

Love for the World, Natality, Incarnation and Justification: How Female Philosophers value Christianity

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Philosophy of Divine Worldliness, Theology of Natality

If telling the exciting story of postmodern female philosophers and their relatedness with Christian religion one should start with Immanuel Kant and the way female philosophers have taken up one of his fundamental thoughts.

Philosophy according to the concept of the world aims for the divine human being in us, Kant says. Female philosophers like Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, Simone Weil, Luce Irigaray, the philosophers of the Italian community DIOTIMA have taken up his proclamation and some of them have transferred it to female existence: *Philosophy according to the concept of the world aims for the divine human being of and between women*.¹ In this feminist thinking, a secret connection between Postmodernism, religion and women's freedom becomes visible.

Kant's declaration of worldliness as divine condition of humanity expresses the quintessence of the new episode of religious history that started within Jewish tradition with the appearance of Jesus. The time of Jesus brought about a new understanding of what it means to be human. Remembering God's Creation of the earth, the world and human beings as the origin was no longer sufficient to provide an understanding of what

¹ Why can Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil be regarded as postmodern thinkers? One main aspect of postmodern thinking is the question of difference as a quality of relationships, the postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida emphasises with the concept of *différance*. As Derrida, all three women relates to Hegel discussion about difference and diversity in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Especially Hannah Arendt's concept

it means to live in the world and in history shaped by human beings: longing for full realisation of human potential and freedom, being confronted with human deficiency as well and feeling obliged to God at the same time estranged from God, the origin of the good, or the world. If there is only one absolutely valid origin being everything is determined. And if human life is determined, - even if the source of determination is God - all human beings, including women, can't obtain freedom. Besides that, the problem of theodicee (justification of God) becomes more and more troubling in the course of human history.

Whereas the creation narratives tell how human order comes into being, the Jesus narrative adds how new beginning and freedom are possible in an already existing order, shaped by human beings. Essentially the dichotomies of origin and end, life and death, religious practice and worldliness, reverence for God and love for the world are to be overcome - they are dualisms, Christianity has not been immune to.

How can worldliness be divine? If being origin is characteristic of divinity, yet, human beings are living in the course of time and in the midst of all that is effected by human hand, the mythological proclamation of the one good origin isn't sufficient. The human condition raises the question how beginning can be understood as not only taking place in a mythological "before the ages", but within the course of time and within the world.

Such a beginning within the course of time and the world can be found in the experience of giving birth and being born. Each new human being enters the world through birth. The newcomer is not released lonely to a non-shaped earth like Adam, the first human creature, according to Michelangelo's imagination in his famous painting in the Sistine Chapel. Such a beginning would perhaps be possible for a human being that started life as a adult - a little child left alone on a non-civilized cloud will die very soon. Instead, through birth, a child enters the organised, normed, and caring world. Its entry occurs in the form of a relation. It is based upon activating and renewing the relationships of the already existing and acting people. Adults are necessary for the growing up of the new-born child, for his/her acquisition of language and personality development.

of worldliness is very familiar with Derrida's concept of *différance*. Cf. Günter, Andrea: *Weltliebe. Gebürtigkeit, Geschlechterdifferenz und Metaphysik*, Königstein: Ulrike Helmer, 2003, 174-182.

Released by God, it is necessary for the adult Adam as well to have at his disposal the knowledge of how to stay alive and to cultivate the earth. In modern times this *conditio humana* is depicted in the novel "Robinson Crusoe". Robinson creates his new life on the island using the knowledge he gained in former years, when, as a child, he was instructed by adults. And, as he needed others during childhood, he now finds a partner: Friday, the native and local, consequently named after the day before Sabbath, the day of rest - and Friday had to slave away a lot.

Leonardo da Vinci has painted a counterexample to Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam": "The Annunciation to Mary". The significant difference between his and Michelangelo's picture is concentrated in what is filling the space of the in-between: the space between the hands.

Between the hands of God and Adam, there is almost nothing. On the contrary, between the hands of Mary and the angel, there is the whole world, arranged and built by human hand: a cultivated garden settled in a plain, the dangerous mountains far in the distance; in the garden a basin filled with water; in front of the wall of the house the imposing desk with the open book Mary's fingers are flicking through.

In this cultivated space the relationship between the divine and the human is composed in a different way. Whereas Michelangelo's all-powerful God, surrounded by a crowd of angels, is discharging Adam solely to the earth, in da Vinci's picture the divine is figured as a messenger willing to communicate: An angel is greeting and addressing Mary, the woman of the messianic future of the world, as a Christian bookprinter of the 10th century called her. The space for joining and interaction is gained.

Modernity forgot the theologoumenon of birth Christianity had developed. Today, some feminist philosophers promote it again. They understand birth respectively being born as fundamental human condition and starting point for an adequate anthropology. This concept links them to the mother again, but beyond identifying being a woman with giving birth and beyond mixing up child and mother.

Birth and the Gap of the In-between in the Times of the World

The annunciation of the birth of a divine child introduces a new beginning. The newcomer enhances the existing web of relationships. He or she will participate in shaping and changing this web. At the same time, birth makes visible that in the world there are always concrete possibilities to give space to something new and unique. In the world, there are gaps. These gaps can be inhabited and occupied by persons, their words and their deeds, Hannah Arendt comments. Birth is the sign for the possibility of beginning and initiating in the times, Kant explains. This concept of beginning is divergent to the one of classical metaphysics, that considers beginning the constant and uninterrupted relation of origin, cause and effect. In this metaphysical concept there is only one real beginning: the beginning before the ages.

Christianity adds to the theology of creation a theology of birth, that is, giving birth and being born. In the gospel of John, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that he can only understand who Jesus is, when he understands what giving birth and being born implies. (Joh 3,1-13) The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus is not worked into the fourth Gospel accidentally. Jesus distinguishes giving birth and being born of the flesh from giving birth and being born from above, from the spirit. Giving birth and being born in connection with the spirit can be interpreted as the specific *human* condition of giving birth and being born.

The author of the gospel of John systematically elaborates a theology of birth.² But unlike other evangelists, he/she doesn't include a narration of Jesus' birth. Instead, the gospel of John starts with the prologue "in the beginning was the *logos*". This phrase is usually translated as "in the beginning was the word". But *logos* can be derived from the Greek *legein*, which means "to collect" and "to assemble". Bearing this in mind, the first sentence of John's Gospel can be translated as follows: "In the beginning was the collected and assembled people, the collected and assembled humanity." In the beginning was the world, because the world is the power of collecting, assembling, connecting, distinguishing and activating human beings.³

"To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the

² Günter, Andrea: "Ich bin der Weg und die Wahrheit und das Leben." Geborenwerden in Wort und Tat, in: dies. (ed.), *Maria liest. Das heilige Fest der Geburt*, Rüsselsheim: Christel Göttert Verlag, 2004; Loos, Eva: *Maria liest: Das Verstehen hervorbringen - das Hervorbringen verstehen*, op. cit.

world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak.”⁴

Re-ligere, legere, legare: reconnecting, collecting, distinguishing, reading and connecting - these basic activities of human spirit are considered by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, one of the main figures of postmodernity. For the tension, the power and the dynamics arising of the interaction of these activities, Derrida coined the term *différance*.⁵ *Différance* is the quality of being distinguished together with its power to create new distinctions. In a broader sense, *différance* means the dynamic of the world, rendering obvious the diversity of human beings and collecting, assembling and inspiring them to produce tables and other objects. Postmodernism is engaged with worldliness, an engagement first started by Christianity and later by Kant.⁶ And whereas postmodern philosophy has proclaimed the death of God or the I,⁷ it has not yet proclaimed the death of the world.

Being born indicates coming to the world, life is *inter homines esse* – live among my fellow human beings.⁸ “The birth and death of human beings are not simple natural occurrences, but are related to a world into which single individuals, unique, unexchangeable, and unrepeatable entities, appear and from which they depart. [...] Birth and death are not natural, but worldly occurrences.”⁹

Birth, as coming to the world and beginning the relationship with others, interprets death, too: death is the end of one’s actively living together with other human beings. These explications illustrate that every act of a person has interpersonal consequences. Therefore, Christianity has concluded, interpersonal relations must be renewed again and again. But what are good connections? How can human beings relate to each other in a free way again and again? And how can this practice of freedom win over the danger of being determined by the existing world?

³ Similarly, Carter Heyward speaks of “at the beginning, there is the relation”, Carter Heyward: *The Redemption of God. A Theology of Mutual Relation*, Washington: University Press of America, 1982.

⁴ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 52.

⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge, 1985, 13-35; cf. Günter, *Weltliebe*, 119-146.

⁶ Günter: *Weltliebe*, 76-78, 85-89, 97-99

⁷ Besides Nietzsche, there is one ignominious exception: Kamper, Dietmar/Wulf, Christoph (ed.): *Rückblick auf das Ende der Welt*, München: Boer, 1990, my critic is in *Weltliebe*, 76f.

⁸ Arendt, Hannah, Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture, in: *Social Research* 38 (1971) 3, 419ff.

Connecting Divinely: Hannah Arendt, Religion and Generations

Together with tradition and authority, religion is an important dimension for Hannah Arendt as well: religion is a central aspect of organising the world, of politics. Arendt depicts religion, tradition and authority as phenomena of human interpersonal relatedness. And she complains about the loss of authority in modern times, due to the loss of tradition and religion.

The decisive point here is not that specific traditional arrangements have disappeared, for example, acknowledgement of the authority of the elder in the genealogical relationship or specific religious rites and the worship of certain deities. Arendt's central point is that modern times have lost the fundamental mode of connecting that used to be based on genealogy.

Hannah Arendt views tradition, religion and authority as fundamental figures of the intergenerational exchange. She attaches the understanding of tradition, religion and authority to the certain Latin verbs, *tradition* in regard to *tra-dare* (to hand over), *religion* in regard to *re-ligere* (to re-connect) and *authority* in regard to *augere* (to augment).

Tradition signifies the handing over of something by the elder to the younger; religion means reconnecting with the beginning; and authority entails using the difference between young and old as a growth potential to the advantage of the individuals, especially of the young – and to the advantage of the world.¹⁰ The terms tradition, religion and authority name ways of acting: the generational activities in and in the form of intergenerational relations.

In her book *vita activa* - English title: *The Human Condition* - Arendt considers how human beings live in time, therefore are active, and build the world. Originally she intended her book to be entitled *amor mundi*. Arendt criticises the traditional Christian hierarchisation of *vita activa* and *contemplativa*, contending that religion is in itself a form of practice:¹¹ the practice of divine re-connecting.

⁹ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 96 ff.. In the last sentence, the English edition is missing the words "but worldly".

¹⁰ Cf. Arendt, Hannah, *Between Past and Future*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993, 17-40, 91-142, 173-197.

¹¹ Cf. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12ff.

Arendt's perspective on tradition, religion and authority as activities of intergenerational exchange emerge from her understanding of the practice between the generations. Handing down something for example includes that the elder give something to the young and the young receive something from the elder. The elder and the younger both have their own view of the process: giving, as performed by the elder, has a different meaning for the elder than for the young, the same is true of the receiving by the young. Structurally, there are two distinct perspectives on the whole of the process. Thus, the intergenerational exchange is basically constituted of two different positions, two different activities and two different perspectives.

If one of the positions, activities or perspectives is made absolute, the intergenerational exchange becomes unbalanced and disproportionate. The consequence of this is polarisation. In this case, it could be helpful to realise and actualise reciprocity. Therefore it is necessary to consider two subjects, both of them with different positions and perspectives, practising different generational activities.

As a result, the gap of the specific human in-between can be found in the reciprocity of the intergenerational exchange: in the necessity of exchange, especially exchange of perspectives, in regard of being connected, especially the young. Acting these components opens the gap where beginning becomes possible. The gaps in the world are the consequence of the necessity that relating intergenerationally is a practice that must be done and filled.

For Kant, the exchange of the generational perspectives is one main aspect of "public use of reason". For him, public use of reason is intergenerationally structured. And the intergenerational perspective is the precondition of reason causing perspectives. Furthermore, for Kant, the intergenerational quality of reason generates the epitome or quintessence - "Inbegriff" - of autonomy.¹²

Arendt called this enlargement of perspective Kant reflected upon "enlarged mentality" (dt.: *erweiterte Denkungsart*).¹³ For Arendt, expressing one's own perspective causes feeling lively. But offering one's own perspective to the exchange with others is

¹² Kant, Immanuel, *Was ist Aufklärung*. *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften*, Horst D. Brandt ed., Hamburg: Meiner, 1999, 20-27; Günter, Andrea, *Die weibliche Seite der Politik. Ordnung der Seele, Gerechtigkeit der Welt*, Königstein: Ulrike Helmer, 2001, 135-155. In our days, Judith Butler also recovered the preconditional as the principle of the subject, but she forget the (female) genealogy and especially the mother, as Irigaray and the Italian philosophers had worked out some times ago. Cf. Tommasi, Wanda, *La vita psichica del potere di Judith Butler*, in: *per amore del mondo*. la rivista 1, www.diotimafilosofe.it/riv_online.php.

more than that. It makes people feel real and create reality. “To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all: for what appears to all, this we call Being, and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality.”¹⁴

Natality indicates that the subject is (caused by) relationship: “Beyond the subject: that we are entering the world by being born, birth or natality is the decisive fact determining the human being as a conscious, deciding being.”¹⁵ - “One recovers the subject, one’s self, not in the position of the subject, but in what is completing it: I find myself in the relationship with others, inhabited by memories, moved by desire.”¹⁶

Sexual Difference: a Worldly Practice of the Intergenerational *re-ligere*

The French philosopher Luce Irigaray refers to Hegel as well when taking the starting point of her reflection with the generational specification of human relationships. But she considers its structure as not only generationally, but also sexually differentiated. According to Irigaray, women can become divine by activating the generational difference between them. Therefore, female genealogy must be honoured and sexual difference must be understood in a new way.¹⁷ Its worldly character becomes concrete.

In the horizon of natality the intergenerational relationship is irrefutably sexual and the sexual difference is irrefutably a generational difference, because in the process of being born the sexual difference exists in the form of the relationship of mother and child. From the beginning, sexual difference is the combination of generational and sexual difference.¹⁸

Along with the coincidence of natality, worldliness and sexual difference, human sexuality is worldly and worldliness is sexuater. As birth is the beginning of a person’s

¹³ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 241.

¹⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt in: Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth: *Hannah Arendt. Leben, Werk und Zeit*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1991, 655.

¹⁶ Muraro, Luisa, Von sich selbst ausgehen, in: DIOTIMA, *Die Welt zur Welt bringen Politik, Geschlechterdifferenz und die Arbeit am Symbolischen*, Königstein: Ulrike Helmer, 1999, 35. (ital. Partire da sé et non farsi trovare, in: DIOTIMA. *La sapienza di partire da sé*, Napoli: Liguori, 1996, 20.)

¹⁷ Irigaray, Luce, *Sexes and Genealogies*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1993.

¹⁸ Günter, Andrea, *Politische Theorie und sexuelle Differenz. Feministische Praxis und die symbolische Ordnung der Mutter*, Königstein: Ulrike Helmer, 1998, 7-20, 139-159.

life in the world, and as life starts with birth and all its conditions, the circumstances of being born must be taken up and worked through with all their aspects. Taking up and working through include worldliness. The world offers the possibilities for this process, as it offers the culturally established and present practices, open for renewal towards the future, executed by the generations.

From the viewpoint of natality, sexual difference is explicit as a *relativum*, as a human *interrelativum*, as *inter homines esse*. Sexual difference leads to the question: Which kinds of relationships between the newcomer and the already existing people are developed, realised and fulfilled in the horizon of human sexuality, particularly in the relationship to the woman having given birth to the child?

Regarding sexual difference as an interrelational worldly complex lightens how natality organises female sexual identity. Female sexual identity does not depend on the fact of having given birth to a child or not, in a way that a woman only would be a true woman if having given birth. To the contrary, sexual identity is based upon being born by a woman. Entering the world by being born by a woman is undeniable for everyone, for every woman and for every man. Sexual identity depends upon the relation to the mother, the child either having the same sex or not. Having the same sex as the mother doesn't necessarily include to become a mother oneself. Becoming a mother is a *possible* position for a woman in the *generational relationship* of human beings, but not identical with female identity and sexuality.

In the perspective of natality, sexual difference is a beginning and starting point for the development of personal sexual identity. It is particular human in being a beginning and starting point. Being taken up and worked through it can produce all the possibilities people are able to create by assimilating and working through sexual identity.

In addition, the correlation of sexual and generational difference shows that the working through of sexuality is linked with the intergenerational activities. Human sexual identity is accompanied by the generational relationship and is the result of the intergenerational exchange, following its basic rules. At the same time, it is influenced by the wishes, demands and gaps that originate in the intergenerational exchange originates.

If sexual difference is an intergenerational process of exchange, the general rules of intergenerational exchange are important for sexual difference as well: recognising the

different positions of the generations, their different perspectives and their complex correlation, while neither preferring the unlimited demands of the young and undamaged for a self-determined sexual life nor the gifts, deeds, experiences and necessities of the elder and hurt. For men shouldn't represent and possess the first and attribute to women the second position any longer, the women's movement itself is the sign for the search of a new balance between these two positions.

Furthermore, transforming sexual relationships is an element of early Christianity, women were highly attracted to. In these times, women found the solution to separate the psychic and spiritual dimension of sexuality from the bodily and to refuse the bodily, as letters between women and Augustinus manifest. Today, we have the possibility to take up the problems of sexuality, following our spiritual disposition without producing hostility towards or domination of the body and further dualisms.

The destiny of sexual difference is not that of an individual, but of the generationally structured human community. Building upon Arendt's definition of the reality of the world quoted above one could define sexual difference as follows: To human beings the reality of sexual difference is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all: for what appears to all, this we call sexual being, and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality.

Freedom, the Gap and the Maternal Word

The traditional concept of beginning entails the problem that any beginning is supposed to be preceded by nothingness. But with regard to natality, nothingness could be a consequence of the beginning. In this case, nothingness would accompany the beginning because of the gaps produced by the beginning and because the transferring process between the generations can fail.

The Gospel of John narrates how a child realises the gap of the intergenerational bond, and thus transition and change become possible beyond the danger of nothingness. Here, we can observe how freedom *in* relationship, the divine dimension of the

word and especially the mother are connected. Structurally, it depends on the rendition of the mother and the bond with her how a gap is perceived.

The contemporary French photographer Bettina Rheims in her exhibition I.N.R.I. shows a picture of the marriage of Cana.(Joh 2, 1-12) When presenting scenes from the Bible, Rheims usually just quotes the original biblical text, without further comment. To the photo of the Cana scene, however, she adds a remarkable comment of her own. Mary turns Jesus' attention to the fact that there is a lack of wine, apparently expecting him to solve the problem. Jesus rejects his mother's request, replying: "Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (Joh 2,4). Rheims' comment reads: "But both understand each other. Doesn't change always grow of the word of a woman?"¹⁹

One can interpret Jesus' rejection as a sign of his being free to say "no" or "yes" vis-à-vis his mother's words just as vis-à-vis the right hour. In the course of times, can there be a right time? And if the possibility of saying "no" or "yes" vis-à-vis the words of the mother is interpreted in the context of the prologue of John's Gospel, saying "In the beginning was the word", then Jesus' act of freely taking up his mother's words initiates Jesus' public appearance and activity. It is the maternal word that turns the son into the son of God, insofar Jesus is free to follow it *and* actually does follow it. Thus, Jesus' reaction "Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" is the logical question. He really has to decide what he wants to do with his mother's request, accidentally happened, because he can't help hearing her words. But he can work through what they mean for him and his acting. "Woman, what have you to do with me: with my existence, my acting, my doing in the times?"

Being free to follow the word, Jesus gets the same condition his mother Mary had to observe, too. According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary was free in how to relate to the commandment every annunciation includes: She was free to say "yes" or "no" to her announced pregnancy; Luke shows her possible "no" in her first reactions of fear and shrinking back from the angel.

The parallelism between the marriage of Cana and the Annunciation shows not only how a transforming process through the word can succeed, but also that the mother had to undergo the same process as the son. "In the beginning was the word" always says: The word is a beginning, itself.

In the correlation of word and gift, gift and commandment, annunciation and deed, Derrida finds the natal unity of voice and text.²⁰ A child learns to realise its own needs and wishes by them being named by his or her mother and her substitutes. For the child, these words become a gift, because they enable him/her to recognise its own situation, for articulating and thinking the self.

Once the child has learnt words and names, he or she is able to express her-/himself precisely and to act individually and distinctly. The mother's gift of words is the condition for the specifically human, conscious kind of acting. In this sense, the word is a law. It is the law of obtaining consciousness.

Thus, the "no" to the mother is a "yes", the rejection an affirmation, because of in order to achieve a "no" that what has been said has to be picked up and worked through. The preceding becomes the starting point of the no.²¹ "The beginning being gives all other transitions their reality, their existence, and saves them from the fall into the abyss of the nothingness."²²

The coincidence of the mother's words, the needs of the child and the assimilating and working through of her words creates the beginning. Having to begin liberates from the abyss of nothingness. The child gets the possibility to make a transition by handling his/her situation, the given words and his/her own possibilities as a constellation that one can pick up actively while being different at the same time. This way of acting carries the possibility of distinguishing oneself actively and considering one's own possibilities. Thus, the given word induces own deeds.

In reality, the gap is filled. It is filled, because there is relatedness. The relationship must be realised by working through and starting to act. Consequently, Mary tells the servants of the festivity: "Whatever he tells you, do it." (Joh 2,5) The beginning of Jesus' work is honoured in its inventive value by differentiating Jesus' taking up of Mary's request while first refusing and afterwards instructing the servants consequently, and the servants as the ones who have to execute the result of the working through.

As being born in flesh by a woman is a prerequisite of Jesus' fleshly human existence, his being born spiritually by his mother is the prerequisite for his worldly psychic

¹⁹ Bettina Rheims, *INRI. Photographien*, Ausstellung, Berlin 28.11.1999-29.2.2000.

²⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1979, 34.

²¹ According to Arendt, the alternative of negating sexual difference is looking at it as a gap that could be inhabited and filled.

and spiritual existence and activity. Therefore the mother herself must possess full humanity and full worldliness, she must show individual, particular activity, that is realising the difference between herself and the world as well as the lacks and the gaps. Full humanity of the mother is the precondition of the spiritual birth of Jesus and all other children. By this, the mother herself represents the gap. As well as she is not the child, she is not the world. For the child, she becomes the in-between between the world and him-/herself.

By learning the difference of “yes” and “no”, of a request and a real own yes by the example of the person of the mother, the child learns the difference between irrefutable law and freedom. Mainly, these differences are discovered through the “no”. Therefore, the “no”, the distancing, the refusing and rejecting become so important. But it would be a wrong understanding of freedom, if freedom was identified with the “no”, the distancing, the refusing and rejecting. Freedom is not caused by the no, but by the possibility of saying “no” or “yes”. It’s the decision, that makes the “no” a genuine “no” and the “yes” a genuine “yes”. The “yes” also is an expression of freedom. In conclusion, a “no” is a “yes” in a certain sense, and a “yes” a “no”: the sign of not being identical with the situation by taking it up.

Was a “no” possible for Mary? Jesus’ first rejection of her request and his subsequent support present him as being in-between. This is a manner of existence he must have learnt from his mother. According to the narration of the marriage of Cana, Mary knows the genuine yes looking with her own eyes at the lacks and possibilities on the part of the hosts during the wedding, the festivity of gaining relationships. Then, Jesus “no” is the yes to her teaching of the being in-between as looking with one’s profound own eyes and finding own practices.

In addition, there are some more good theological reasons why Mary’s yes to her divine pregnancy is a genuine yes. In the Magnificat, Mary says that God has regarded the degradation of his slave. Has God really regarded her if he degrades her at the same moment by making her a container for his will without a will of her own?²³ In this case,

²² Arendt, *Vom Leben des Geistes, Bd. II: Das Wollen*, München: Piper, 1989, 52.

²³ Ulrike Eichler shows, how the relationship between God and women changes with these words, cf. Ulrike Eichler, “Redet Gott nicht auch in uns”: Marias Freiheit durch weibliche Genealogie, in: Günter, *Maria liest*, op. cit.

God can't be God, because a greater God could be thought of by every woman immediately.

Jesus is and becomes what women are and do in the relationship with him, feminist theologians have shown. Furthermore, Jesus is and becomes what his mother is and what happens to her words. As a precondition of this process, Brigitte Rheims suggests: both have to understand each other. This implies that Jesus has to listen to his mother's words and must be able to listen to them freely at the same time, corresponding to the law of spiritual birth by the mother's word.

The author of St. John's Gospel is consequent, if she or he starts with the phrase "In the beginning is the word." In the beginning, there was the being together and assembled with the mother and her words at once with the re-connecting with her in form of the language. In the beginning was the word, which Mary took up, transformed and addressed to Jesus, in order that he may be able to re-connect himself freely the world and find his own way. "The idea, that the language we speak and our capacity of speaking are the fruits not only of the exchange between the speakers, but of an according with reality, negotiated with the mother by exchanging the acknowledgement of her authority for the capability of speaking, this idea is the object of an intuition I strongly feel."²⁴ The word of the mother is the birth of the spiritual human existence in the world. It creates transitions bringing about change.

"The free woman is just being born": Beauvoir and Women's Love for the World

Following Kant, some feminist philosophers take up the concept of worldliness in order to reconstruct the understanding of being a woman. The first was Simone de Beauvoir. In her famous book *The second sex*, Beauvoir criticises that female existence is degraded to a simplified comprehension of nature, to the conventional understanding of femininity and, at the same time, to the reproduction of established morals.

²⁴ Muraro, Luisa, *Die symbolische Ordnung der Mutter*. Frankfurt: Campus, 1993, 62 (ital. *L'ordine simbolico della madre*, Roma: Editori Riuniti 1991, 50).

But human beings are able to bond themselves freely. This ability is the source of transforming the relationship between the sexes. Women gain transcendence by elaborating a personally satisfactory necessity of their own.

Surprisingly, Beauvoir gave to the last major part of her book the title “Justifications”. Justification is based upon actively bonding oneself to other persons and to the world while gaining love for oneself and a necessity of one’s own in the world.

For Beauvoir, in this circle of personal justification, the relationship to God is substantial. Longing for God can open the relationship to oneself, to other persons and to the world. Longing for God effects that the place of the other is empty, again and again, the Italian philosopher Luisa Muraro asserts.²⁵

As being born indicates, individual person and family, *sexus* and morality are the point of departure of a person’s existence. One can speak of a particular human nature in which biology, family and, as we would complete today, the spoken word coincide. According to Hegel, becoming a human being signifies that persons pick up and work through all that they encounter, using the creative quality of language.

Beauvoir demonstrates that women and men are supposed to follow different paths of working through. A girl climbing a tree is blamed for not acting in a truly “feminine” way. She is expected to act in accordance with the established norms of femininity.

At the same instance, a boy will be assumed to follow his own aims. Denying women the development of an existence with coherent and meaningful aims of their own, intends to keep the world with all its possibilities away from them. Thus, women become worldless.

Consequently, women are the representatives of Christian worldlessness. Their duty is to guard (human) nature in the form of feminine nature *and* morals. While men possess the authority to develop future, women have to represent tradition. Feminist philosophers reject this concept, enforcing the worldliness of women’s existence. - As the worldliness of women’s existence together with the broader concept of human nature, elaborated by Hegel and taken by Beauvoir, often is ignored in feminist theory, female worldlessness is reproduced in a reduced discussion about the body.

What does it then mean for women to live in a worldly manner? Women act worldly when they bond themselves to other people. In the chapters on "Justifications", Beauvoir discusses how loving, the human manner of staying related in complex configurations, is creative. A human person loves other persons, things of the world, God and her-/himself. In all these relationships a person can fail. He/she can become narcissistic. He/she can submit to being loved or devote himself/herself to material things. Or he/she can despise the world because of not being successful in reaching the world through the love for God.

By connecting oneself, others, the world and God in one act, a woman can find her aim and necessity, increase the love for herself and her autonomy. She achieves her true and full humanity. For Beauvoir women are justified if they are able to achieve the circle of reconnecting in practice. Incarnation is realising meaningful female existence in the world. Incarnation means: being and becoming a part of the world by one's own practice of divine re-connecting.

The Eternity in time and the Female Love for the World: Simone Weil and the Philosophers of DIOTIMA

Simone Weil found the meaning of love for the world by meditating the prayer "Our Father".²⁶

Considering that God has given freedom to human beings, the lines "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" can't signify that God's will determines human action, requiring mere obedience. Furthermore, instructions of God are missing for most situations a human being encounters today. Moreover, the trials and ordeals that human beings have to respond to originate in the world. One can summarise that Weil pursues the question how what is effected by the world can be combined with the fulfilment of free humanity as intended by God. She is in search of a practice that allows to turn

²⁵ Cf. Muraro, Luisa, Die göttliche Schule der Rechtfertigung, in: Günter, Andrea/ Wodtke-Werner, Verena (ed.): *Frauen - Mystik - Politik in Europa*. Mit Beiträgen aus Spanien, Italien und Deutschland, Königstein: Ulrike Helmer, 2000, 89-101, (ital. Muraro, Luisa, *Le Amiche di Dio*, Napoli 2001, 228-231).

²⁶ *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panidas, New York: David McKay 1977, 92-100.

contingency into a starting point (*principium*) of eternity - as Jesus did when addressing the tax collectors and whores.

Love for the world, according to Weil, means to orientate human desire towards eternity. Love for the world consists in desiring every single incident, every thing, every person one is confronted with - thus finding eternity. Desire means to direct one's own will to any object one encounters and to develop one's own will in this interaction. Combining events, things, persons, one's own needs and wishes allows to find in them one's own possibilities, that can be taken up and transformed into future.

Desire is based upon the interaction between the person and the outer world. Love for the world signifies to find in the desire the world as the origin of desire and as the future of incidents, things and persons.

Female love for the world is a central subject of the Italian philosophers of DIOTIMA. They emphasise the worldliness of women as a main aspect for the understanding of female existence: The world is between women. In the in-between of the world, there are women. The world is the greatest third arranging, dividing and distinguishing women. And the world is the place of women's life and acting where they want to live with well-being.²⁷

In addition, the world is the result of human being's acting. Therefore it confronts women immediately with the effects of their acting and forms the space of their greatest influence.

Paying attention to the diversity of women produced by the world helps not to reduce female existence to a myth of femininity or to a law of nature. Through the relationship of women founded by the world, women can find their interpretation of sex. In connection with the world the human manner of being related, a manner of being female, too, can be discovered by woman. The world is the outer human source and condition of femininity.

The Italian philosophers found a principle that allows to activate the mutual interaction of being a woman and being related to the world. This principle says: Between me and the world: another woman. Between another woman and me: the world. Activating

²⁷ Libreria delle donne di Milano, More women than men. In: Bono, Paola/ Kemp, Sandra (ed.). *Italian Feminist Thought. A Reader*. Oxford, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991, 110-123.

the alliance of women, their relations and their worldliness makes possible to acquire the female art of bringing into the world for the world itself: bringing the world into the world.²⁸

For this act it is essential to bring the female desire into the world, because it includes the particular connection to the world women have. As Simone Weil shows, realising desire doesn't mean to have a certain wish that needs to be fulfilled. To the contrary, women have to connect their needs and wishes with time and eternity. They have to ask themselves how their desire can stay awake, vivacious and strong. Thus, female desire is raised to power.²⁹ The female desire for the world can be multiplied with the future of the female desire in the world. Thus, female desire induces eternity.

²⁸ DIOTIMA, *Mettere al mondo il mondo*. Milano: La Tartaruga, 1990.

²⁹ Cf. Günter, Andrea, Transzendenz der Gefühle ist Treue zu den Gefühlen. Zur feministischen Rekonstruktion der Kultivierung der Gefühle, in: *Wissen und Gefühl*, *Erziehung heute*, 3 (2003) 31-35.