

## Saint Hildegard of Bingen and the relationship between man and woman

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The experience of sex complementarity that had been progressively expanding through the number of double monasteries within the Benedictine tradition from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, created an environment in which a philosophy of sex identity began to challenge the previously stated premises of sex polarity and sex unity. It is within this context that Hildegard of Bingen emerged as the first philosopher to articulate a complete theory of sex complementarity. Although some previous Christian philosophers, such as Augustine, Boethius and Anselm, had defended sex complementarity in certain isolated categories of thought about woman and man, Hildegard was the first to develop a rationale for this theory across all four categories of the concept of woman in relation to man. For this reason, Hildegard is rightly considered as the foundress of the sex complementarity position.

Hildegard was not completely consistent in her theory of sex identity, On the logical level, she gave evidence at times of the same paradoxical combination of sex polarity and reverse sex polarity that was found in Abelard. Namely, she refers to woman the weaker sex who is made superior to man by God's grace. However, Hildegard balances her intermittent references to this paradox with a thorough and far-reaching defence of the equality and significant differentiation of woman and man. Hildegard's theory of sex complementarity can be summarized as follows:

### Sex Complementarity in Heaven

<b>Man</b>	<b>Woman</b>
Opposites	Equal and different in resurrection
Generation	First parents, Adam and Eve, equal and different
Wisdom	Equal and different in knowledge
Virtue	Male saints equal to and different from female saints

### Sex Complementarity in the World

	<b>Man</b>		<b>Woman</b>
<b>Opposites</b>	More like fire and earth		More like air and water
		<i>Equally in image of God</i>	
<b>Generation</b>	Deposits cold seed		Warms and strengthens seed
		<i>God provides soul</i>	
<b>Wisdom</b>	Practical knowledge of		Practical knowledge of

	man in relation to woman		woman in relation to man
<b>Virtue</b>	Follow Christ; stronger though less self-control; rule by love		Follow Christ; weaker though more self-control; obey by choice
		<i>Equal access to public and private spheres of activity</i>	

Hildegard was given over to the care of the Abbess Jutta at the double monastery of Mount St. Disibode at the age of eight. At fifteen she entered the monastery and, at the death of Jutta in 1126, Hildegard became Abbess, at the age of a twenty-eight.<sup>1</sup> In the context of the double monastery, Hildegard was exposed to the main Christian writers of the time, including Augustine, Boethius, and Anselm. Joseph Singer also suggests that Hildegard's writings give evidence of familiarity with Aristotle's *De Caelo et Mondo* and *Meteorologica*, Isidore's *De Rerum Natura*, Bernard Sylvester's *De Mundi Universitate Sive Megacosmos et Microcosmos*, Constantine of Africa's *On the Nature of Man*, and Hugh St. Viktor's *On the Members and Parts of Man*.<sup>2</sup> If Singer is correct, it would indicate that Hildegard was a very learned woman.

However, Hildegard rarely refers to scholars in her writings, and she implies that all her knowledge was infused directly by God. She describes this process in the old paradox of sex polarity and reverse sex polarity. Woman, who is inferior since Eve, will be made superior to man, by the direct infusion of Divine knowledge. In a vision, she records being told by God:

Therefore write it large from a fountain of abundance, and so overflow in mystical erudition, so that they may tremble at the profusion of your irrigation, who wished you to be considered contemptible on account of Eve's transgression. But thou dost not get this knowledge from men, for thou receivest it from above.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Scivias*, Hildegard reports that the result of mystical illumination was the increase in understanding of the meaning of texts with which she was already familiar:

It happened in the year 1141 of the Incarnation of God's Son Jesus Christ, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, that the heavens opened and a fiery light of great brilliance came and suffused my whole brain.... And suddenly I came to understand the meaning of the book of the Psalms, the Gospel and the other canonical books of both the Old and New Testaments-although I could not interpret the words of their text, nor divide the syllables, and I had no knowledge of cases or tenses.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Hildegard of Bingen," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 edition.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Joseph Singer, *From Magic to Science: Essays on the Scientific Twilight* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), pp. 235-8; see also, Frances and Joseph Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Francesca Maria Steele, *The Life and Visions of St. Hildegard* (London: Heath, Cranton and Ouseley, Ltd., 1914), p. 132. See also, Barbara Newman, *O Feminea Forma: God and Woman in the Works of St. Hildegard*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale, 1981. This work will be published in a revised text entitled *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (University of California Press, forthcoming 1985). I am indebted to Barbara Newman for many clarifications and sources concerning Hildegard of Bingen.

<sup>4</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* (CCCM 43-43a). See *Wisse die Wege* (Salzburg: Otto Mailer Verlag, 1975), Translated by Barbara Newman and printed in "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation" presented at the American Academy of Religion, Dallas, December 1983 and appearing in a forthcoming issue of

In another description from the *Vita*, Hildegard includes philosophy in the category of things whose meanings were revealed through visions:

I understood the writings of the prophets, the Gospels, and the other saints, and of certain philosophers, without any human instruction. And I expounded some of them, although I had scarcely any knowledge of literature, as an uneducated woman had taught me.<sup>5</sup>

It would follow from these observations, that Hildegard had most likely already studied the texts of some philosophical writings whose meaning was clarified for her in the experience of infused knowledge.

For Hildegard, however, the most obvious source of knowledge about sex identity and the concept of woman in relation to man was her own observation of human nature in her years of work in the infirmary of the monastery. Benedictine monasteries often had a hospice for pilgrims and for the sick. Hildegard worked as a nurse-physician in the hospice connected to her monastery. As a result of her acute powers of observation and organization of information, she wrote a scientific treatise classifying the curative powers of herbs. More germane to the question of sex identity, Hildegard also wrote a text in which she analysed the biological composition of men and women and the effects of these factors on personality and human interaction. In *Causae et Curae*, one of the earliest books on the psychology of personality written in the west, Hildegard produced numerous personal observations on human nature. In this way, she functions as a philosopher who supports her views with empirical evidence. Therefore, although Hildegard claims to have received her knowledge directly from God, when the texts she wrote are examined in some detail, they reveal a sophisticated philosophical mind generating fresh and original hypotheses in new areas of thought.

Hildegard of Bingen is accessible to the contemporary public in a way that far exceeds any female philosopher who preceded her in the west. All of her major works are available.<sup>6</sup> The titles of the texts with philosophical and theological significance are as follows:

Latin	German	English equivalent
<i>Scivias</i>	<i>Wisse die Wege</i>	<i>Know the Way</i>
<i>Liber Simplicis Medicinae (Physica)</i>	<i>Naturkunde</i>	<i>Natural Arts</i>
<i>Liber Compositae Medicinae (Causae et Curae)</i>	<i>Heilkunde</i>	<i>Healing Arts</i>
<i>Liber Vitae Meritorium</i>	<i>Der Mensch in der Verantwortung</i>	<i>Man in Responsibility</i>
<i>Liber Divinorum Operum (De Operatione Dei)</i>	<i>Welt and Mensch</i>	<i>World and Man</i>

Hildegard's other writings include:

Lives of St. Disibode and St. Rupett,... hymns and canticles of which she wrote both words and music; 50 allegorical homilies; a morality play; for diversion a language of her own

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*Church History*, pp. 4-5 of manuscript, footnote 8.

<sup>5</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Vita* (11.17, 104A), printed in Newman, "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation," p. 5 of manuscript, footnote 9.

<sup>6</sup> At present her works are available in Latin and German only. However, a translation of the *Scivias* is being completed by Mother Columba Hart, O.S.B., to be published in the *Classics of Western Philosophy* (New York: Ramsay; Toronto: Paulist Press, forthcoming).

composed of 900 words and an alphabet of 23 letters, and also letters to popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, kings, emperor, monks, and nuns, men and women of various levels of society, both in Germany and abroad.<sup>7</sup>

No woman previous to Hildegard revealed such a wide range of knowledge and creative thought. The extraordinary breadth of her writing skills, which ranged from music to drama, to scientific texts on the classification of stones and herbs, to theological speculation, to language games, to the philosophy of psychology, reveal a genius unparalleled by a woman and matched by very few men up to the twelfth century. The additional discovery that Hildegard was the first person to develop an original theory in support of the philosophy of sex complementarity makes her contribution to the history of the concept of woman in relation to man all the more significant. Hildegard's theory of sex identity will now be examined in each of the four categories of opposites, generation, wisdom and virtue.

### *Opposites*

Hildegard believed that women and men were opposite in much as the elements were opposite. The elements, and the humours derived from them worked together to bring about all change in the world:

Mankind lives out of the four elements. Namely, God has put the world together out of these four elements such that one cannot be separated from another the world would no longer be, could one exist without the other. On the contrary: they are inextricably linked with one another.<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle had also given a central importance to the elements. However, in his theory woman was described as being more like the two lowest elements (earth and water) and man as being more like the two highest elements (air and fire). Hildegard took a different view. She argued that man was more like the highest element, fire, and the low element, earth, while woman was more like the two middle elements, air and water. In this way, the two sexes balanced each other out, so that neither one was fully superior or inferior to the other.

The differences between Aristotle's and Hildegard's theories of relation of sex identity to the elements is summarized in the following two charts:

#### **Aristotle's Sex Polarity in Relation to the Elements:**

<b>Fire</b>	Man	Higher	Active	Lighter	Superior
<b>Air</b>					
<b>Water</b>	Woman	Lower	Passive	Heavier	Inferior
<b>Earth</b>					

<sup>7</sup> "Hildegard of Bingen," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 edition. Her hymns have recently been recorded by Christopher Page, a Hyperion recording. See a review of this recording by Barbara Grant, "A Feather on the Breath of God" in *Parabola Magazine*, published by the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition, New York City, New York, Vol. IX, no. 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 94-8. For the written text of her hymns see, *Lieder* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Heilkunde: das Buch von den Grund and Wesen and der Heilung der Krankheiten (Causae et curae)* (Salzburg: O. Müller Verlag, 1972), p. 97. Translated from the German by Jasmin el Kordi-Schmitt, as are all subsequent passages from this text.

## Hildegard's Sex Complementarity in Relation to the Elements

<b>Fire</b>	Man
<b>Air</b>	Woman
<b>Water</b>	Woman
<b>Earth</b>	Man

### **Interconnection of elements, neither sex is superior or inferior**

Hildegard offered a theological defence of her association of the elements with sex identity. She stated that the association of man with the earth arose from his direct creation by God from the earth, while woman's lack of association with this element sprang from her direct creation from the body of man:

Adam, who was created out of the earth, was awakened with the elements and thereby transformed. Eve, however, having emerged from Adam's rib was not transformed. So through the vital powers of earth, Adam was manly and through the elements he was potent. Eve, however, remained soft in her marrow and she had more of an airy character, a very artistic talent and a precious vitality for the burden of the earth did not press upon her.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that in the above passage Hildegard did not value one sex above the other. The man had more power or strength because of his creation from the earth, but the woman had more refinement and creativity because of her creation from bone. The artistic and vital character of woman was connected with the greater presence of air in her body:

The woman, however, did not experience such a transformation; taken from flesh, she remained flesh. That is why ... she is so to speak an airy being, for it is her task to bear the child to maturity and to give it birth. She also has a cloven skull and thinner skin so that child she carries in her womb may get air.<sup>10</sup>

In the above passage Hildegard shows how freely she integrates religious faith with empirical observation. A belief in the story of the creation of Adam and Eve is supplemented by Hildegard's observations of the interaction between mother and child during pregnancy. She observed further that the greater presence of earth in the male reflected itself in physical appearance. More earth meant more hair, and men, in general, had more hair than women.<sup>11</sup>

Hildegard also believed that the balance of the various elements in a person had important consequences for character. The interaction of the elements and the humours provided a basic personality pattern for individual men and women. As will be seen in the subsequent sections of this chapter, Hildegard developed a complicated psychology of female and male development. She considered it to be a central task of philosophy to make explicit the different ways in which woman and man interact with one another. In all her theories of interaction, however, there is a decided effort to guard the equality and significant differentiation of the sexes.

Hildegard also described both woman and man as being created "in the image of God." Although writing very clearly within the Christian tradition of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Hildegard frequently refers to the feminine aspect of the Divine Nature. Barbara Newman describes a vision from the *Scivias*:

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. "That the man wears a beard and has more hair all over his body than does the woman, hence comes because the man was formed of earth." See also, "And since they [the second kind of woman] do have a somewhat manly nature, and a great deal of procreative power, they often grow a down around their chin," p. 144.

In Hildegard's first vision of the feminine Divine, she beholds a radiant woman adorned by suppliant angels. A voice from heaven identifies her as *Scientia Dei*, the knowledge of God: "She is awesome in terror as the Thunderer's lightning, and gentle in goodness as the sunshine. In her terror and her gentleness, she is incomprehensible to men, because of the dread radiance of divinity in her face and the brightness which dwells in her as the robe of her beauty.... For she is with all and in all, and of beauty so great in her mystery that none could comprehend how sweetly she bears with men, and how she spares them with inscrutable mercy."<sup>12</sup>

Since God is both feminine and masculine, Hildegard concludes that woman and man reflect this bisexual divine nature in their sex identities. In addition, she argues that both sexes contain in their souls a masculine and feminine nature. Newman continues:

For when God created male and female in His image, Hildegard remarks, he extended this dual likeness to the soul as well as the body. The male designates strength, courage, and justice in the inward man, while the female denotes mercy, penance, and grace.<sup>13</sup>

The division of the soul into masculine and feminine aspects is not new to philosophy. Aristotle and Philo had developed a similar division along sexual lines. However, once again we find a difference in the evaluation of the qualities associated with male and female identity. For Aristotle and Philo, the division of souls was within a framework of sex polarity, while for Hildegard it was within a framework of sex complementarity.

#### **Aristotle and Philo's Sex-Polarity Division of the Soul**

Masculine	Rational, discursive reason, with authority	Superior
Feminine	Irrational, sense, without authority	Inferior

#### **Hildegard's Sex-Complementarity of Soul**

Masculine	Strength, Courage, Justice	Equally important
Feminine	Mercy, Penance, Grace	

Hildegard frequently argued that men ought to develop the feminine qualities of mercy and grace, while women ought to develop the corresponding masculine qualities of courage and strength.<sup>14</sup> In this way, even though she designated particular qualities as masculine or feminine, a wholly integrated woman or man would have both aspects of their nature developed. The main difference between the sexes would be that a man's natural starting point was the masculine qualities, so that he needed to develop feminine qualities, while a woman's natural starting point was the feminine qualities, so that she needed to develop her masculine side. Therefore, in her consideration of woman and man as created in the image of God, Hildegard has maintained the balance so central to sex complementarity.

#### *Generation*

Hildegard's analysis of generation proposes two different theories, one before and one after the Fall. In her description of paradise, Hildegard states that woman generated by herself, without the help of man:

The first mother of mankind was equipped according to the model of ether; the way ether carries the stars undamaged within it, thus she carried unharmed and undamaged and without pain

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Newman, "Divine Power Made Perfect in Weakness: St. Hildegard on the Frail Sex," *Medieval Religious Women* (Cistercian Publications, forthcoming 1985), p. 18 of manuscript, footnote 54.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21 of manuscript, footnote 60.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* See also footnotes 61-66 of the manuscript for other examples of Hildegard's description of this theory.

mankind (within her) for she had been told: Go ye forth and multiply.<sup>15</sup>

Hildegard then suggests that man's testicles descended after the Fall and that man, for the first time, produced seed:

Had man remained in paradise, he would have perpetually existed in an immutable and perfect state. But after his sin all of this was changed into another, quite bitter condition. For now the blood of he who is excited in the fiery heat of passion, ejects an effervescent humor, which we call seed.<sup>16</sup>

After the Fall, the continuity of generation demanded the sexual interaction of woman and man, whereas before it demanded only the cosmic parenting of woman.

Hildegard's analysis of human generation followed Aristotelian lines as qualified by Porphyry and Galen. She believed that woman did not contribute seed to generation. Drawing upon the theory that woman was naturally weaker than man, Hildegard states that woman contributes only blood and a kind of foam:

The blood of the woman, who is weak and fragile, has no such seed: rather, she emits a thin and scanty foam, for she unlike man is not composed of two different types, namely earth and flesh, but is only of man's flesh.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, after the Fall, woman lost not only the full power of generation, but also an equal role in the provision of seed for the child.

However, even with this sex-polarity description of the continuity of generation, Hildegard does not conclude that woman is inferior to man. She suggests that the woman heats up the man's seed and allows it to develop:

[The man's] blood pours into the woman a cold foam which then congeals in the warmth of the motherly tissue taking on that blood-mixed state. In the beginning this foam remains in the warmth and later is maintained by the dry humors of the motherly nourishment growing into a dry, miniature like form of the human being until finally the script of the Creator, who formed man, penetrates under expansion of human formation as a whole, much the way a craftsman shapes his superior vessel.<sup>18</sup>

Within the sex-polarity tradition, which envisions heat as superior to cold, Hildegard once again seeks to bring about a balance between the sexes that would not allow either one to be essentially superior to the other. The man deposited the seed, the woman "warmed it up and strengthened it," and God brought it to life, by implanting the soul.<sup>19</sup> The suggestion of a different, but equal contribution by woman and man indicates Hildegard's movement towards a sex-complementarity theory of generation.

Hildegard gave a very detailed account of the complete process of generation. During the first month the seed slowly formed into a blood-like mixture that took on the shape of the child. The humours of the mother brought about the congealing, the development of shape, and the growth. Hildegard stated, however, that at this point the fetus was not properly described as

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<sup>15</sup> Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92. See also, "Not until Adam's transgression was the extraordinary power in his sexual member changed into this poison-like foam. The woman's blood was likewise altered into yonder unnatural discharge," p. 104; and "When Adam, through his sin was blinded and in a state of insensibility, his generative power went with him into exile and transferred to another organ. It fled so to speak secretly to the above-mentioned genitals and remained there," p. 138.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

alive, but rather as merely surviving. After one month, God infused life into the child.

The most striking aspect of Hildegard's description of the development of human life is her insistence on the complete integration of soul and body. This fact shows an important contrast between her theory and previous theories of sex unity that tended to devalue the body. As will be seen, sex complementarity, in its first complete articulation by Hildegard of Bingen, appears to maintain a balanced approach to the body and soul.

Hildegard drew upon a number of natural metaphors to explain how the soul and body were integrated. In *Causae et Curae*, the soul was compared to a great wind:

The spirit of life draws near according to God's will and touches yonder form without the mother noticing, touches it like a strong, warm wind, that sweeps across the plains with a rage; it pours into the foam and intertwines into all its limbs.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Liber Divinorum Operum*, the relation of soul and body was compared to the intimate interaction of water in the earth: "For as water pours through all the earth, so the soul passes through the whole body."<sup>21</sup> The same metaphor was also used in the *Liber Compositae Medicinae*: "And the way the waters dash to particular spots, so the soul infuses our body over which it is all the same superior."<sup>22</sup> Finally, the soul, according to Hildegard, "wanders everywhere through this form like a caterpillar spinning silk."<sup>23</sup>

In all of the above natural metaphors, Hildegard emphasized the complete integration of soul and body. In this way, she rejected the Platonic tradition in which a soul was considered separate and distinct from the body. At the same time, although Hildegard's theory paralleled the Aristotelian integration of human rationality and materiality, it avoided the devaluation of the female that is so central to Aristotelian thought. In this way, Hildegard offered a new synthesis of body and soul that led to a complementarity, rather than a polarity of the sexes.

In Chapter III, Augustine's affirmation of the resurrection of the body was cited as offering the potential for a philosophy of sex complementarity by its recognition of the centrality of the body in the definition of personal identity. Hildegard, significantly, states that in the resurrection, the sexual aspect of man's and woman's natures will be maintained:

Thus all men in the twinkling of an eye shall rise again in body and in soul without any contradiction of cutting off their members, but in the integrity of their bodies and their sex.<sup>24</sup>

The specific argument against the "cutting off of their members" implies that in the context of Hildegard's discussion, some suggestion had been made that the anatomical aspect of sexual differentiation would be destroyed in the resurrection. This view would have followed from a sex-unity tendency such as that suggested in the writings of John Scotus Erigena. In this theory the more perfect human state would be a unisex model. Hildegard's argument against the sex-unity theory of resurrection is, therefore, different from Augustine's argument against the sex-polarity interpretation of resurrection in which women would be changed into men. However, both Hildegard and Augustine insisted on the ultimate equality and differentiation of woman and man in the resurrected state. They understood this theory of sex complementarity to be the logical consequence of the Christian theological belief in the resurrection of the body. In this view, human perfection necessarily involves reference to sex complementarity.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>22</sup> Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

## Wisdom

Hildegard believed that wisdom demanded self-knowledge. Since women and men had a sexually differentiated relationship in reference to the elements, wisdom demanded reflection on the relations between this material difference. Close association with the elements earth and fire gave man more natural power and greater passion. Woman's association with the elements of air and water gave her a more refined and gentle disposition. For Hildegard, the search for wisdom led woman to a certain recognition of her weaker status:

The fear of God dwells in the sanctity of the chosen woman, for God has formed the woman so that she shall have awe for Him, and awe also for her husband. Therefore, it is only just if the woman displays a demure nature. By that she is, so to speak, the house of wisdom, for in her nature both worldly and spiritual matter comes to be realized.<sup>25</sup>

The above passage reads like a simple support for sex polarity in its emphasis upon woman's awe for man and her demure nature. However, Hildegard did not consider natural passion and strength to be superior qualities in a human being. She gave an equal evaluation to the more refined natural character of woman.

Hildegard's theory of the complementarity of the two sexes is nowhere more clearly expressed than in her analysis of sexual intercourse. In the following passage; she explains the differing elemental sources for man's and woman's sexual desires:

For as soon as the storm of passion arises with a man, he is thrown about in it like a mill. His sexual organs then are so to speak the forge to which the marrow delivers its fire. That forge then transmits the blaze to the male genitals and makes them flame up mightily. If however, the wind of lust arises from the female marrow, it comes into the uterus that hangs at the navel and stirs the woman's blood with excitement. But the uterus possesses a wide and so to speak open space around the navel region so that wind can spread around the woman's womb; therefore, it lets her flow with passion less vehemently.<sup>26</sup>

Hildegard appears not to give a superior value to either the fire-like sexuality of the man or the air-like sexuality of the woman. She perceives them as equal and complementary. In yet another passage, Hildegard describes woman's sexual desires as similar to the gentle heat of the sun penetrating the earth:

Such is the woman's sexual pleasure, gentle and silent and yet of a steady firey desire to receive and bear children.... It is of a lighter nature than that of man.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the above general differentiation of the two sexes, Hildegard also developed a complicated psychology of different kinds of persons within either sex. She described four kinds of women and four kinds of men. Her analysis included reference to the humours, a common category in medieval thought that focused on the quality of blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile present in a person. The humours were thought to effect both health and personality.

### Hildegard's Four Types of women

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
muscular	very heavy	moderately heavy	delicate	meagre

<sup>25</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Der Menrch in der Verantwortung, das Buch der Lebensverdienste (Liber vitae Meritorum)* (Salzburg: Otto Miiller Verlag, 1972), 69. Translated by Jasmin el Kordi-Schmitt as are all other passages from this text.

<sup>26</sup> Hildegard, *Heilkunde*, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

structure				
blood	clean, red	whiter	drier	slimy
colour of skin	clear and white	sullen	pale	dark
fertility	moderate	very	partial	rare
menstruation	light	moderate	heavy	very heavy
character	artistic, content	efficient, manly, strict	intellectual, benevolent, loyal, chaste	unstable, ill-humoured
Possible diseases after early menopause	Depression, melancholy, pains in the side, unhealthy glandular secretions	Insanity, problems with spleen, dropsy tumors	Paralysis, imbalanced, liver problems, cancer	Abdominal pains, spinal pains, early death.

Hildegard's theory of the intricate connection between body and soul is clearly seen in the above chart. She understands personality as having a clear connection with quality of blood and muscles; in addition, she sees the relationship between personality and color of skin, intensity of menstruation, and disease. Her analysis is astonishingly modern in its emphasis on the interaction of psychological and biological factors, while it is at the same time medieval in its consideration of elements and humours.

In the following summary of Hildegard's theory of the four kinds of men, we find a somewhat less detailed, but similar kind of analysis.

#### **Hildegard's Four Types of Men**

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
Blood	Fiery	Fiery and windy	Windy and black bile	Weak in all respects
Colour of skin	Red hue	Mixed red and white hue	Sombre	Unclean and pale
Fertility	Very	Moderate	Partial	Infertile
Character	Hearty and hale	Balanced	Very dangerous, no moderation	Weak, effeminate
Children	Tend to be unrestrained, coarse-mannered children	Balanced, happy, well-mannered children	Mean or evil children	

It is interesting to note that Hildegard included reference to fertility as well as to the quality of progeny in her analysis of types of women and men.

Hildegard's analysis of the kinds of women and men had as one of its purpose the goal of leading people to a heightened self-knowledge. Wisdom consisted, in part in learning about one's own basic material constitution, and about how this kind of personality might affect other people. If Hildegard had merely completed her analysis with the above general descriptions, it would have been significant for the history of a philosophy of sex identity. However, she went much further, giving detailed assessments of the way in which each type of man related to each type of woman in both sexual and chaste relationships. It is in these passages that Hildegard's frankness, combined with her gift of poetic description, makes her one of the most important philosophers in the history of the concept of woman.

[The first type of men] love coition with women and are anxious to get out of other men's way and to avoid them, for they are more inclined to women than to men.... As soon as they

get sight of a woman, hear of one or simply fancy one in thought, their blood is burning with a blaze. Their eyes are kept fixed on the object of their love like arrows as soon as they catch sight of it.<sup>28</sup>

The strong presence of the element fire in this kind of man made him a persistent companion. The second type of man, however, had a stronger presence of the element wind:

The addition of wind in their genitals moderates and tames the fiery power within themselves.... That is why one refers to them as a golden edifice of sexual embrace.... With women they can have an honorable and fruitful relationship. The eyes of such men can meet squarely with those of the women, much in contrast to those other men's eyes that were fixed on them like arrows.<sup>29</sup>

Hildegard understood perfectly well the difference between a man who sought to relate to a woman as a sex object to be possessed, and a man who sought to be joined to the whole woman as a person.

Hildegard's description of the remaining two kinds of men developed other kind of male character in equally vivid detail. The third kind of man suffered from an over abundance of black bile in his blood. This turned him into an evil sort of companion

The wind in their genitals has three characteristic features: for one, it is fiery, then also windy and finally intermixed with the smoke of the black bile; therefore, they are incapable of having a genuine loving relationship with any being. Through that they become bitter, avaricious and full of foolishness and abundant passion. In intercourse with women they know no moderation and act like donkeys.<sup>30</sup>

Hildegard used the animal metaphors of wolves of prey, lion, and bear to describe this kind of man. She argued that some of these men "retained an instinctive hatred toward [women's] sex." This hatred caused their genital organs to become violently twisted away from their original purpose. Hildegard ended her analysis with a warning:

If they were permitted, these men would kill a woman during their intercourse, for there is nothing of the tenderness of loving desire nor of sincerity in their embrace.<sup>31</sup>

Hildegard's distinction between the first kind of passionate lover and the third kind of violent misogynist was important. While the first kind of man at least offered some possibility of relationship, the third should be avoided altogether. The fourth kind of man turned out to be indifferent to women. He suffered from a general weakness in possession of all the elements:

The wind in their genitals has little fiery force, for it is lukewarm like water that has hardly been heated. His two spheres, meant to serve him like bellows to mend the fire, are stunted, underdeveloped and too feeble to erect the trunk, for they do not hold within them the riches of the fiery power. Such men can be loved in sexual embrace, whereby they desire to cohabit with women as well as with men.... They are not tormented by envy so mote out of good will love women who are weak as well, for the woman is weak and in her weakness appears more like a boy.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

Hildegard concluded that a relationship with this kind of man was rarely productive.

Hildegard's description of the four kinds of women did not go into as much detail about lovemaking. However, just as she had described which kind of man was most attractive to women, she also considered which kind of woman was most attractive to men. The first kind, or artistic women, are "charming and lovely in their embrace."<sup>33</sup> The second, or manly kind of women, "are very attractive to men and understand how to captivate them; therefore, men are very fond of such women."<sup>34</sup> Hildegard seems to be using "manly" here to refer to a woman similar to the contemporary earth mother image. The third kind, or the intellectual woman, had a more difficult time. "Although men like their way of living, they shun them a bit, for such women attract them, is true, but don't know how to captivate them."<sup>35</sup> The fourth kind, or unstable women, appeared to discourage men altogether. "Men likewise have a disinclination for such women and also love them very little. And should they really at one point reach a sexual pleasure, it will not last but shortly."<sup>36</sup>

Hildegard was not only interested in describing sexual relations between women and men. As a nun in close relation to a man's monastery, she was equally interested in how men and women interacted on the personal level when genital sexuality was not a factor in the relationship. Hildegard was as insightful in this dimension of male-female relationships as she had been previously. She argued that the second type of man and the second type of woman were best able to live with the opposite sex in chastity. Significantly, these two types of women and men were also best able to sustain a marriage. In other words, it was precisely the same characteristics that enable a person to have a balanced relationship with a member of the opposite sex that also gave them the necessary character for a productive spiritual life.

In more detail, Hildegard outlined the ways in which each man dealt with chastity. The first kind of man, with the fiery nature, had a very difficult time with women:

They wither away and drag about as if dying, unless they can let loose the foam of their seed in another way by means of lustful dreams or thoughts or perverse acts.<sup>37</sup>

Hildegard reflected that they would even be aroused by inanimate objects and subsequently exhausted by the struggles of their sexual drives. As a consequence they had to avoid women at all costs:

Should these types wish to shun women voluntarily, may it be out of necessity, shame, fear or love for God, then they have to shun them like poison and have to flee from them, because they find it too hard not to embrace women.<sup>38</sup>

In this way, Hildegard explained the multitude of writers-such as Jerome, Lucretius or Juvenal-who counselled men to avoid women.<sup>39</sup>

The second kind of man, or the person with a balanced nature, was quite able to live in chastity: "They are also capable of abstaining from them (women) and to look at them in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> See, Jerome, "Letter to Eustochium, no. 22," *op. cit.*, Juvenal, "Satire Against Women" in Chapter III, and Lucretius, *The Nature of Things*, in Chapter III.

a friendly and moderate way."<sup>40</sup> However, Hildegard observed that this kind of man needed to have female friends:

If the above mentioned men remain without women, they are inglorious like a day without sunshine.... In company with women their joy is like a clear day when the sun is shining brightly.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, Hildegard's description of the most perfect kind of man included a clear statement of the need for that man to be in a complementary relation with women. It could be a sexual relationship, as within marriage, or it could be a celibate bond. The second kind of man was capable of developing either creatively.

The third kind of man, or the person with an abundance of black bile, was frequently able to avoid women without much difficulty: "Some of these men can avoid the female sex, for they feel no love and dislike women."<sup>42</sup> They appear to be quite unable to form any meaningful kind of relationships with either women or men:

They neither receive any love from their fellow men, nor have any inclination to a social life of their own, all the more since they exhaust themselves with continuous figments of their imagination. Then when they meet people they already are full of hate, malevolence and the wrong attitude so they can't enjoy company anymore.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, this kind of man would tend to be as erratic and violent in chastity as he was in a sexual encounter. Finally, the fourth kind of man, or the weak man, could live in chastity without too much effort:

Obviously, they do not have to suffer much from lust in their emotional life, except for having to grapple with it at times in their imagination or in their ideal life. Because they demonstrate such deficiencies in their bodily condition, they are also awkward in drafting their spiritual world.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that this kind of man would not have a very intense or creative relationship of complementarity with a woman.

Hildegard's discussion of the effect of celibacy on women did not focus as much on their subsequent relation with men as on the effects of this situation on their health. She argued that the first kind of woman, the artistic woman, needed a sexual relationship with a man.

If they have to remain without men and can't give birth to children, they suffer from quite a number of bodily conditions. If they have men, they are healthy.<sup>45</sup>

The second kind of woman, the earthy woman, however, was able to live without men.

They can abstain from intercourse, if they want to, without suffering particular damage. However, often when they do avoid the company of men, they are quite difficult and unbearable in their manners.<sup>46</sup>

Hildegard believed that the second kind of woman did not adjust well to abstinence in

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<sup>40</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Heilkunde*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

many cases. However, they were the only kind who were able to retain their good health. The third kind of woman, or the intellectual woman, appeared to suffer from the lack of a relationship with a man:

In sexual union, they act chaste, are loyal to their men and healthy with them, but suffering if without them. Then they are ailing, both because they don't know in which particular man to trust or because they have not got a man at all.<sup>47</sup>

Hildegard did not consider it a negative quality of woman to need the company of men. On the contrary, she argued that the fourth kind of woman, the unstable woman, was the only one who quite happily lived without men.

Thus they are healthier, stronger and merrier without men, all the more since they often feel very weak after having had intercourse with men.<sup>48</sup>

To be happy without contact with members of the opposite sex seemed to point to a lack of personal development for Hildegard. Only those women and men who responded to one another in a whole and balanced way were considered examples of ideal women and men. This meant that abstinence would bring about some initial suffering until the relationship was transformed into another dimension of complementarity. Women and men who had achieved this balanced transformation were able to have deep personal bonds with one another. Indeed, their happiness in some way depended upon the development of such complementarity bonds.

Hildegard's theory of the interaction of the four types of women and four types of men, as developed in *Causae et Curae*, is summarized in the following chart.

The second types of man and woman turn out to be the ideal or most perfect examples of human development. It is significant that this particular combination of elements and humours involves a balance particularly of the male and female elements of fire and air. In fact, Hildegard explicitly draws out this implication in the following passage:

### **Hildegard's Theory of the Interaction of the Sexes**

#### Four Types of Men: Generally More Earth and Fire

<b>Type I</b>	<b>Type II</b>	<b>Type III</b>	<b>Type IV</b>
Too much fire	Balanced air and fire	Too much water in form of bile	Weak in all elements
Passionately interested in sexual relations with women	Honourable and fruitful relationship with women (sexual and celibate)	Hates women, masochistic	Indifferent to women, effeminate

#### Four Types of Women: Generally More Air and Water

<b>Type I</b>	<b>Type II</b>	<b>Type III</b>	<b>Type IV</b>
More earth through heavy muscular structure, more fire through blood	Balanced earth through moderate muscular structure, more air through white blood	Less earth through delicate muscular structure, less water with drier blood	Weak in all elements through meagre muscular structure, slimy blood.
Needs to be with men	Likes to be with men	Remains loyal to	Not interested in men

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

	but does not need to	men, but suffers because cannot keep their interests	
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### Generative Relationship

Moderately fertile	Very fertile	Partially fertile	Rarely fertile
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Often they too (the second kind of men) must bear some pain when they cry with all their strength to abstain; but they are so adroit, a wisdom that takes its beautiful self-control out of the female element: for they are in possession of a sensible understanding.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, the ideal man has developed the feminine side of his nature – which is naturally masculine – in much the same way as an ideal woman develops the masculine side of her nature – which is naturally feminine. In this way, Hildegard developed a unique theory of the complementarity of woman and man both within the internal structure of their personal identity as well as in the external dynamics of their interaction in either married or celibate relationships.

Wisdom, in conclusion, demands of both sexes an astute understanding of their own specific natures both as woman or man and as individuals within the broader category of sexual identity. Because women and men differ in their sexual identity, the specific kind of self-knowledge they would have would also differ in detail of content. However, the general goal of self-knowledge as the path to wisdom would be the same for both sexes.

### *Virtue*

Hildegard developed a sex complementarity in connection with her theory of virtue in three different areas: the nature of virtue; the relation of woman and man to ruling and obedience; and the relation of the sexes to the public and private spheres of activity. Each of these areas will now be studied in turn.

Hildegard considered the broad category of virtue from the theological perspective in the *Scivias*, *Liber Vitae Meritorium*, and *Liber Divinorum Operum*. In these texts she described the ways in which all Christians ought to struggle towards the good and away from evil. Virtue followed from the personal transformation that a love of Christ could bring in a person's life. While Hildegard often spoke of virtue in broad categories, without specific reference to sexual differentiation, she always recognized the individual context of actions for any person. To know what ought to be done in any particular situation demanded a knowledge of the people involved. Virtue followed from wisdom. Therefore, the same sort of sexual differentiation that had been discovered in the category of wisdom, was carried forward into the concrete actions demanded by the practice of virtue.

Hildegard also considered virtue in her morality play *Ordo Virtutum*. In a recent study of this play by Bruce Hozeski, it is revealed once again that Hildegard was an original thinker and writer:

In the twelfth century *Ordo Virtutum*, revealing Hildegard's freedom of dramatic invention through her sense of personifications and figurations, is, then, important since it pre-dates by

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140. See also, "The reason within them knows its extraction and therefore modesty and a humane attitude are prevailing. Such men are entitled to marry with manly discipline, for the female nature is of more gentleness and tenderness than that of man," p. 139.

approximately two centuries any other known liturgical morality play.<sup>50</sup>

The complementarity of the play is established at the outset by a movement back and forth between the male patriarchs and prophets and the female virtues:

PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS: Who are those who look like a cloud?

VIRTUES: O holy ancients, what makes you wonder at us? The Word of God becomes clear in the form of man, and therefore we shine with Him, edifying the members of His glorious body.

PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS: We are the roots and ye the branches, the fruit of the living bud, and we were the shadow in Him.<sup>51</sup>

The complementarity of male and female, represented as a relationship of root and branches, as shadow and light, is carried forward throughout the play.

The *Ordo Virtutum* describes the struggle of a soul moving from a state of vice to a state of virtue. The soul desires to become "a daughter of the king":

VIRTUES: We ought to serve as soldiers with thee, O daughter of the king.

BUT A TROUBLED SOUL COMPLAINED: Such hard labour, and such a heavy weight I have in the garment of this life, because it is so hard for me to fight against the body.

THE VIRTUES TO THE SOUL: O soul, created by the will of God, and most fortunate instrument, why dost thou trouble thyself so much against that which God in the virgin nature destroyed? Thou oughtest to overcome the devil by our aid.

THE SOUL: Hasten and help me to stand.<sup>52</sup>

In the play, the separation and struggle between the soul and body is seen as a false view of the self. The Virtues are convinced that integration and ordering of the body is possible in life. Drawing upon a metaphor of virtues as warriors, which springs from the Crusades, the personification of Victory indicates that even the source of evil can be conquered by Virtue:

VICTORY TO THE VIRTUES: Ye most brave and glorious knights, come and help me to conquer that deceitful one.

VIRTUES: O most sweet warrior, who swallowed the greedy wolf in the torrent! O glorious crowned one, we willingly fight with thee against this deceiver.

HUMILITY: Therefore bind Satan, O very bright virtues!

VIRTUES: O our queen, we will be obedient to thee and we will fulfill thy precepts in all things.<sup>53</sup>

The female personification of the Virtues, with the corresponding description of them as knights in combat with the vices or the devil as the source of evil, is an interesting fusion of male and female identity. For Hildegard and for Herrad of Landsberg – who will be studied in the next section – this fusion of male and female identity did not imply a sex-unity development. For the knights are dressed as women rather than men. In this way, female identity is depicted as developing the male qualities of strength, courage, and fortitude without losing the natural female relationship to grace, mercy, and prophetic insight. Therefore, a complementarity, rather than a polarity of the sexes is preserved.

In the second area of virtue to be considered, Hildegard begins her analysis by appearing to

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<sup>50</sup> Bruce William Hozeski, *Ordo Virtutum: Hildegard of Bingen's Liturgical Morality Play*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1969, p. ii.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. Translated by Bruce Hozeski as are all other passages from this text.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

repeat the traditional sex-polarity differentiation that men, by nature, ought to rule, and women to obey. In describing woman, Hildegard states, "She was formed from the flesh of man; therefore she is subject to him, it is true, but she is in a much greater position of quiescence."<sup>54</sup> On closer examination, however, the above passage marks a radical departure from the sex-polarity theory as articulated by Aristotle. The Greek philosopher had argued that woman ought to obey because she was not in control of her emotions, while Hildegard asserts that she is more in control of her emotions than man out of her "greater position of quiescence."

In another passage, Hildegard also begins with an apparent sex polarity but adds a qualification that moves towards an equality of the sexes. Hildegard starts with the claim that woman ought to be in "awe" of man:

Did she not know this awe, she could never cherish the reserve of chastity, but rather would bite everything she could like a den of adders. The awe-struck woman, however, gathers all riches of good works and holy virtue in her womb, and she does not stop until she has accomplished everything good.<sup>55</sup>

The important aspect of this awe is that it comes from within the woman herself. She "gathers" her virtuous acts, and she "accomplishes everything good." Her control is not imposed from outside, but springs up within herself, as a method of practising human perfection.

It is important to note that Hildegard is writing about subjection in the context of a Benedictine monastic tradition in which obedience is understood as a valuable method for learning to overcome the limitations of selfishness, egotism, and personal will. In this context, obedience towards the Abbot or Abbess of the monastery, as the representative of Christ, constituted an important element in the development of virtue. Here it made little difference whether one obeyed a woman or a man. Hildegard could argue, then, that within marriage, it would be useful for a woman to practise awe of her husband in order to develop further her natural tendency towards self-control.

At the same time, obedience was not considered to be an absolute for Hildegard. While it ought to be practised for the most part, there may be times when it should be abandoned for a higher goal. In two incidents of Hildegard's life, she asserted her own will over and against her Abbot and the Bishop, both of whom, generally speaking, she should obey. In the first incident, soon after she had been elected Abbess of the woman's community at Mount Disibode, she decided to take the nuns from this double monastery and to found a new monastery for women at Rupertsberg because Disibode was dominated by a much larger and more powerful community of men. The Abbot disapproved of her plan and did everything in his power to block it. Hildegard went over the Abbot's head and tried to persuade the Archbishop of Mainz to support her. After a great deal of manoeuvring she won.<sup>56</sup>

In a second incident, Hildegard buried in the tombs of her monastery at St. Rupertsberg a young man who had been excommunicated from the Church. The Archbishop of Mainz placed her monastery under interdict, and ordered her to exhume the body. Hildegard refused.<sup>57</sup> These two incidents indicate that in Hildegard's personal life, the practice of obedience could also be overturned in the specific practice of virtue. Obedience was not forced by nature, but practised by choice.

Therefore, Hildegard's theory of the relation of woman and man to obedience and ruling

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<sup>54</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Heilkunde*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>55</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Der Menrch in der Verantwortung*, p. 69. 216. Steele, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-40.

<sup>56</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, pp.32-40.

<sup>57</sup> Gies, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5. See also, Jacques Christophe, *Sainte Hildegard* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), pp. 52-54.

followed in the tradition of the neo-Pythagorean philosopher Perictione rather than that of Aristotle; for obedience when adopted as a choice became virtue. Since obedience was the virtue of choice for a woman and ruling for a man, it would happen that in certain circumstances the virtuous choice would be the opposite, namely that the woman would rule and the man obey. In the above two examples, this inversion of virtue occurred.

In the third area of virtue to be considered, Hildegard broke through the traditional separation of the activities of women and man into private and public spheres. She understood her call to be that of a prophet in an age that had grown weak or effeminate. Hildegard claimed that "Society had been plunged into feminine levity; so that to the scandal of men, women prophesy."<sup>58</sup> The view that women had been called to prophesy because men were weak or immoral was further repeated in the writings of Elizabeth of Schbnau, who was deeply influenced by Hildegard. In a passage from her *Visions*, Elizabeth states:

People are scandalized that in these days the Lord deigns to magnify His great mercy in the frail sex. But why doesn't it cross their minds that a similar thing happened in the days of our fathers when, while men were given to indolence, holy women were filled with the Spirit of God so that they could prophesy, energetically govern the people of God, and even win glorious victories over Israel's enemies? I speak of women like Hilda, Deborah, Judith, Jael, and the like.<sup>59</sup>

In the call of women to prophesy, the traditional limitation of the virtue of silence for women and speech for men is shattered. Woman is virtuous by speaking, just as is man. The difference between the sexes, however, is also present and it is significant precisely because a woman is called to speak rather than a man. A sex-unity theory would have ignored the differences between the sexes, but Hildegard is aware that the power of prophesy is due in part to the fact that a woman, the weaker vessel, is chosen to confound the strong.

As Barbara Newman states, Hildegard took her prophetic speeches far and wide:

Between 1158 and 1159 Hildegard travelled along the Main, preaching at monastic communities in Mainz, Wertheim, Wurzburg, Kitzingen, Ebrach, and Bamberg. Her second trip in 1160 took her to Metz, Krauftal, Trier, where she preached publicly. Within the next three years she visited Boppart, Andernach, Siegburg, and Werden, addressing clergy and people together at Cologne. After 1170 she undertook her fourth and final journey in Swabia, preaching at Rodenkirchan, Maulbronn, Hirsau, Kircheim, and Zwiefalten.<sup>60</sup>

This extensive travel and public speaking reveals that Hildegard believed women ought not to be limited to the private sphere of activity or, inversely, that the public sphere ought not to be limited to men. During the twelfth century, the concept of the cloister for Benedictine nuns did not imply that the nuns were unable to go out into the world. Rather, it primarily indicated that there was an enclosure within the monastery that excluded the entry of people from outside. It was not until later in western history that the cloister restricted the movement of women into the public spheres of activity.

In addition to Hildegard's public speaking, her communication beyond the monastery also occurred through writing. From the beginning, Hildegard submitted her writings to the scrutiny of men:

When the visions experienced since childhood increased in later life, she confided in her confessor Godfrey and authorized him to submit the matter to the abbot, and, later to the Archbishop of Mainz. A committee of theologians gave a favorable verdict on the authenticity of her visions and assigned the monk Volmar to act as her secretary. Eugene III appointed a committee to

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<sup>58</sup> Newman, "Divine Power," *op. cit.*, page 5 of the manuscript, footnote 12. An unofficial fragment (IV, 28).

<sup>59</sup> Newman, "Visions and Validation," *op. cit.*, p. 15 of manuscript, note 39 (*Liter visionum*, 1, 1).

<sup>60</sup> Newman, "Divine Power," *op. cit.*, footnote 4, p. 28 of manuscript.

review her writings, and again a favorable report followed.<sup>61</sup>

Working in complement with Volmar within the context of the double monastery of St. Disibode, Hildegard dictated her works in Latin. In addition to the numerous books she wrote, Hildegard's correspondents include St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Gilbert of Gemblous, and a master of the Cathedral School of Paris, Odo of Soissons.<sup>62</sup> Through this extensive correspondence Hildegard entered into an intimate exchange of ideas with some of the leading men of her day, even after she had moved-by her own choice-out of the context of the double monastery into an exclusively women's monastery at Rupertsberg. Her fame, therefore, enabled an exchange between women and men to continue without any changes to the basic context of complementarity that the double monasteries offered.

Hildegard's influence extended beyond her monastery through her extensive correspondence and because of her travels throughout Germany and parts of Gaul. She spoke to people of all classes and walks of life exhorting them to reform and to heed the prophecies and divine warnings entrusted to her. During her last years she was so ill that she had to be carried from place to place and was unable to stand upright. Nevertheless, she remained available to all who sought her, discussing perplexing questions, encouraging and exhorting her nuns, admonishing sinners, and writing continuously.<sup>63</sup>

There is some controversy about whether or not Hildegard took a further important trip to Paris in 1174. It is argued by some scholars that Hildegard, at the age of 76, made this arduous trip of several hundred miles-in a cart-to submit copies of *Scivias*, *Liber Divinorum Operum* and *Liber Vitae Meritorum* to the Bishop of Paris for consideration.<sup>64</sup> Abelard had died thirty years previously, the Cathedral School of Notre Dame had a reputation for its excellence in philosophy and theology, and the masters guilds had been slowly formed in Paris since 1140. Hildegard would have been aware of this shift in the centre of higher education from the Benedictine monasteries to the Bishop's schools in Paris. One goal of this reputed trip was to seek to have her texts integrated into the developing curriculum of academic theology. Hildegard is reported to have requested the Bishop to ask all the masters of theology in Paris to study her writings. The process is described as having taken three months for one single master of theology, who gave the works back and simply affirmed them as "divinely inspired."<sup>65</sup> The works, however, were not integrated into the curriculum.

The belief in Hildegard's Parisian trip is contested by other scholars, who argue that it was carried out by Hildegard's literary executor, the Canon Bruno of Strassbourg, several years after her death.<sup>66</sup> However, both versions of the story point to the growing importance of the educational situation in Paris, since it was deemed necessary to take Hildegard's writings to the centre of intellectual study. As will be demonstrated in the coming chapter, the concept of woman in relation to man was significantly altered by the developments in thirteenth-century Paris. Hildegard is particularly significant to this study because she wrote just before the explosion of the Aristotelian Revolution. That her philosophy of sex complementarity was original and complete within her medieval context, is witness to the effects of the concrete practical interaction of women and men springing from the double monasteries and reaching far beyond

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<sup>61</sup> "Hildegard of Bingen," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 edition.

<sup>62</sup> S. Hildegardis, Abbatissae, *Opera Omnia, Patrologiae* (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1882, vol. 197)

<sup>63</sup> "Hildegard of Bingen," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 edition.

<sup>64</sup> Christophe, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-53.

<sup>65</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Marianna Schroder and Adelgundis FGhrkbtter, *Die Echtheit des Schrifttums der heiligen Hildegard von Bingen* (Kbln-Graz: Bbhlaue-Verlag, 1956), pp. 151-3. I am grateful to Barbara Newman for bringing this theory to my attention.

into broader society. As there was a true complementarity in a long-term living situation, it was inevitable that a philosophy of sex complementarity would eventually evolve.

The situation in Paris, however, was radically different from the double monasteries, for by the time the masters guilds and small schools evolved into the University of Paris, women were excluded from formal study. At the same time, the total influx of translations of Aristotle's works, containing a devaluation of women, became integrated into the academic curriculum. In this way, the slowly developing foundation for a philosophy of sex complementarity, as articulated by Hildegard, was pushed into the background of philosophy and theology, where it stayed for several centuries until a new philosophical foundation for the equality and significant differentiation of the sexes would re-emerge. Therefore, Hildegard stands as an important transition figure, just at the end of the period in western thought before the Aristotelian Revolution in sex identity occurred.

## CONCLUSION

### ST. HILDEGARD AS THE FOUNDRRESS OF SEX COMPLEMENTARITY

One of the most striking aspects of this study of the concept of woman in relation to man in the second half of the medieval period is the slow but steady development of a philosophical foundation for sex complementarity. In western history sex complementarity had always been present in discussions of sex identity, but up to this point it appeared only in a peripheral way in comparison to the solid articulation of philosophical grounds for sex unity or sex polarity. Empedocles suggested sex complementarity in early Greek philosophy, and Augustine recognized its theological grounds in early Christian philosophy. It was not until Hildegard of Bingen, however, that sex complementarity was given a thorough defence as a theory of sex identity.

In attempting to assess why this breakthrough in the history of the philosophy of sex identity occurred in the twelfth century, several factors arise. The first one is the situation of women and men within the Benedictine tradition of education. For the first time in history, significant numbers of women and men together studied and discussed philosophy within the context of double monasteries. The example of Hilda of Whitby, Roswitha, St. Anselm, Heloise and Herrad all point to the release of creative energies and to the quality of writing that emerged within this situation in which women and men had equal access to the highest and broadest sources of knowledge. Therefore, it can be concluded that one central factor in the preparation for a philosophy of sex complementarity is the actual experience of women and men jointly participating in the practice of philosophy.

Within this context, the genius of Hildegard of Bingen had the opportunity to flower. Drawing upon the scientific knowledge available to her, Hildegard wove an intricate theory of the relations of the elements and humours to sex identity. Integrating the rational, material and spiritual aspects of human nature into a unified whole, Hildegard argued that women were equal to but significantly different from men. The individuality of human existence within this framework was limited in her analysis to four general types of women and four general types of men. However, within this limitation Hildegard revealed a sophisticated understanding of male and female interactions in both chaste and sexual relationships. Her drive for thoroughness and consistency across all four categories of opposites, generation, wisdom and virtue makes her the first western philosopher to articulate the complete concept of sex complementarity. Therefore, Hildegard rightfully holds the title of foundress of the philosophy of sex complementarity.

The legacy that Hildegard left was soon buried by the onrush of the Aristotelian Revolution. The greater sophistication of the Aristotelian method brought with it a plethora of arguments in favour of sex polarity. Hildegard's writings were left to languish inside monastic libraries for centuries. However, the tragedy of the negligence of her works at that time in history may now turn

out to be of benefit to contemporary philosophers, for all her writings have been preserved and are now able to be analysed, evaluated, and developed. Therefore, the example of Hildegard can become as significant to the developing philosophy of sex complementarity as Plato was for sex unity or Aristotle for sex polarity. It is possible for contemporary philosophers to integrate and move beyond Hildegard in an attempt to articulate contemporary grounds for sex complementarity. This would mean, for example, using contemporary scientific knowledge about male and female identity as a starting point for an analysis of sex identity, which would include many of the same questions Hildegard asked. It would also imply seeking the same kind of integration of rationality, materiality and spirituality, while going further in developing a more contemporary understanding of the significance of the factor of individuality in understanding the person as such. In this way, Hildegard can finally be recognized as the foundress that she was, and she can begin to influence the direction of further considerations of sex identity that will one day go far beyond the limitations of her analysis and her age.