it about
Stein that he embraced on an inherently spiritual level as a lived reality within his own
life? As was mentioned prior, certainly Roman Ingarden’s personal affiliation with the
Jewish philosopher had a direct impact on Wojtyla’s mind and own phenomenology;
however, as the author of this thesis contends, having been raised in the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation, in addition to having known so many close Jewish friends as a child that perished in the Holocaust, one could rightly argue that Wojtyla could understand and open his heart to the realities of Jewish insights more than any other Pope in history, and certainly more than most Roman Catholics. This was characteristic of John Paul II was affirmed repeatedly by Jewish leaders in Rome and around the world during his funeral. Of these personal experiences that he had known with so many warm-hearted Jews he later wrote: “Vividly I remember those who gathered every Saturday at the synagogue behind our school. Both religious groups, Catholics and Jews were united by the awareness that they prayed to the same God.”

The Polish Jews in the first half of the 20th century identified themselves largely with Poland and with the Polish struggle for independence and freedom. This reality was never far from the heart of Wojtyła as a young man or during his many leadership roles in the Church. As a Lieutenant in the Polish army, the elder Captain Karol Wojtyla passed on to Karol a firm sense of Polish identity, culture, and pride. Ultimately, it was this dedication to truth and to culture that enabled the struggling young Roman Catholics and Jews to persevere during the stronghold of the Nazis and the occupation of the Soviet Red Army under Joseph Stalin. John Paul’s deep respect and admiration of the Jewish people, whom he frequently referred to as “our elder brothers,” undoubtedly enabled him to be personally attracted to Stein’s historical witness as a daughter of Abraham coming to understand the revelation fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, as an adolescent, the future pope possessed a profound interest in the Carmelite Order, and for the mystical writings of St. Teresa of Avila, and St. John of the
Cross. Having devoured the writings of St. John of the Cross, as a member of Jan Tyranowski’s Living Rosary group, Wojtyla became greatly attracted to the Spanish reformer and doctor of the Church. Because Carmelite tradition involves a spirituality of abandonment to the Cross of Christ, and because Wojtyla later wrote on St. John of the Cross while completing his doctoral thesis under Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange at the Angelicum, he often reflected on the reality that the Carmelite tradition had a profound impact on him both spiritually and emotionally. At one point in his young adult life Wojtyla himself even considered becoming a Carmelite monk, but after much prayer and discernment concluded, “I don’t think I had a very strong vocation to the Carmelites.”

Suffice to say; however, that the Carmelite tradition occupied a deeply personal part of Wojtyla’s spirituality, thus engendering him to Stein on still another level.

Other than what has been officially documented regarding Stein’s personal influence and appeal within the mystical traditions and personal prayer life of Pope John Paul II, there is little doubt that John Paul’s deep love and devotion to the Holy Virgin Mary has led him to a fuller understanding of feminine personhood as revealed in the physiological and spiritual composition of woman as created in the image and likeness of God. Having lost his own mother Emilia while still quite young, it is certain that the young Wojtyla found great maternal solace in his devotion to the Blessed Mother, a phenomenon not uncommon in the Church throughout her history, especially during the darker periods of high mortality rates among delivering mothers (i.e. Black Plague). In her own life, Stein was profoundly marked by the strength of her own mother, who undoubtedly contributed to her understanding of the nature of feminine personhood and character. It is the position of this thesis that given the nature of the personal lives of
both Stein and Wojtyla, and their own experiences with their own mothers and with the
women in their lives, that Stein’s spirituality and philosophy appealed to the person of
Karol Wojtyla on an intimate and familial level. At her canonization in October of 1998
he articulated this point to some degree:

Through the experience of the Cross, Edith Stein was able to open the way to a
new encounter with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of Our Lord
Jesus Christ. Faith and the Cross proved inseparable for her. Having matured in
the school of the Cross, she found the roots to which the tree of her own life was
attached. She understood that it was very important for her to ‘be a daughter of
the chosen people and to belong to Christ not only spiritually, but also through her
blood…’ May her witness constantly strengthen the bridge of mutual
understanding between Jews and Christians.62

During his twenty six year pontificate Pope John Paul II frequently referred to
what he called the “School of Suffering,” in underscoring the redemptive nature of
suffering as understood through the Cross of Christ. This theme is found repeatedly in
the writings of Stein and especially in her last book entitled the Science of the Cross,
wherein she points out the beautiful and yet difficult nature of human suffering, and that
through the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, human suffering takes on eternal merit
beyond mortal comprehension. In a letter to a fellow Carmelite sister, she writes: “One
can only gain a scientia cruces (knowledge of the Cross) if one has thoroughly
experienced the Cross. I have been convinced of this from the first moment onwards and
have said with all my heart: ‘Ave, Crux, Spes Unica’.”63 This understanding of the
redemptive nature of human suffering, though certainly articulated in the Carmelite
tradition, is part of the Church’s tradition as a whole, and appealed to John Paul specifically considering his own phenomenological perspectives with suffering and the many people he witnessed during his formative years who lost nearly everything and everyone in their lives. John Paul could in fact gain an experience of the Cross of Christ, because he lived it and endured it for the majority of his life. Having survived the deaths of all those in his family, having survived the Blitzkrieg initiated by the Nazi’s against Poland in 1939, and having persevered throughout the disheartening Communist occupation years as pastor, bishop, archbishop, and cardinal, and witnessing so many friends and good priests “detained” never to be seen again, and towards the end of his life as one who struggled with the most basic movements and physical activity in a frail body, Wojtyla knew well the personal experience of the Cross and the difficult and yet, redemptive nature of the Cross of Christ as it plays out in the lived human experience.

Likewise, because he so fundamentally associated himself as Shepherd and Vicar of Christ on earth, he openly embraced the crosses which inevitably appeared as foolishness to our culture. In his reflections on his own experiences as a bishop in *Rise, Let us Be on Our Way!*, he draws largely from Stein with regards to his own spiritual perceptions of the Cross of Christ as compared with her own tragic but glorious martyrdom for the Cross: “I was always interested in her [Stein’s] philosophy. I read her writings, but what fascinated me the most was her extraordinary life and tragic death, along with millions of other victims during this era in history.”

In addition to the influence of Stein on the spiritual personhood of John Paul II, it can be said that Stein may have influenced largely the methodology and fundamental arguments enumerated by Archbishop Wojtyla during the Second Vatican Council (1962-
George Weigel has suggested that anyone searching for a cognitive and spiritual understanding of Karol Wojtyla the man, the philosopher, and the Pope, must come to perceive him through the lens of the Second Vatican Council and the fundamental impact that this singular event had on him as a bishop and spiritually within the deepest and most intimate levels where Wojtyla communted with his God on an intimate level. William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore has noted that one truly witnessed the profundity of this depth of prayer especially while concelebrating mass with John Paul II. This deep interiority, he notes, cannot be ignored and, at times, can become even distracting due to inner-light one perceives from his person during the Holy Sacrifice of the mass. Weigel further points out that Wojtyla’s attraction to contemplative mysticism (as if found in the Carmelite tradition), can only be understood within the context of the Second Vatican Council:

“To grasp the pontificate of John Paul II ‘from inside’ means recognizing that John Paul has sought to secure the legacy of Vatican II as an epic spiritual event – the Council at which the Catholic Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, came to grips with modernity by developing a theologically enriched sense of its unique mission in and for the world.”

Weigel continues: “The Pope’s debt to Vatican II must be understood in religious rather than political or ideological terms.” Weigel makes note of the fact that no two texts have been quoted so frequently as sections 22 and 24 from Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). In them the Council asserts that the true meaning of man is to be found in the contemplation of Jesus Christ and that one truly discovers oneself in self-giving, as opposed to self-assertion or self-taking. John Paul
later expands on these fundamental issues during his one hundred and twenty-nine general audiences delivered from 1979-1983, entitled the *Theology of the Body*. What is so largely unique regarding the insights of the Council Fathers and John Paul throughout his writings, but resoundingly in the *Theology of the Body* audiences, is the emphasis on the beauty and nature of the human person. In his research and writings on the phenomenological nature of the human person, the influence of Max Scheler and Edith Stein on Wojtyla again cannot be overstated. After becoming a philosophy professor at the Lublin University (1954-1957), Scheler along with several other philosophers eventually developed a phenomenological school based around the realities of the human person, known simply as the Lublin school of philosophy. These philosophers had survived the ideologies promoted by totalitarian regimes and warped concepts of the person enumerated during the Second World War and they focused their energies on articulating a fresh “objective realism that was open to spiritual reality.”

67 The nature of man and the dignity of his person became the hallmark and perceptible goal of this school, and in particular professor Wojtyla.

In many of his own audiences and writings John Paul has linked the values of modern phenomenology (namely that of Scheler and Stein) with the Aristotelian-Thomistic and Augustinian insights found within the Church’s tradition. Of this combination Fr. Richard Hogan, Papal researcher, notes that the “unifying element” inevitably becomes the human person, as having been created in the image and likeness of God.

68 When this influence is addressed in light of the influence of the Second Vatican Council on John Paul II, one begins to see that the profundity with which the Council, and perhaps more specifically *Gaudium et Spes*, had on Wojtyla’s understanding
of the human person. While it is true that the dignity of the human person is a consistent theme throughout Wojtyla’s conferences and writings prior to the Council (see Love and Responsibility and Fruitful and Responsible Love), the fact that the Council Fathers in solemn Magisterial pronouncement reiterated these truths confirmed them spiritually and inherently for Wojtyla the philosopher/theologian. Mary Shivavanandan articulates this change in Wojtyla’s understanding of the human person prior to and post Second Vatican Council:

   Karol Wojtyla’s philosophical writings before Vatican Council II and even following the Council...concentrated on developing a concept of personhood that emphasized subjectivity, self-determination, self-governance, and self-possession. The Council brought a new dimension to his thought which can only be described as theological. The Council was a turning point for Wojtyla. He, himself, in a talk given in Rome in 1978, stated, ‘my parents, my country, my parish intended to prepare me right from the beginning for an extraordinary service of the Church, in the context of today’s Council with the many tasks united with it’s implementation, and also in al the experiences and sufferings of modern man’.69

John Paul understood the Council in intrinsically phenomenological terms, which were lived in profoundly spiritual realities. As Weigel notes, “he was not an interlocutor,” who studied the experience of the Council as a Church historian or social scientist, rather, after having taken key roles in the formation and implementation of documents such as Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, and Humanae Dignitatis, he understood the lived spiritual applicability of the teachings put forth by the Council Fathers and sought thereafter to
apply them to the lived applicability of the everyday lives of the people that compose the Mystical Body of Christ.

V.) **The Influence of Edith Stein on the Writings/Teachings of John Paul II:**

It has been noted by George Williams and Rocco Buttiglione, Papal biographers, that at the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Karol Wojtyla made a conscious effort to apply philosophical reality to a theological reality, in conjunction with one who perceives the Reality of Christ in terms of the phenomenological: “The Council did, indeed, deepen his philosophical insights, giving a greater integration to his thought, but it’s major impact seems to have been to move him in the direction of a theological rather than a primarily philosophical reality.” The Council played a large impact on his major philosophical work, *The Acting Person*. He began; however, to realize that the teachings of the Council Fathers must be applied practically and on the grass-roots level, rather than remaining simply abstract and academic notions to the laity. Wojtyla remarked to his friend Fr. Mieczyslaw Malinski, “You know, I think we have enough philosophers in the Church in Poland, and what we need now are good theologians.” Having come into personal contact with some of the most influential theologians at the Second Vatican Council, such as Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar, Wojtyla became intimately aware of the intrinsic connection between faith and the human person. He articulates this connection in his book on the Council *The Sources of Renewal*, wherein he devotes the first three chapters to the human person and his response to faith. He notes: “According to the explicit doctrine of Vatican II, faith is a particular response on the part of mankind
to God’s revelation of himself…It is not just related to his intellect and will but relates to man’s whole personal structure and spiritual dynamism.”\textsuperscript{71}

With regards as to how the influence of Edith Stein’s feminology may be found within the Council documents and teachings of John Paul II, Mary Shivanandan points out that John Paul generally understood the human person from a distinctly Thomistic angle before the Council, and after the Council his moral emphasis focused largely on the phenomenological realities of modern man, and in a unique way those of Christian womanhood.\textsuperscript{72} Having largely influenced Wojtyla’s understanding of Christian womanhood, it could be said that Stein contributed to what would be a common theme found throughout his writings and audiences as Pope John Paul II; namely that of the \textit{communio personarum}, or the communion of persons of the Trinity, which he relates to the Trinitarian nature of married love as approached in faith. This is a concept borrowed largely from St. Thomas Aquinas’ argumentation of the relations of each person of the Trinity to one another. This Thomistic notion was further developed by Stein in her translation of St. Thomas’ texts into German, thus it is upon this personalistic-Thomism that Stein developed her understanding of the complementarity of the sexes and of Christian womanhood. It is interesting to note that while this general theme is found throughout his writings before and after the Council, Wojtyla does not actually use the expression \textit{communio personarum} until after the Council itself. As Mary Shivanandan notes, the fuller expression and philosophical understanding in light of \textit{Gaudium et Spes} brought new understandings and connections to Wojtyla that had not been made prior to the Council. Having worked diligently on the Council preparatory commission in addition to the sub-council to revise \textit{Schema 13 (Gaudium et Spes)}, Wojtyla brought to the
Council his philosophical understanding of sexual complementarity, as taught by Stein and Scheler. After the Council then he was attentive as to how the insights revealed by the Council Fathers found their way into the lives of the faithful. As he noted in a 1965 article entitled *The Council and the Work of Theologians*, ‘Theology should focus on the problems of the contemporary world and especially the crisis of humanism.’ He wished the Council to focus on how man and woman in the modern world were to be “human, reasonable, and free.” His development of the communion of persons was one such applicable reality he sought to formulate in his writings as Pope.

The concept of *communio personarum* in light of the Council is significant in that in the revelation that “God reveals man to himself,” the Council Fathers articulated that as man grows in holiness and closer to God, he comes to perceive the intrinsic beauty of himself and to actually know himself. This “knowing” bares deep theological and phenomenological significance in light of its relation to the dignity of the human person and to the vocation and meaning of womanhood, as understood in Christ. In light of Wojtyla’s assertions on the communion of persons this indicates that as man and woman grow and struggle in their marriage, and as they unite their marriage to Christ, they invariably unite themselves to Christ and grow in Christian holiness, thereby fulfilling their fundamental vocations and growing in self-knowledge and love as well. The two become Trinitarian in uniting their struggles, joys, bodies, and entire lives to Christ through and in one another. In *Love and Responsibility* (in this pre-Conciliar work Wojtyla uses the term *unio personarum*, rather than *communio personarum* to refer to the same concept) Wojtyla notes that such a uniting of the couple to Christ “corresponds to the dignity of the human person.” It is important to realize that he was acutely aware of
focusing on the development of Church teachings on marriage and family rather than on changing it somehow, as he has been accused of.

The actual term ‘communion’ implies “community” or a sharing between or among persons. This is seen in light of the giving and receiving that occurs in marriage.

As previously noted, Gaudium et Spes no.24 was one of the most frequently quoted texts by John Paul II in articulating the nature of communio personarum and the gift of self to one another:

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father ‘that they may all be one…even as we are one’ (John 17:21-22), had opened up new horizons closed to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of the sons of God in truth and love. It follows then, that as man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for his own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.

In his Wednesday general audiences on The Theology of the Body, John Paul later relates this concept of communio personarum to what he referred to as ‘original unity,’ in reference to Adam prior to encountering Eve, and then ultimately in giving himself completely and totally to her. He notes that man and woman experienced a ‘double solitude’ in their differentiation and that the gift of man to woman in the state of original innocence enables them to grow in sanctity and holiness. Because the dignity of man rests above all then, in the fact that he is called to communion with God, man and woman fulfill this human dignity by communing with God by communing with one another through the marital embrace and their complete gift of self to the other. It is interesting
to note that while John Paul underscores the unity and beauty of the sexes in fulfilling their vocation in the gift of one to the other, he does not dismiss the fundamental uniqueness of each sex as well. He seems to concur largely with Stein’s assertions that while there is a certain and real feminine distinctiveness in man, both on a spiritual and corporal level, this does not undermine the equality and uniqueness of each sex, but rather intensifies the complementarity of each to one another\textsuperscript{79}. Stein pointed out that each human being has a complete human nature and that within the bounds of human nature there is the masculine and feminine natures which invariably compliment each other and are intrinsically oriented ultimately towards God\textsuperscript{80}. It can be seen clearly then that Stein’s understanding of the masculine/feminine complementarity is found frequently in Wojtyla’s assertions with regards to the communio personarum.

John Paul expands on this concept of the self gift of man to woman and woman to man in again referring to the original unity of the sexes, their self-donation, and complementarity in articulating what he refers to as the nuptial meaning of the body, which is the inherent capacity of man to allow a total and complete self-surrender of himself and his/her body to his/her spouse. He quotes Genesis in explaining that in this nuptial embrace Adam ‘knew’ Eve, thus in the actual act of giving his body to her Adam grew in knowledge of himself and likewise of Eve, and therein experienced genuine love in the “knowing” of one to the other. In the same way, John Paul points out that in completing the nuptial embrace man and woman grow in self-knowledge, knowledge of the other, and perhaps more profoundly, knowledge of God as they image Him and become Trinitarian in their union with Him. This echoes the Thomistic point made previously that each person in the Trinity has a complete knowledge of the other in the
gift of self to the other. John Paul points out that the growth in knowledge continues as the man and woman enter fatherhood and motherhood in the openness to offspring. Fr. Richard Hogan paraphrases John Paul’s understanding of this knowledge:

The woman, whose femininity is hidden, is revealed to herself and to others (especially to her husband) in motherhood. Similarly, the new relationship of the male to the child, fatherhood, reveals to the husband and to others (especially to his wife) an aspect of humanity not previously experienced. In the child, both the man and the woman see and know themselves.81

His assertions with regards to the nuptial meaning of the body and the personal-humanistic notion of the ‘knowledge’ of man to woman and woman to man cannot be understood apart from love itself. As he repeatedly has articulated in numerous Papal documents (i.e. *Familiaris Consortio*, *Redemptoris Mater*, *Mulieris Dignitatem*) the primary vocation of every human person is to love and to surrender oneself to another in fulfilling the call of Christ to the greatest form of love, namely; “to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13).”

Even as a university professor Wojtyla taught this foundational concept to his students in asserting that it is in “responsible self-giving, not self-assertion” that man finds human fulfillment.82 In her arguments, Stein repeatedly articulates that the beauty and nature of womanhood is found both in the “helpmate” companionship that she is created to give to man, and in the motherhood, biological and spiritual, that she is created to bring forth for society, both biologically and spiritually. Stein argues that “it is natural for a woman to be oriented to the other in order to be a companion,” and that by her nature a woman becomes involved “empathetically in the concerns of others.” She goes
on to point out that “even concern apart from her own is part of her orientation.” Thus the intrinsic concept of fulfillment through being a helpmate to the other and through self-donation is found repeatedly in Stein’s assertions and Wojtyla’s documents. As Pope, John Paul makes note in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the fact that by her nature woman became the helpmate for man and man for woman:

In the description found in Genesis 2:18-25, the woman is created by God from the rib of the man and is placed at his side as another ‘I’- as the companion of the man, who is alone in the surrounding world of living creatures and who finds in none of them a ‘helper’ suitable for himself. Called into existence in this way, the woman is immediately recognized by the man as ‘flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones’ and for this reason she is called woman…The woman is another ‘I’ in a common humanity. From the very beginning they appear as a ‘unity’ of the two.  

John Paul goes on to point out that even from the beginning of time, the two are called, not only to exist as “partners” in a project, working side-by-side, but rather they are called equally to exist for the other person and for the good of the other person. By the very fact that they are mutually referred to as “helpmates” indicates further that the two are both ordered towards the other and that the two must are to actually help each other to grow in Christian holiness each day. Wojtyla drew many of his insights regarding “the other” from Stein and her arguments that woman, by her orientation towards the other and as a helpmate to the man, does not necessarily have to actually be married in order to fulfill this vocation, but that the ‘tasks of companionship and motherhood can be taken up by any woman, regardless of her actual state in life.’ She notes that there is always in
woman a supernatural calling to assist in the formation of all people to greater sanctity and charity. Given her war time work as a nurse in the hospital for the wounded and the post-war realities of woundedness that Wojtyla genuinely experienced among those in Eastern Europeans, it is likely that Stein’s words rang especially poignant for him.

One area of Stein’s arguments for the dignity of womanhood that have frequently been taken out of context by prominent feminist authors, is her model of motherhood for the nature of woman. As God created woman ordered for the other, she assumes a role of nurturer and encourager of those in the larger society as a whole: “A woman is to bear the burdens, those clearly known and those hidden, which each carries; she is to search out and find the weaknesses in others and to encourage the development of the hidden potentialities in others.”

In the context of a post-modern culture this is frequently misunderstood as being out-dated or even simply glossed over by feminists who prefer to lay claim to Stein’s words on their own terms. Similarly, John Paul II has repeatedly affirmed Stein’s argument that woman is, by her nature, a nurturer and healer, and hence John Paul is frequently attacked by the very feminist activists that claim Stein’s ‘nurturing’ understanding of womanhood is outdated and irrelevant. In her book *Papal “No,”* Deborah Halter, professor of religion at Loyola University, quotes Gail Grossman Frye in taking aim with John Paul’s defense of this fundamental “truth” of the feminine nature found in *Mulieris Dignitatem:* “Women do not ask for, they do not want, a ‘special nature’ if this nature excludes them from the possibility of full participation in the life of the Church!”

By “full participation in the life of the Church” Grossman is referring to female ordination to the ministerial priesthood, an argument that the author will not take up within this context; however, it should be noted that this
misunderstanding with regards to the Church’s teachings of a male-only priesthood is in many ways the same misunderstanding of feminists to accept the true feminine nature of nurturer.

Many feminists then, simply cannot accept the argument of differentiation and equality, put forth by John Paul and recently reiterated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, or the reality that, as John Paul has repeatedly noted, the “feminine genius” of womanhood that leads to the ultimate betterment of society by her self-giving and nurturing roles. Cultural feminism so often sees the “betterment” of society by the self-assertion of women towards their “rights” by the negation of sexual complementarity and the negation of the feminine roles within the family as caregiver. This is, then, largely not a problem of having certain feminine rights at all, but one of a genuine misunderstanding of feminine identity and vocation.

During his pontificate, Pope John Paul II was not immune from confrontations with feminists who argued that this feminine model of woman as the nurturer to be outdated, regardless of how clearly he may have previously articulated this model as being founded on Sacred Scripture. This is, of course, ironic considering that as a leading feminist lecturer Stein herself argued for the nurturer-model of femininity. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September of 1995, was such an example of these two models meeting head-on. Ten days prior to the conference John Paul met with the Holy See’s spokeswoman, Mary Ann Glendon (a former Harvard professor, herself exceptionally educated with regards to international law and especially international human rights abuses against women), Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, and Angelo Cardinal Sodano to discuss the preliminary misgivings and rejections.
that the Conference Board had with the assertions that the Holy See made regarding the sanctity of human life and the maternal dignity of womanhood that needed to be protected worldwide. The minority coalition, dominated largely by European Union members, all but rejected the Holy See’s insistence on the protection of the role of woman as mother and nurturer, a role ironically argued by Stein in Europe some seventy years prior. With the situation appearing to be quite morally bleak prior to the Conference itself, John Paul deftly instructed Glendon and Navarro-Valls, “If you get in trouble, go to the people.”

As the days wore on in the Conference it became keenly apparent to Glendon and Navarro-Valls that the coalition had no intention of upholding the dignity of motherhood or of the feminine nature of nurturer within the final deliberations that were to be made. They choose rather to assert the “reproductive” rights of women in choosing adequate contraceptives and pregnancy-termination options. Those that argued for such models as the Holy See’s, such as the delegate from Slovakia, were frequently ignored altogether.

In finally taking John Paul’s advice Glendon and Navarro-Valls drafted a brief text wherein they detailed the glaring inconsistencies and contradictions the E.U. coalition was making at the Women’s Conference with regards to the beauty of motherhood and that the principal of human dignity was “inimical to the pursuit of equality.” This contradicted points previously established at the Population Conference in Cairo (September 1994) and Declaration by the World Conference on Human Rights made largely by E.U. members (Vienna 1993). The text was faxed overnight to major media affiliates throughout the world and broke worldwide the next day. Within twenty-four hours the E.U. Coalition was forced by members of their own countries to recant on
fundamental points that contradicted their own constitutions and international charters. The move infuriated the largely feminist coalition, but served as an indicator to many of the uphill battle that the Church’s understanding of the feminine tends to face culturally and among leaders in the modern world.

The Beijing Conference on Women served as a cohesive indicator of the radical feminist methodology of thinking that has infiltrated not only the perceptions of government leaders worldwide, including many noted feminists on the United Nations Security Council, but likewise their social and moral policies with regards to women’s “rights” and population control. One finds genuine irony in the fact that the E.U. Coalition repeatedly denounces human rights abuses in the Peoples Republic of China, while simultaneously instituting social programs that discourage parenthood or the conception of children worldwide. Such is the reality that John Paul II confronted with his understanding of the “feminine genius” of womanhood. In March of 2005, ten years after the Conference, Glendon addressed the United Nations General Assembly regarding the progress that has been made with regards to women’s rights and fundamental dignity during the ten-year interim. She noted with vigor that in many ways the Western countries have become fundamentally antagonistic towards the feminine role of nurturer and the beauty of feminine motherhood:

In a world that has become dangerously careless about protecting human life at its frail beginnings and endings, older women are likely to be at particular risk for poverty…What is needed, as Pope John Paul II recently pointed out, is ‘a vast moral mobilization of public opinion, especially in those countries enjoying a sufficient or even prosperous standard of living…Furthermore, the problem of
harmonizing women’s aspirations for fuller participation in social and economic life with their roles in family life is one that women themselves are fully capable of resolving. But the problem will not be resolved without certain major, one may even say radical, changes in society.  

The assertions put forward by Glendon, as the representative of the Holy See, echo points made several months earlier in 2005 by the CDF, wherein, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, articulates that the differences between male and female identity goes far beyond the biological aspect of mere physicality. Rather, it involves emotional, psychological, and ontological differentiation as well, as John Paul’s feminological writings have clearly pointed out. Furthermore, the document, On the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World, addresses both characteristics which tend to be seen in many of the social and population programs in many of the more affluent and Western countries. For instance, the CDF notes that many times, in a misguided effort to legitimately defend their fundamental human rights, women will lean in one of two directions: 1.) They will emphasize the need of women to makes themselves “adversaries” of men in order to forgo the subordinating role than certain men may wish to concretize them into. The answer to the abuse of power by men is the domination and manipulation of power by women in return. One finds in this approach a “stooping,” as it were, to the level of the abuse, rather than a reeducation of or a moral correction of it. 2.) Similarly, any and all differences between the sexes tend to be inherently denied. Such a relativized notion of human sexuality leads ultimately both to fundamental problems of human personhood among its proponents, and likewise to disordered notions of human sexuality and parenthood among the children within the
culture. The day prior to his election as Pope Benedict XVI, Ratzinger alluded to such a blurred understanding of objective truths in his homily at the opening of the conclave: “Relativism, which is letting oneself be ‘swept along by every wind of teaching.’ looks like the only attitude [acceptable] to today’s standards. We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism, which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.”

The CDF argues that in this relativized understanding of sexual identity, the physical difference, termed ‘sex’, is minimized, while the purely cultural element, termed ‘gender’ is emphasized to the maximum and held to be primary. Thus in such a perception of blurred sexual roles homosexuality becomes largely accepted as a ‘chosen’ lifestyle, and homosexual acts become accepted as being morally permissible, if not altogether natural.

In *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul again reiterates the Church’s teaching of the equality between the sexes, but notes that they are essentially unique in their vocation and creation by God, namely that of woman:

The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity. Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her fulfillment as a person, her dignity and vocation on the basis of these resources, according to the richness of femininity which she received on the day of creation and inherits as an expression of the ‘image and likeness of God’ that is specifically hers.

The basis for this differentiation is Jesus Christ Himself and his bride, the Church. John Paul enunciates the fact that Jesus Christ Himself became *The Sincere Gift*, in giving Himself as *The Sacrifice* for all of humanity as the Church:
Christ has entered this history and remains in it as the Bridegroom who ‘has given himself.’ ‘To give’ means ‘to become a sincere gift’ in the most complete and radical way…According to this conception, all human beings- both women and men – are called through the Church, to be the ‘Bride” of Christ, the Redeemer of the world.  

It is interesting that in the writings and personal journals of Edith Stein, one repeatedly finds the reference to the fact that she understood the feminine identity and role in terms of the whole of society and world community, as opposed to the general philosophy of Me-ism, that fundamentally tends to perceive life and relationships in terms of self-taking rather than self-gift and of the greater whole. To the extent that Stein fought tooth-and-nail for equal rights for women within her culture, she likewise understood that, on many levels, it was largely the woman’s responsibility to transform the culture, as Sarah Borden has noted:

The particularity of the feminine is, she insists, precisely what is needed to address the problems of her own time, and she repeatedly calls women to take up, firmly and lovingly, the task of becoming full persons. It is not, she says, merely a personal task but is precisely what is necessary for the whole society.  

This underscores the points made earlier that Stein understood the feminine nature, as created by God in his image and likeness, in terms of nurturer and empathizer with humanity, in addition to giving humanity a pure and holy model to follow. In a radio address given in Germany, Stein once argued that “there is no natural power which is so influential to the fate and character of a person as his/her mother.” Because she understood motherhood not solely in biological terms, but in spiritual and emotional
terms as well, her feminine notion of personal development lays a tremendous responsibility for feminine leadership and empathy for women everywhere. Certainly this is an exulted, if not at times, daunting challenge for women worldwide.

John Paul frequently noted that St. Paul himself had a profound understanding of the entire Church in the feminine model, as being a spotless and sacred Bride for the Bridegroom of Christ. While this theme is found largely through Old and New Testament texts, Paul expounds upon this again in his letter to the Ephesians:

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. 24 As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her 26 to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, 27 that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (5:21-27).

This forms the basis for John Paul’s own mediations on the feminine role of the Church Universal in his Wednesday audiences on the Theology of the Body. In his audience on October 13, 1982, John Paul stressed the “nuptial” gift of Christ to his Bride the Church, and that this self-gift of Christ has both a unitive and procreative dimension. The unitive is seen in the giving and receiving by Christ and the Church herself. He notes that by nature of the gift itself, it must be given and it must be received in order for the relationship to be prosper according to its nature. It is in the accepting of the self-gift of
Christ and responding to this gift that the Church, “in her turn completes this sacrament as the wife, in virtue of spousal love, completes her husband.” 100 Such was Adam’s experience in finally finding, “a helper fit for him (Gen.2:20).” He will later articulate even further in Mulieris Dignitatem that the mystery and dignity of the wife is found genuinely in her motherhood, regardless of whether she actually bares biological children or not. The Church then draws all her spiritual merit and life-giving dimensions and capacities from the gift of Christ for her. It is for this reason as well that he alludes to the sanctity of the one-flesh union as it should be respected as a sign of the “great mystery” of Christ’s love for the Church. Pope Paul VI noted this in his encyclical Humanae Vitae and John Paul again reiterates this in his own Pontificate, borrowing largely from Genesis and Edith Stein’s argumentation regarding the self-gift of Christian femininity.

Likewise, John Paul continues in noting that the sacrament of marriage is in fact the “proto-type” of the all the sacraments because it bears the nuptial and complete union with one another just as Christ gave Himself completely for humanity. Such an argument for the nature of the Church, while being inherently Scriptural, is strikingly reminiscent of Stein’s arguments for the model of femininity for culture and the world; that of caretaker. Stein expresses the argument largely in terms of a specifically female role only; whereas, John Paul expounds on this in the Theology of the Body in underscoring that while there are certainly objective differences between the sexes, all of the Church, men and women alike, are called to receive and return the love of Christ for the Church in returning this love to those actually within the Church. Thus John Paul concurs with Stein on the fundamental differentiation and equality of the sexes, and yet reminds the
Church of her feminine model in receiving the love of Christ and her responsibility to reciprocate this love through action.

While he certainly addresses it elsewhere, John Paul uses the feminine model of the Church Universal in reiterating the call of the Second Vatican Council to holiness and greater personal sanctity. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Church Fathers underscore this call to sanctity in Christ in whatever position the faithful may find themselves:

Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as ‘uniquely holy,’ loved the Church as his bride, delivering himself up for her. He did this that he might sanctify her. He united her to himself as his own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God’s glory. Therefore the Church…is called to holiness according to the saying of the Apostle: ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification.’

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The Council Fathers end this Constitution with a chapter dedicated to the Blessed Mother as the feminine model of genuine sanctity for the Church herself: “The Church indeed, contemplating her [Mary’s] hidden sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father’s will, by receiving the Word of God in faith becomes herself a mother.”

102

Having participated largely in the development of the Constitution, both Wojtyla and Ratzinger were poised to develop this understanding of the feminine model of the Blessed Mother as the model of the Church further in their writings. For his part, John Paul repeatedly alludes to this model, in particular in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*:

The Council expresses this when it states in another passage that Mary ‘has gone before,’ becoming ‘a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and
perfect union with Christ.’[13] This ‘going before’ as a figure or model is in reference to the intimate mystery of the Church, as she actuates and accomplishes her own saving mission by uniting in herself--as Mary did--the qualities of mother and virgin. She is a virgin who “keeps whole and pure the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse” and “becomes herself a mother,” for “she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God.

Herein the Blessed Mother is seen as the supreme model of spouse of the Holy Spirit and mother for the Church herself. In underscoring the Council Fathers, John Paul finds in the Blessed Mother the nurturer and care-taker model that Stein herself found in the Blessed Mother, which intrinsically altered her perception of the feminine nature of woman and the Church in the model of The Woman, who crushes the head of the serpent. It is interesting that upon entering the Carmel in Cologne, Stein was asked spontaneously, as all postulants were, to sing a hymn for the community as a test of her humility. She later noted rather sheepishly in her journal that without thinking of it she sang *Oh Mother of the Redeemer*, because “it was the first song which came to mind.”

It may be necessary to reiterate at this point that both Stein and John Paul inherently perceive both ontological and corporal realities generally in terms of the phenomenological implications that they have on their participants. Just as Stein perceives the feminine nature as a reflection of God’s love and in terms of the actual growth in holiness of the whole of society, so too does John Paul see the experiential and lived reality of the Mother of God as being the model *par excellence* for the Universal Church. In drawing on Stein’s insistence on practicality, John Paul, as noted earlier, insistently underscores the ‘lived’ reality and possibility of personal holiness in the
everyday lives of the faithful. This personal holiness therein builds up the Body of the Church, just as the sinfulness of her members draws her body further from this union with the Bridegroom. John Paul again articulated this call to holiness in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the close of the Great Jubilee:

> To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as the Bride of Christ, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy. This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized…As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection must not be understood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possibly only for a few ‘uncommon heroes’ of holiness. The ways of holiness are many according to the vocation of each individual.¹⁰⁵

Thus John Paul points out that in assuming the feminine model of the Bride of Christ, and in imitation of the spotless Virgin Mother, the Church becomes procreative in bringing forth holiness and betterment in the societal whole and the world-over. This is her mission. One gets the impression that John Paul understands the sanctification of the world will come almost organically as the Church becomes more closely united to the Bridegroom. As he and Stein co-argue, however, it is in this unity and self-gift that the Bride and the Bridegroom fulfill their nature and mission.¹⁰⁶

Biographers of John Paul have speculated on the profundity and impact that Stein had upon the life and teachings of Karol Wojtyla. Some have argued that as a person, John Paul can only be understood in terms of Stein’s particular sacrifice and martyrdom for the Church herself, given her (and others like her, namely St. Maximilian Kolbe, Bl. Karl Leisner, etc.) impact on him personally. As one who doggedly pursued the meaning
of truth back to its roots, who stood against overwhelming odds in defending her feminine dignity and Jewish heritage, she herself accepted the Cross of her Bridegroom in a literal way in giving her life so freely at Auschwitz, thereby giving new meaning to her taken name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. At her beatification it was acutely apparent that John Paul found Stein’s self-sacrifice for her Bride to be a genuine model and reciprocation for the self-donation Christ made for the Church:

She saw the inexorable approach of the Cross. She did not flee….Hers was a synthesis of a history full of deep wounds, wounds that still hurt. At the same time it was a synthesis of the full truth about man, in a heart that remained restless and unsatisfied ‘until it finally found peace in God.  

In his writings and audiences, John Paul was personally affected by the examples of those such as Stein and Kolbe from his own generation and region who literally followed the Cross of Christ to its fullest and complete end. Having beatified and canonized more blesseds and saints than any other Pope in history, his high regard for the example of Christian martyrdom and the lived applicability that the examples of these saints provide for the Church, present John Paul as a Pope who understood and could grapple with the reality that an example like that of Edith Stein, truly gave the Church an example of total self-gift, just as the Church herself has likewise received in Christ. Stein is a profound personal example of a woman who was inherently a nurturer, mother, self-gift, and daughter of Christ as well. In her own self-giving she becomes holier to a much more profound degree, and the entire Church is lifted up by her gift to Him who gave Himself to her.
In this thesis, the author has attempted to articulate the influence that St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross had on Karol Wojtyla’s (Pope John Paul II) perceptions of sacred femininity. The author has attempted to explain the specific influences Stein had on Wojtyla the man, and on his perceptions of feminine personhood. This fundamental impact that Stein had on the person and spirituality of Pope John Paul II would include his phenomenological perceptions of the nature of motherhood as not merely a biological reality but a spiritual one as well. Likewise, John Paul repeatedly emphasized the nurturing qualities of the feminine nature throughout his Pontificate, including his writings prior to assuming the Office of Peter. Stein likewise argued that though men and women are intrinsically different, they are fundamentally equal as well. Men tend to be largely task oriented, whereas women tend towards the personal and affective nature of relationship. John Paul draws on this reality in his own argumentation and as is seen most recently in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its recent assertions on womanhood.

As regards areas of further study, the author would like to explore further the assertion of Edith Stein that young women require and deserve very specific education and formation in the nature of their femininity and their divine vocation within the culture. The author does not believe that it will be possible to adequately educate young women in this regards unless a realistic effort has been made to educate young women with regards to their Christocentric feminine vocations. While it is true that statistics abound regarding young women in the United States, it seems that few studies have been
undertaken to diagnose the organs for instructing young women in their Christian feminine vocation. This would possibly be an area for future study for author.

The influence of Stein on Karol Wojtyla could perhaps be perceived as the influence of a big sister on her little brother. Judging by Wojtyla’s own words, one certainly gets the impression that he found in Stein a spiritual sister beyond comparison. One can perceive this influence in his writings as he built on Stein’s understanding of the genius of femininity and the feminine beauty of the Holy Church.
1 Mulieris Dignitatem. #27.
2 The Writings of Edith Stein, Hilda Graf. 41.
3 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.70.
4 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.57
5 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.59
6 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.60
7 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.60
8 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.72
9 Edith Stein, Life in a Jewish Family. P.522
10 Edith Stein. Henry Bordeaux. P.32
11 Witness to Hope. George Weigel. P.537
12 Edith Stein. Henry Bordeaux. P.20
13 Edith Stein. Henry Bordeaux. P.32
14 The Writings of Edith Stein, Hilda Graf. 41.
15 The Writings of Edith Stein, Hilda Graf. 42.
16 The Writings of Edith Stein, Hilda Graf. 155-156.
17 Witness to Hope. George Weigel. P.538
19 Edith Stein. Henry Bordeaux. P.32
20 Witness to Hope. George Weigel. P.538
21 Edith Stein. Henry Bordeaux. P.419
22 8 Spiritual Heros. Brennan Hill. P.202
23 8 Spiritual Heros. Brennan Hill. P.202
24 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.70.
26 Woman. Edith Stein. P.67
28 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.70.
29 “Edith Stein’s Philosophy of Women and Women’s Education.” Mary Catherine Baseheart.
30 Edith Stein’s Philosophy of Women and Women’s Education.” Mary Catherine Baseheart
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32 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.71
33 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.71
34 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.71
35 Woman. Edith Stein. P.107
36 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.75
37 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.76
38 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.77
39 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.76
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41 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.78
42 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.78
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46 Is the Pope Catholic? Joanna Manning. P.14
47 Is the Pope Catholic? Joanna Manning. P.14
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103 Redemptoris Mater. #5
104 Edith Stein: Carmelite. Audio cassette by Fr. John Sullivan, O.C.D.
105 Novo Millennio Ineunte. #31
106 Stein. Sarah Borden. P.77
107 Witness to Hope. George Weigel. P.542
107 Mulieris Dignitatem. #18
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