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Alter Christus: Edith Stein on the Liturgical Sources of Bildung

Alter Christus: Edith Stein sobre las fuentes litúrgicas del Bildung

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RESUMEN: Edith Stein pensaba que una visión adecuada de la educación, *Bildung*, no sólo debería abarcar las potencias y el propósito naturales de la persona humana, sino también sus potencias sobrenaturales. Para ella, el *telos* sobrenatural de la educación de una persona es que se convierta en una imagen y un icono únicos de Cristo. Esta meta trascendente requiere medios igualmente sobrenaturales para alcanzarla, y en este

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ensayo se examina el papel fundamental que desempeñan el sacramento de la eucaristía y la liturgia de la Iglesia en general para alcanzar esa meta, al tiempo que se hace una sugerencia metodológica sobre la interpretación de los textos teológicos de Stein.

PALABRAS CLAVE: antropología, *Bildung*, educación, eucaristía, gracia, liturgia, persona.

ABSTRACT: Edith Stein thought that a proper view of education, *Bildung*, should encompass not only a human person's natural potencies and purpose, but their supernatural potencies as well. For her, the supernatural *telos* of a person's education is that he or she become a unique image and icon of Christ. This transcendent goal requires similarly supernatural means to attain, and in this paper, the pivotal role played by the sacrament of the eucharist and the church's liturgy more broadly in reaching that goal are examined, while further making methodological suggestions regarding the interpretation of Stein's theological texts.

KEYWORDS: anthropology, *Bildung*, education, eucharist, grace, liturgy, person.

1. INTRODUCTION

From 1927-1931, Edith Stein was a popular lecturer on the topic of education. Her essays and lectures from this time reveal that she thought of education as more than a merely *natural* phenomenon, but as a properly *supernatural* one that perfected and expanded our natural potencies. However, the methods necessary for this task require educational sources outside of the ordinary classroom, even outside of the traditional instructor. She located these methods primarily in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church. In this essay, I will examine Stein's philosophy of education by attending specifically to these supernatural components of the educational task.

2. EDUCATION AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Edith Stein repeatedly states that the proper *telos* of education is the formation of "the whole person," *der Ganze Mensch* (Stein, 2001)². Put simply, the task

² "Die katholische Auffassung [über Erziehung] steht zwischen diesen Extremen. Für sie ist Gegenstand der Erziehung ,der ganze Mensch." Also consider: "So macht sich in dem Satz,

of *Bildung* is not complete merely with the development of a certain skillset or the acquisition of expertise in a particular science, but when the entire individual in his or her various capacities has unfolded. This means that the practical task of education requires an anthropological prolegomena, since we cannot possibly “form” a person’s potencies if we are not clear about what those are in the first place³. In this essay, I want to examine one of those potencies in particular and attend to how Stein thinks one ought form and educate it.

This potency is humanity’s *capax Dei*, our capacity for God, a potency rooted in our ontological status as creatures bearing the *imago Dei*, the divine image. Stein scholars have often noted the significance of the *imago Dei* in her anthropology (Betschart, 2022; Betschart, 2022; Wallenfang, 2017) but here I would like to analyze how this ontological feature exerts a kind of teleological gravity over her educational writings composed during her time as a teacher at a Dominican girls’ school in Speyer from 1923-1931 (Herbstrith, 1992).

True, the supernatural *telos* of the human person would be central in her late, magisterial writings written during her time in a Carmelite convent, particularly in *Finite and Eternal Being* and *The Science of the Cross*. But this theme is already essential to understanding her writings on the topic of *Bildung* and women’s education which pre-date her entry into Carmel. There, Stein especially highlights the significance of the liturgy and the Eucharist as contributing to a person’s formation into “another Christ.” In this essay, I will look at three themes in Stein’s writings from this period that she highlights as conducive to the supernatural goal of *Bildung*: the Eucharist, the liturgy, and a reverential atmosphere.

Stein’s writings on *Bildung* insist that a person’s education is incomplete apart from its supernatural *telos*. In 1929, Stein was invited to give a talk at a conference in Würzburg dedicated to the theme of “youth religious formation.” For her lecture, she chose specifically to look at the role of monastic

„Alle Bildung ist Selbstbildung“ die Doppelbedeutung des ‚Selbst‘ geltend: es kann damit einmal nur das Subjekt des freien Willens und der vom Willen bedingten ‚freien Akte‘ gemeint sein, sodann aber *die ganze menschliche Person*.” And: “In der Tat, es liegt eine innere Form in der Menschenseele, die triebkräftig gemacht werden muß, um *das ganze Menschenwesen* von innen her nach außen hin durchzuformen.” (Stein, 2001).

³ This is Stein’s own justification for writing *Der Aufbau der Menschlichen Person*.

institutions and titled it “Die Mitwirkung der klösterlichen Bildungsanstalten an der religiösen Bildung der Jugend,” or “The Cooperation of Monastic Institutions in the Religious Formation of Youth.”

A good student of St. Thomas Aquinas, who himself followed Aristotle in arguing that things are defined by their ends or specific *telos*⁴, Stein (2001) begins her talk by considering education’s *goal*: “We must first,” she contends, “consider the goal of education [*Bildungsziel*]. What form should we give to the matter? We must help form the children of men into becoming children of God. They should become God-shaped [*Gott-förmig*], Christ-shaped [*Christus-förmig*]... [They should become] *Alter Christus*, another Christ. That is the form, that is the educational goal to be achieved,” (p.51). According to Stein, education which does not aspire to the properly *supernatural* finality of forming *alteri Christi* is insufficient to the kinds of creatures that human persons essentially are.

This is not to say that pre-supernatural or natural education is not a genuine good, only that such an education has not fulfilled its final purpose. This is why, at the end of *Der Aufbau der Menschlichen Person (The Structure of the Human Person)*, Stein (1994) writes that the ideal educator should actually be familiar with the truths of Christian revelation. For “to educate,” Stein writes, “means to lead other people to become what they should be. [But] this cannot be done without knowing what man is and how he is, where is to be led, and what the possible paths are. Thus, what our faith says about mankind is *an indispensable* theoretical foundation for practical educational work” (p.195). Thus, for Stein it is axiomatic that *Bildung* must attend to the ways in which human persons become like Christ. So, what are those ways? How does a person receive the *forma Christi*? One of the most recurring themes Stein highlights throughout her educational writings on this point is the Eucharist.

3. THE EUCHARIST AND EDUCATION

On July 14, 1930, Stein was invited to give a lecture at a Eucharistic Congress in Speyer commemorating the 900th anniversary of the construction of the

⁴ Cf. Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* 71 b9-11.

Kaiserdom, the imperial cathedral of Speyer. She titled her talk, “Eucharistische Erziehung” – Eucharistic Education. Here she makes some rather remarkable claims about the role of the Eucharist in human formation. She starts with a rather simple premise: “One principle applies to all of us who want to educate Eucharistically: we can only do this if we live Eucharistically [*eucharistisch leben*]. We want to lead others to a Eucharistic life, and we can only do this by modeling it for them” (2001, p.64). This naturally raises the question of what it means to “live Eucharistically” in the first place.

Stein’s answer here is instructive, and moreover it is an answer whose significance we are likely to overlook, I argue, without placing her comments in the context of her earlier phenomenological writings. In order to “live Eucharistically,” she writes, we must “allow the Eucharistic truths to become practically effective” (2001, p.64). Here I want to make a methodological suggestion that could go a long way in helping students and scholars appreciate Stein’s *theological* contributions. Often, Stein will make theological claims or suggestions that, at first glance, appear rather mundane or ordinary.

And the apparent ordinariness of her claims perhaps explains the relative neglect paid to Stein by theologians (as opposed to philosophers)⁵. But these claims often appeal to or incorporate significant *philosophical* concepts that she has worked out elsewhere, and these philosophical premises deepen her theological insights. I argue that this is true of the text at hand. When Stein writes that the Eucharistic truths must become “practically effective [within us],” she seems to be suggesting that a person must encounter the “Eucharistic truths” (more on what those are to follow) and appropriate them, digest them, or in her preferred Teresian idiom, a person must allow these truths into her “interior castle.”

In several of her other works, but first intimated in her pre-conversion philosophical treatises, Stein argues that we can engage reality in a way that “touches” our souls at varying degrees of depth (Stein, 1989, pp.102-107; Stein, 2000, pp.241-263; Betschart, 2016). If I read a book but am preoccu-

⁵ Consider, for example, that the international scholarly body committed to research on Stein’s *oeuvre* is the “International Association for the Study of the *Philosophy* of Edith Stein.” Theological investigations have, up to this point, been more scarce. There are of course important exceptions, however, as seen in the work of Betschart and Wallenfang (cf. fn. 3, *supra*), and Maskulak (2008) and Maskulak (2012).

pied by my own anxieties, what I must do later, and so forth, I only engage the book from my “peripheries” or “surfaces” [*oberfläche*]. The book’s argument or narrative is not formative for me, because it does not contact and shape the depths of my individual self. Conversely, if I patiently attend to the text, contemplate its structure and narrative, and endeavor to see what good or true or beautiful insight might be communicated by it, I allow it into my depths.

To use Stein’s Teresian grammar, the book has contacted *das Innere*, the inner recesses of my soul. Stein’s phenomenological insight about the nature of the soul and the human capacity to engage reality at varying layers is central to her educational philosophy: we are *formed* by a thing to the degree that we “allow” it into the depths of our souls, to the degree that we do not hastily pass over it, but receive it in order for it to shape and form us.

With these philosophical prolegomena in place, we are in a better position to interpret Stein’s comments in her lecture on “Eucharistic Education.” Stein is saying something far more insightful than: “there are certain dogmas a person must believe.” Rather, when she writes that a person must allow the Eucharistic truths to become “practically effective,” she is applying her phenomenological insights sketched previously: we must allow the Eucharistic doctrine of the Church to *inform* us by inwardly appropriating and receiving it. Put simply, Stein thinks that a Christian must contemplate and attend to these truths, not merely “submit” to them, because it is only by this act of internal reception that these claims become personality-forming and consequently tend toward a person’s individuation.

Christian doctrine is, for Stein, a bearer of *value*, and as Mette Lebech has persuasively argued, values are, for Stein, what motivate and shape us as *individual* persons (Lebech, 2004; Lebech, 2015). When we read Stein’s theological proposal in light of her phenomenological analyses, then, the profundity and even the uniqueness of it becomes clear: the “Eucharistic truths” are themselves individuating and formative, bearers of value that shape persons into becoming who they most properly *are*. As Stein (1994, p.133) writes at the conclusion of *Der Aufbau der Menschlichen Person*, “doctrinal truth, inwardly appropriated, has the highest formative power.” This then raises the question: what are these doctrinal truths that a person must appropriate and internalize?

Stein lists three Eucharistic truths: first, the Savior is present in the Blessed Sacrament Second: in the Mass Christ daily renews his sacrifice of the cross on the altar. And third: Christ wants each and every soul to be intimately united to him in holy communion (Stein, 2001, p.65). The first two are fairly standard tenets of sacramental theology: they assert the real presence of Christ in the sacrament and then the nature of the Mass as a participation in Christ's sacrifice on the cross. But the third –that the Eucharist is an expression of Christ's *longing* for union with the human race– is perhaps more unique, especially when given equal value along with the preceding two. But Stein thinks that this third “Eucharistic truth” simply follows as a matter of course from the first. In making himself present in the sacrament, Christ is simply expressing his will: to be with you. Thus Stein (2001, pp.64-65) writes:

The Savior's delight is to be among the children of men, and he has promised to be with us until the end of the world. He has made this promise come true through his sacramental presence on the altar. Here we wait for us, and one would think that people should crowd to the consecrated places. The simple meaning of this truth of faith demands that we should have our home here, that we should move away from here only as far as our tasks demand it, and that we should receive these tasks daily from the hands of the Eucharistic Savior, and that we should back into his hands the day's work that has been accomplished...This, then, is what the Eucharistic truths –rightly understood– demands of us: to seek the Savior in the tabernacle as often as we can, to attend the Holy Sacrifice as often as we can, to receive Holy Communion as often as we can

On a first reading, these lines might sound pious or spiritually fecund, but perhaps not theologically *deep*. Nevertheless, I argue that this is yet another instance where we must read Stein with her phenomenological anthropology in the background to appreciate its profundity. Notice that Stein says that a Christian should have her “home” with the Eucharistic presence of Christ. Later in this lecture, she writes that the Eucharist should be the “middle point” [*das Mittelpunkt*] of Christians' lives.

This is the same vocabulary Stein employs to discuss the interiority of the human soul, and most remarkably for our present purposes, she will later argue in *Finite and Eternal Being* that the “middle point” of the human soul is

precisely where spiritual truths and values “become flesh and blood” (Stein, 2002, pp.436-444)⁶. In other words, phenomena become *real* for us when they are inwardly appropriated.

To return to the phenomenology of reading, a person might run their eyes over every sentence in a book, but the book’s contents are hardly *real* to a person who does not actually attend to and meditate on its words. Through this act of “interiorization,” however, the book and its contents become more than theoretical, but real, “flesh and blood,” a living part of the reader’s interiority. By applying that exact term to her discussion of the Eucharist, Stein is further arguing that, just as the “interior castle” is the middle point of a person’s soul, so too should the Eucharist be the “middle point of a Christian’s life. Moreover, since the “middle point” is that which makes the person most fundamentally him or herself, the Eucharist is similarly individuating.

In short, we become who we are, most really individuated and unique, when our lives take a kind of Eucharistic shape⁷. Like God the Father, who retains his being precisely by communicating his essence to the Son, and like Christ himself, who similarly communicates his own presence through the Eucharist, Stein insists that we discover and retain our very selves by a kind of self-gift, a Eucharistic self-communication that itself defines the very being of the Trinity⁸. Following this, Stein says that the outcome of appropriating the “Eucharistic truths” is that the person’s interior is “expanded.” She (2001, p.65) explains:

He awaits us to take upon Himself all our burdens, to comfort us, to counsel us, to help us as the most faithful friend, always the same. At the same time, he lets us live his life, especially when we join the liturgy and experience his life, suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension, the becoming and

⁶ See especially: “When the ego’s life issues from this interiority, it lives a full life and attains to the height of its being. Any contents received from without that penetrate to this interiority remain not merely a possession of the memory but may ‘become flesh and blood.’” In Stein (2002, p.438).

⁷ Consider the following from *Finite and Eternal Being*: “By doing what God demands of us with total surrender of our innermost being, we cause the divine life to become *our* own inner life. Entering into ourselves, we find God in our own selves.” In Stein (2002, p.447).

⁸ Stein discusses the Trinity in remarkably Eucharistic language in Stein (2002, pp.419-420).

growing of his church. For we are lifted out of the narrowness of our existence into the vastness of God's kingdom; his affairs become ours, ever more deeply we become united with the Lord and in him with all his own. All loneliness ceases, and we are incontestably secure in the tent of the King, walking in His light.

Eucharistic formation contributes to a person's *Bildung*, their formation as individually specific creatures, by a kind interior dilation. It takes the person out of the kingdom of self and inserts him or her into the kingdom of God. And the point to note here is that it is as citizens in *that* kingdom, as persons who have taken the longings, affairs, and life of Jesus into themselves, that we become most ourselves. Stein's correlation of *Bildung* and "expansion" furthermore echoes a concept proposed by some early Christian thinkers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, that they called the soul's "ep-ectasy," a kind perpetual stretching or progress whereby the human person becomes ever more capable of receiving the God who gives himself to his saints⁹.

While Stein does not appear to refer to either Gregory or Maximus in her spiritual and theological writings, she eventually translated the entire corpus of Pseudo-Dionysius –who stands between these two giants of the Greek theological tradition– and wrote an essay on his epistemology (Stein, 2003). This anonymous, sixth century author had himself read Gregory's writings and in turn was deeply influential on Maximus¹⁰.

It is likely that Stein's interest in Pseudo-Dionysius is in part indebted to an already existing kinship between certain patterns in their thought, patterns which Stein appears to have arrived at independently and through her phenomenological analyses. The point, here, is simply to further demonstrate that Stein's theological intuitions have significant historical precedent, while further noting that she does not merely "re-discover" what was already present in the tradition but adjusts it through her specific method.

⁹ See especially Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, as well as Maximus Confessor's *Ambiguum* §10. Paul Blowers' analysis of the theme in both thinkers is essential, in Blowers (1992).

¹⁰ For Gregory's influence on Dionysius, see: Motia (2002). For Dionysius' influence in turn on Maximus, see: de Andia (2015).

Notice the twofold movement here: to be formed by the Eucharist is a simultaneous *expansion* (the life and affairs of Christ, his passion and resurrection, become ours), but also a *deepening*. We are stretched, expanded, rendered more and more proximate images of the infinite God as we move more deeply into him, and so ourselves are deepened thereby. Elsewhere, Stein writes that the educational process terminates precisely in such an “interior expansion.” Particularly in the lectures and essays collected in *Die Frau*, Stein (1996, p.144) observes that the genuinely educated person has an “expansive soul.”

An authentically formed student is receptive to and thus adequately capable of attending to a multitude of phenomena, whether persons, works of art, texts, problems, and so forth. She makes a similar point in her discussion of the *imago dei* in *Finite and Eternal Being*, where she writes that the movement of *spirit* is precisely to expand the self, to make it more capacious and full (Stein, 2002, p.431). Here, Stein argues that the Eucharist has a similar effect: Christ’s life is literally defined by its “expansiveness.” On the cross, he offers himself for the entire human race. This offering is participated in with every Eucharistic celebration, where the sacrifice of the cross in 1st century Judea expands into 5th century Greece, 13th century France, or 21st century Avila.

The entire essence of the Eucharist is to *stretch* the corporal presence and mission of Christ across time and space. Thus, when Christians partake of the Eucharist and appropriate its mysterious truths, they participate in this very stretching and become themselves more Eucharistic, self-giving and “stretched.” If, therefore, the Eucharist is itself the “expansion” of Christ into the created order, and if education is similarly a process of interior expansion, then we are in a better position to also understand a comment Stein makes at the end of her treatise *On the Structure of the Human Person*, where she makes this staggering claim: “The Eucharistic event is *the* most essential pedagogical act” (1994, p.197).

The significance of this line is likely to be missed if we fail to read Stein’s writings on the Eucharist considering her entire corpus, and especially in light of her phenomenological analyses of the human person and the kind of education proper to it.

4. LITURGICAL PRAYER AND EDUCATION

A further source of supernatural *Bildung*, for Stein, is the church's twofold liturgy: the Mass and the liturgy of the hours at the beginning of this essay, I referred to Stein's lecture on the role of monastic institutions in the religious formation of youth. There, she makes some rather concrete and instructive proposals about the liturgical component of education. Stein (2001, p.61) writes:

There is no more comprehensive and effective means for religious formation than the liturgy in its twofold form: the liturgy of the Mass and the liturgy of the hours...It seems to me," she writes, "that the importance [of the liturgy of the hours] for religious education has not yet been sufficiently grasped [...] If children were introduced to the spirit of choral prayer in the hours and...could at least listen to it, and if they were able to hear it in a form that can awaken holy joy and enthusiasm, then they would take something with them for their lives.

First, it is interesting to note that Stein's recommendation that children especially (but all Christians more broadly) be exposed to choral prayer in the liturgy of the hours is a directive later made by the Second Vatican Council in its constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*¹¹.

Second, note that once again Stein refers to the liturgy's "expansive" influence on the soul. As Martin Heidegger famously noted, everyday existence has the effect of narrowing and restricting our attention. *Das Alltägliche* confines our attention to ephemera (bills, bureaucracies, clothes, etc.), and thereby restricts the horizon of our gaze and our sense of the real¹². But the repeated call of the liturgy is to incorporate these banalities into the life and prayer of the church. Stein makes a similar point in other essays about Carmelite spirituality, as she seems to be especially fond of observing that the church's

¹¹ "Pastors of souls should see to it that the chief hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and the more solemn feasts. And the laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually." *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §100.

¹² See especially Heidegger (1961, pp.210-224).

various liturgical seasons and celebrations allow a person to be expropriated into the life of Christ in its entirety¹³.

Similarly, the Liturgy of the Hours is most essentially defined by the Psalms, the Bible's prayerbook. And theologians have long remarked the Psalter is a kind of *vade mecum* to the human condition: there's lament and joy, praise and complaint, rage and destitution¹⁴. The Psalms offer a kind of grammar of human experience, a way of incorporating all the *affections* proper to our condition and offering them up to God. The Liturgy of the Hours, then, incorporates the Psalms so that our everyday emotions and cares become itself part of the prayer of the church, the *body of Christ*.

Thus the "expansion of the soul," its dilation and unfolding, is further encouraged by frequent liturgical prayer, particularly in praying the prayers that Scripture itself provides¹⁵. The church's prayers provide a kind of basic narrative that enfolds and deepens the prayers and experience of the individual.

5. REVERENCE AND EDUCATION

A final practical point Stein makes about religious *Bildung* is that it is most effectively conducted in an atmosphere of reverence. Stein (2001, p.32) comments thus:

¹³ "The interior life is the deepest and purest source of happiness for the Carmelite... It has developed devotion to the most holy humanity [of Jesus] in the most diverse ways and has made this devotion native to Carmel. Nowhere can Christmas and the entire Advent season be celebrated more beautifully and joyfully. Love for the Blessed Mother and trust in the ever-helpful Father, Joseph, are inseparable from devotion to the infancy of Jesus. On Palm Sunday, [Saint Teresa] remembered that no one in Jerusalem had entertained the Lord. To compensate for this, she used to receive Holy Communion then... The liturgical year in Carmel is a wreath of beautiful feasts, which are not only liturgically arranged according to the spirit of the church, but at the same time are celebrated as familial feasts with heartfelt joy, tightening the bond of sisterly love" Stein (2001, pp.107-108).

¹⁴ Thus John Calvin memorably referred to the Psalms as "An Anatomy of the Soul" (Janz, 2002, p.205).

¹⁵ This is also the main theme of Stein's beautiful essay "The Prayer of the Church," found in Stein (1992, pp.7-17).

Reverence elevates the child to feel his own dignity as a child of God and makes him look up to the person who teaches him to feel this very nobility. This is perhaps his first living contact with the Kingdom of God. Love and reverence thus become the atmosphere in which the school community grows [...] The children encounter [these moods] as the basic attitudes of the soul which belong to all of them, and which each has to proffer the others in turn. In this atmosphere, communal life can develop, the community can organize itself, and each individual can form himself into its participant. Where love and trust prevail, the child's heart easily unlocks.

In order to adequately appreciate Stein's insight in its anthropological and theological significance, a couple important contextual points need to be raised. First, recall that Stein thinks we can attend to reality with varying degrees of depth, engaging it either from our "depths" or from our "peripheries," and furthermore that Stein says education requires the formation of these same interior spaces, of the soul's "depths." In her essays on women's education, Stein notes that problems can arise when persons, for various and often understandable reasons, refuse to open their "depths" to a teacher or object. Some students keep their defenses raised, as it were, suspicious or hostile to unknown or external influences.

Stein (1996, p.264) observes that these walls are often brought down through simple acts of kindness and attention, such as "a friendly word, a sympathetic question." Moreover, she explains that a great power of a properly maternal influence is its capacity to encourage the "openness" of children, precisely through loving attention, nurture, and care. For Stein, the mother is a kind of archetypal "educator," the first and *most formative teacher* most persons have (Stein, 1996, pp.109-110). As Antonio Calcagno notes: "Stein ascribes to mothers a great importance in that they are the prime institutors of tradition, culture, and value" (2014, p.100). Yet Stein deepens her analyses of education and maternity by noting that this role has a supernatural archetype in the Virgin Mary. And one of the ways Mary displayed perfect motherhood, Stein notes, is by her *reverence* for her Son (Stein, 1996, pp.197-198). Mary "reverences the divinity" in Christ, thus tending him to be open to her formative influence. She *reveres* his person, his dignity, and his unrepeatable individuality; thus the God-man is receptive and open to her formative influence.

The reverential atmosphere supplied by Mary led to her Son's formation as a human person, one who is fully divine, yes, but still irrevocably *human* and replete with specifically human potencies.

With this text in mind, we are better situated to understand why Stein contends that "love and reverence become the atmosphere in which religious community grows." Why does Stein insist that "religious formation" is best done in an atmosphere of reverence? Her reasoning, here unstated yet nevertheless assumed, goes something like this: reverence is the maternal mood, the "spirit," one might say, in which students are more likely to open themselves toward the divine. Thus "mother church" nurtures Christians toward opening themselves to God by offering them a reverential atmosphere. And here I would further argue that Stein is not simply making assertions but simply being a faithful phenomenologist of human experience.

Consider that human people are perhaps hardly ever more vulnerable or open than when we explain what we are amazed by, what we wonder at. If a person wants to get to know a man or woman, find out what induces awe or wonder in that person. This perhaps explains the hesitancy many have to talk about what induces this awe, since the sources of wonder are felt to be, in many respects, woven with our very selves. When Stein writes, then, that "love and reverence become the atmosphere in which religious community grows," she is simply extending an insight arrived at on her analysis of empathy, that a full constitution of the other person *as* a person depends upon the empathic comprehension of his or her *values* (Stein, 1989, pp.102-103)¹⁶.

Reverence allows a person's values to manifest and unfold, and moreover it disposes the other to receive our values in turn. In the context of her essay on religious education, Stein therefore contends that a reverence is a kind of mutual gift offered by each person to the other allowing them to be receptive

¹⁶ Calcagno (2014) here is helpful: "With sentiments that have other people as their object, one crosses into the other's hierarchy of values...Stein claims that when we experience love or hate or animosity toward another person and their values, we stand in a certain relation to that person, who, as a bearer of value, becomes constitutive of our own values; we see ourselves in relation to that particular other's values".

to God, whose presence in the Eucharist forms the proper “middle point” of human existence.

In this essay, I have tried to contribute to a deeper appreciation and understanding of Stein’s writings in two ways. First, by analyzing some of her texts on the Eucharist and the liturgy, we can gain some clarity regarding the sources or conditions attendant upon fulfilling the supernatural *telos* of education as becoming *alter Christus*, another Christ. In order to understand Stein’s philosophy of education, we must attend to this supernatural element since she herself thought it was an essential component to the task of education *per se*.

Stein consistently points to liturgical and sacramental participation as intrinsic to this graced dimension of *Bildung*. Second, I have also proposed a kind of methodology for better assessing Stein’s depth and insight as a theologian: she often puts forward suggestions, comments, or ideas without explaining the philosophical premises animating them. For the essays and lectures examined in this essay, this can largely be explained as a function of genre. In those texts, Stein is primarily addressing neither trained philosophers nor academics. She therefore does not always “show her work,” but rather assumes it. Thus, her comments regarding the Eucharist as the “middle point,” the way the liturgy “expands the soul,” and so forth, might come across as merely poetic flourishes. This can lead the contemporary reader, however, to fail to appreciate the ingenuity and fecundity of her proposals.

But this is a mistake. As ever with Stein, it is far wiser to take her words seriously, and I have argued that several of her more theological formulations explicitly incorporate a lexicon or grammar she has philosophically explored and deepened elsewhere, and it is only in the context of that prior, philosophical labor that we can then observe the depth of her theological intuitions. In a talk on “Zur Idee der Bildung,” “On the Idea of Education,” Stein summarizes her idea of religious education in the following way: “Religious formation is formation through Christ to Christ – Christ, as he lived and as he is revealed in the gospels; Christ, who lives on in the Eucharist and in the sufferings, teachings, and prayers of the Church” (2001, p.50). We are now hopefully better situated to appreciate this summation.

6. CONCLUSION

Edith Stein argues that education requires attending to and cultivating the supernatural *telos* of the human person. The methods required for this aspect of the educational task are distinct, and Stein located them primarily within the liturgical life of the church. In that sense, liturgy has a *methodological* significance in her thought, and especially in her philosophy of education. Apart from the Eucharist, liturgical prayer, and an atmosphere of reverence and awe, no student can become fully him or herself.

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