BSHP NEW TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Amalia Holst

On the Vocation of Woman to Higher Intellectual Education

edited with an English translation by

Andrew Cooper

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Introduction

Amalia Holst (1758–1829) was a dedicated pedagogue and an outspoken philosopher. Her daring book *On the Vocation of Woman to Higher Intellectual Education* (*Über die Bestimmung des Weibes zur höhern Geistesbildung*, 1802) exposed a striking paradox at the heart of the German Enlightenment.[1] While the celebrated figures of the Enlightenment made significant gains in unearthing the social conditions of human freedom, they failed to advance either the political status or the education of women.[2] Immanuel Kant defined intellectual autonomy as the mark of Enlightenment, yet he deemed that a woman's mind is constituted differently to that of a man. If a woman were to pursue the higher education of her mind, Kant declared, she would 'destroy the merits that are proper to her sex'.[3] Johann Gottlieb Fichte demonstrated that free activity is the final end of every self-determining I. Yet, like Kant, he also held that 'the minds of men and women are, by nature, very different'.[4] While a man's education should include speculative philosophy, so that he grasps the principles of his knowledge, a woman's education should not disrupt her natural feeling for the good and the true. Instead, it should consist of practical training for the domestic duties to which nature has destined her. Against the backdrop of revolution in France, which dissolved natural bonds and threatened the role of the family in civic life, there was an explosion of texts across the German states on 'the vocation of woman' (*die Bestimmung des Weibes*), which called on central tenets of the Enlightenment to secure the subordinate status of

[1] In her pioneering study of Holst's writings, Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos presents the widening gap between the ideal of freedom and the social status of women as a form of irony. While this may be a fair historical assessment, Holst's contention is that the gap is paradoxical; the suppression of women is the final contradiction to be overcome in the progress of reason. See Sotiropoulos, 'Scandal Writ Large', 98.

[2] A rare exception to this failure is Theodor von Hippel. See Section 3.2.

[3] Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, 2:229. Later in his career, and despite his close friendship with Hippel, Kant argued that a learned woman is fraudulent: she uses books 'in the same way as her *watch*…which she carries so that people will see that she has one, though it is usually not running or not set by the sun'. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7:307.

[4] Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, 135. I follow Michael Baur's translation in Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, 304.

women by philosophical means.[5] Holst's book stages a bold interjection. It seeks to unveil the double standards of her male interlocutors and establish the priority of reason before gendered roles.

Holst recognized that the Enlightenment project, when left in the hands of one sex, does not advance human freedom but in fact reproduces the coercion it purports to overcome. Drawing from her practical experience as a teacher, she sought to expose the contradictions she encountered in the leading pedagogies of the movement. One of her primary targets was a progressive group of reformers known as the Philanthropinists (*Menschenfreunde*) who aimed to realize the Enlightenment's slogan *Sapere aude!* (Dare to know!) by replacing the cerebral, authoritative legacy of scholastic education with a noncoercive environment aligned with the student's natural capacities. Their reform project was not peripheral to the German Enlightenment. In the midst of deep social and political change occurring across the German states, the schooling system offered a key site of reform for those seeking to instantiate the Enlightenment's emancipatory ideals while avoiding the radical upheaval unfolding in France.[6] Inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (*Émile, ou De l'éducation*, 1762) and pioneered by Johann Bernhard Basedow's model school in Dessau (the Philanthropin, founded in 1774), Philanthropinism gained the support of the leading philosophers of the day. Kant acted as the primary fundraiser for the Philanthropin in the 1770s, declaring that 'never before has a more just demand been made on the human species, and never before has such a great and more self-extending benefit been unselfishly offered'.[7]

Holst too was convinced that the ideals of the Enlightenment required a new movement in education tailored to the student's natural capacities.

[5] In her study of women's intellectual and political participation during the French Revolution, Geneviève Fraisse argues that 'in this passage from the old to the new regime, at the very moment of the rupture, the rights of man were not those of woman, not out of forgetfulness but out of an internal necessity that we must try to discern'; Fraisse, *Muse de la Raison*, 15. Exploring Fraisse's thesis in the British context, Eileen O'Neill argues that philosophy itself altered in years following the revolution such that it became harder for women to be recognized as philosophers. O'Neill defines this alteration as the 'oxymoron problem': by definition, women could not be identified as philosophers; O'Neill, 'Disappearing Ink', 20. In what follows I argue that a similar case can be made in the German context.

[6] For a study of gender and education in the construction of the modern German state, see Mayer, 'Bildungsentwürfe und die Konstruktion der Geschlechterverhältnisse zu Beginn der Moderne'.

[7] Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften,* II 447. Kant published two essays in support of the Philanthropin in the *Königsbergische gelehrte und politische Zeitung*, which have been reprinted in the Akademie Ausgabe (II 445–52). For a discussion of Kant's curious attraction to Basedow's project, see Louden, 'Kant and Basedow on the Need to Transform Education'.

Yet her ongoing struggle to advance the education of women alerted her to a form of coercion that remained lodged at the heart of the movement. While the Philanthropinists claimed that education must enable each student's rationality to develop on its own course, they restricted the curriculum for girls to subjects that were strictly necessary for their 'threefold vocation' (*dreifache Bestimmung*). As Karl Friedrich Pockels put it,

> The vocation of a woman is to become a wife, a mother, and a housewife, in fact, a *pure wife*, a *perfect mother*, and a *prudent housewife*. It is to this end that girls must study. Everything that does not contribute to her vocation leads away from it, and makes her an unnatural sight.[8]

The Philanthropinists envisaged the education of women as a vital part of reform. Yet they maintained that the duties prescribed by a woman's vocation place normative constraints on her intellect. A woman's education must be restricted to knowledge that will enable her to please her husband, raise her children well, and manage a good home. Areas of knowledge that extend beyond this end are not only unnecessary but also dangerous, for they entice her to neglect the duties bestowed on her by nature. These attitudes were not restricted to the Philanthropinists but were repeated and even refined by many of the major philosophers of the German Enlightenment, not least Kant and Fichte but also Mendelssohn, Schleiermacher, Humboldt, and Hegel, to name just a few.

In the opening pages of *On the Vocation of Woman*, Holst challenges the elevated position assumed by men who have 'dared to set a limit that our minds may not transgress in the field of knowledge' (p. 9). She begins her argument by issuing a fiery demand to the male gatekeepers of women's education:

> In the name of our sex, I challenge men to justify the right they have presumed for themselves, which holds back an entire half of humankind, barring them from the source of the sciences and allowing them at most to skim their surface. (p. 10)

[8] Pockels, *Versuch einer Charakteristik des weiblichen Geschlechts*, II 332. Pockels is in fact citing a letter by Christian Friedrich Sintenis entitled 'On Learned Women' ('Über gelehrte Weiber', 1796), which was widely circulated among German literati in the mid-1790s; Sintenis, *Briefe über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Menschheit*, III 273. See Holst's response to the letter, beginning on p. 44.

Holst's demand resonates with the work of several women writers across Europe, including Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Germaine de Staël. Yet in contrast to the early feminists we celebrate today, whose works were published in multiple editions and translated into several European languages, Holst's book had little success.[9] Following its initial publication, *On the Vocation of Woman* received just three reviews, all appearing in journals based in Holst's home town of Hamburg.[10] None of her reviewers acknowledge the merits of her project or take her argument seriously. Holst's book did not outstrip its original print run, nor was it recognized as a notable feminist text until the twentieth century.[11]

Understanding why *On the Vocation of Woman* has been overlooked—both then and now—confronts us with a darker side of the German Enlightenment that, until recently, has been neglected. Over the past few decades, scholars have become increasingly aware that women were not only excluded from the fruits of the Enlightenment but also erased from the historiography of German philosophy.[12] Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, for instance, traces the deliberate removal of women from anthologies of German philosophy, beginning in the late eighteenth century and extending to the present day. She presents a sobering analysis in which the absence of women's voices has less to do with the opportunities available to women than with a sustained attempt to 'keep women out of academia in general and out of philosophy in particular'.[13] *On the Vocation of Woman* provides further evidence in support of Ebbersmeyer's claim, for it demonstrates that the absence of women in the historiography of German philosophy is not due to a lack of powerful texts by women. Indeed, Holst was alive to the obstacles facing women philosophers at the turn of the nineteenth century

[9] Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was immediately translated into major European languages and reached a third English edition just four years after its initial publication. Staël's novel *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807) was widely translated within the year of its publication, and by 1872 had gone through more than forty printings. Though Gouges's *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791) was not immediately translated, its contents were widely discussed across Europe, especially after her public execution in 1793. See Johns, 'Translations'.

[10] The three reviews are included in Appendix 2.

[11] Gertrud Bäumer was the first to acknowledge Holst as an important figure in the history of German feminism in Volume 1 of *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung* (1901). *On the Vocation of Woman* was not reprinted until Berta Rahm's edition in 1983.

[12] See O'Neill, 'Early Modern Women Philosophers and the History of Philosophy'; Ebbersmeyer, 'From a "memorable place" to "drops in the ocean" '; Nassar and Gjesdal, 'Editors' Introduction'.

[13] Ebbersmeyer, 'From a "memorable place" to "drops in the ocean" ', 444. See also O'Neill, 'Early Modern Women Philosophers', 186.

and set out to repudiate a repeated claim made by her male peers that the very idea of a learned woman is contradictory. At one point she frames her argument in response to a public letter entitled 'On Learned Women' ('Über gelehrte Weiber', 1796), in which the theologian and popular writer Christian Friedrich Sintenis declares that

> a so-called learned woman is and remains either a laughable or an adverse creature. Either her learnedness is not right, or, even if it were, then she is not right as a *woman*. If the latter, then as a woman she is a non-woman, something monstrous, and if this is how she is found in her natural state, she deserves merely to be *gaped at* and certainly never *admired*.[14]

A so-called learned woman is a laughable creature, Sintenis quips, for by becoming learned she loses the essential characteristics of her femininity. Feminine qualities do not lie in the cultivation of moral and epistemic virtues but in the untarnished innocence a woman possesses from childhood. Elsewhere he attests that it 'is just as absurd to imagine a woman philosopher as it is to imagine a woman standing in rank as a soldier'.[15] The image of a woman philosopher is absurd, for, qua philosopher, a woman would no longer be a woman; a woman philosopher is a contradiction in terms. Sintenis's letter is, of course, polemical. Yet it does nothing but extend a widely held view to its unsavoury conclusions. Holst railed against the pervasive drive to curb women's education, yet her attempt to shift public opinion had limited success.[16]

By making Holst's *On the Vocation of Woman* available to the anglophone audience, this translation provides students and scholars of German philosophy with a timely resource for developing a richer understanding of their field, and general readers with access to a powerful early feminist text that reveals the opportunities and difficulties facing women philosophers at the turn of the nineteenth century. From the opening pages, the reader encounters a stylistically dexterous and philosophically astute writer who

[14] Sintenis, *Briefe über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Menschheit*, III 280–1. It seems that Holst first encountered Sintenis's letter cited in Pockels's *Versuch einer Charakteristik des weiblichen Geschlechts*, II 296–345. Pockels elaborates on Sintenis's argument in several places, indicating his support of the author's satirical portrait of the learned women.

[15] Pockels, *Versuch einer Charakteristik des weiblichen Geschlechts*, II 332.

[16] The difficulties facing Holst's project exemplify the observation made by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor eighty years later: one who wants to criticize a principle that is held almost universally has 'more difficulty in obtaining a trial, than any other litigants have in getting a verdict'; Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, 120.

constantly reformulates her position in anticipation of her readers' demands. The dialogical character of the text requires some level of familiarity with the central concepts of the German Enlightenment if its contribution to the philosophical debates of the period is to be fully appreciated.[17] My aim in this introduction is thus to provide sufficient context for readers to feel the rhetorical force of Holst's book. Section 1 presents a brief sketch of Holst's life, writings, and the state of pedagogy in the German states at the end of the eighteenth century. Section 2 provides a summary of the text and reconstructs several of its major arguments. Section 3 examines its early reception and identifies several sources that inspired Holst to write.

1 Life and Context

1.1 Amalia Holst, née von Justi

Little is known about Holst's life save the obituaries and biographical entries that appeared in local magazines and compendia of German writers in the years following her death in 1829. These are included in Appendix 1. The entries repeat themselves at several points, sometimes reproducing false information (e.g. the publication date of *On the Vocation of Woman*). Their authors acknowledge a lack of familiarity with the major events of Holst's life, and, at times, contradict each other (e.g. on the question of Holst's doctorate). Such discrepancies suggest that Holst's eulogists had little information to go by, and perhaps that they did not expect their efforts to have enduring significance.

The entries agree on the following. Johanna Paulina Amalia von Justi was born on 10 February 1758 to Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi and his second wife, Johanna Maria Magdalena Merchand.[18] Her precise birthplace is unclear. On the cover page to *On the Vocation of Woman*, Holst describes herself as 'a child of the Prussian states' (p. 5), and the announcement of her

[17] For an account of the dialogical character of women's writing at the turn of the nineteenth century and the role this played in excluding women writers from philosophy's canon, see Pollok, 'The Role of Writing and Sociability for the Establishment of a Persona', 196–7.

[18] Holst's full name appears on the announcement of her marriage, which is reproduced in Rahm's edition of *Über die Bestimmung des Weibes* (see Rahm, 'Nachwort', 155). Her chosen first name is spelled in several different ways by her eulogists (Amalie, Amelie, Amalia) and she changes between 'Amalia' and 'Amalie' when signing the letters published in Lindemann's *Musarion*. I follow the spelling of 'Amalia' from the cover page of *On the Vocation of Woman* (see p. 1).

marriage states that she is 'aus Berlin'. Yet it is likely that Holst was born in Altona, just outside Hamburg, where her father kept a residence and was working at the time of her birth.[19] The family moved to Berlin in 1760 and then, shortly after, to Bernau, just north of the city. Johann von Justi was a leading cameralist and self-described 'state adventurer' (*Staatsabenteurer*), rising to fame across Europe through an active life of writing, public administration, and state entrepreneurship. Before entering public service, he published several radical essays in which he advocated for civic reform through the increasing involvement of women in public offices. In 'Proposal on the Establishment of a Female Jury' ('Vorschlag von Errichtung eines weiblichen Schöffenstuhls', 1745), he proposed to erect civil courts administered and elected by women officials.[20] In 'Proposal on the Establishment of an Academy for Women' ('Vorschlag von Errichtung einer Akademie vor das Frauenzimmer', 1747), he argued that it would be impossible to instantiate the goals of Enlightenment without the establishment of 'a rational education for the female sex'.[21] In the years leading up to Amalia's birth, Justi taught German language and rhetoric in Vienna and then economics at the University of Göttingen (indeed, he was the first to do so). He founded several journals on social and political matters and published an astonishing sixty-seven books on economics and political science (*Staatswissenschaft*).[22] Yet Justi was not a scholar in the traditional sense. His writings were motivated by a restless drive to reform and centralize the Prussian economy, a trait that attracted the attention of Frederick the Great, who, upon hearing of his achievements in 1765, appointed Justi as Prussian captain of mines and financial expert in the management of state property. While he was a neglectful husband during his first marriage and constantly moved between positions during his second, Amalia was evidently attached to her father.[23]

A difficult chapter unfolded for the family in 1768 when Justi was accused of embezzling state funds, a fate met by several prominent cameralists of the

[19] Justi left Göttingen in 1757 to take up a position in Denmark; his residence in Altona was close to the Danish-German border at the time. See Rahm, 'Nachwort', 156.

[20] Justi, 'Vorschlag von Errichtung eines weiblichen Schöffenstuhls', 131.

[21] Justi, 'Vorschlag von Errichtung einer Akademie vor das Frauenzimmer', 312.

[22] For a survey of Justi's writings, see Reinert, 'Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi', 33.

[23] Justi's first wife, Gertrud, left him in June 1756 because 'her husband no longer maintained her'; cited in Reinert, 'Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi', 40. His estate was in such disarray that one of his maids at the time claimed that she had not been paid for five years. Amalia's affection for her father is nevertheless evident in her correspondence with Beckmann. See Beckmann, *Vorrath kleiner Anmerkungen über mancherley gelehrte Gegenstände*, 549–50.

time, including Georg Heinrich Zincke and Johann Friedrich Pfeiffer. While the accusations were never substantiated, Justi died as a prisoner in Küstrin in 1771, when Amalia was 13.[24] This episode left her mother in a prolonged state of grief, which prevented Amalia from publishing a collection of her father's letters that she hoped would explain the unfortunate situation and clear her father's name.[25] The charge was formally revoked when it became clear that Justi's estate could not repay his fine of 2,878 thaler,[26] and the king took personal responsibility for completing the education of his six children.[27]

The details of Amalia's adult life are somewhat more substantive. She moved to Hamburg in 1791, married Dr Johann Ludolf Holst in 1792 at the age of 33, and had three children, Emilie, Mariane, and Eduard. Johann Holst was a lawyer, and directed a pedagogical institute in Hamburg-St Georg. Amalia Holst clearly imbibed her father's entrepreneurial spirit and tenacious drive for reform. She was engaged in teaching from the age of 15 (possibly as a governess in Bernau), and quickly became convinced that it 'is only through the higher education of women that the ennoblement of humanity as a whole is achieved'.[28] From 1792 to 1802 she was headmistress of the preschool Johann directed, and went on to establish three schools for girls (*Erziehungsinstitute*) in Boizenburg, Hamburg, and Parchim.[29] An obituary appearing in the *Freimütiges Abendblatt* offers a striking insight into her teaching practice:

[24] Backhaus argues that it was Justi's aide who was in fact guilty of embezzlement. When Justi was appointed by Frederick II as captain of mines, his appointee noted that Justi had weak eyesight and could not manage the bookkeeping. Thus Frederick appointed an aide to manage the documentation of state expenditures. See Backhaus, 'Introduction', xi.

[25] See Beckmann's account of this episode in the first entry of Appendix 1.

[26] As a comparison, Justi's yearly salary in 1765 was 2,000 thaler. Reinert, 'Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi', 42.

[27] Backhaus, 'From Wolff to Justi', 18.

[28] One of the few insights we have of Holst's career before she was married is a letter written in 1802 to the Enlightener August Hennings, asking for his assistance to found an educational institute in Hamburg. As she lays out her credentials, Holst states that she has been engaged in education 'since her fifteenth year'. Holst, 'Brief an August Hennings (Hamburg, 29 May 1802)'. For a discussion of Holst's known letters, see Dyck, 'Amalia Holst on the Education of the Human Race'.

[29] Several of Holst's eulogists record that she started a school in Boizenburg, before returning briefly to Hamburg and then starting another school in Parchim (see pp. 113–14). In her edition of *Über die Bestimmung des Weibes*, Rahm includes a baptismal record of Holst's granddaughter Mathilde, which states that Holst was leading an educational institute in Parchim in 1819 (and also identifies her as a 'Doktorin'); Rahm, 'Nachwort', 154. While Holst states in her letter to Hennings that she intends to start a school in Hamburg, there is debate about whether her plans were realized.

> her school was held in general esteem, for she did not educate her female students merely for domestic service, or for society, or for the so-called refined side of life. Rather, she educated them for life as a whole and opened the wellspring in spirit and mind for a loving and intelligent fulfilment of everything that the female vocation demands of woman in religious and cosmopolitan respects. Household management and maternal care, faithfulness in large and small matters, sensitivity and strength, sense and understanding to delight the circle of society, the propensity to do the right thing, the skill to do it well and without mishap, quiet charity, modest activity with all the knowledge and artistry of female education, and in all this a noble feeling that does not allow the sense of the infinite to be lost in earthly activity, and in which the mind remains free and firm above the colourful essence of all worldly activity: that is what distinguished those who remained in her hands and were left to her guidance until they reached a certain goal. Many parents, young women, husbands, and mothers certainly still thank her for this. Her educational work will remain a blessing for generations to come. (p. 113)

This description of Holst's work as a teacher captures a central theme in her writing. The educated woman does not neglect the demands of domestic life but skilfully navigates her duties in a manner that is alive to the spiritual significance of her vocation as a human being. Holst's pedagogical activities were known by several prominent Enlighteners in Hamburg, including August Hennings, Franz August Gottlob Campe (the nephew of Joachim Heinrich Campe), and Elise Reimarus.[30] There is evidence to suggest that Holst's time in Hamburg overlapped with Reimarus, who was aware of Holst's writings even before the publication of *On the Vocation of Woman*.[31] Several of Holst's eulogists claim that she received a doctorate from the University of Kiel in her later life. Yet the lack of conclusive evidence, and

[30] Hennings, Campe, and Reimarus were each involved in the pedagogical debates of the late eighteenth century. Hennings edited the journal *Der Genius des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, which published several radical essays on women's education; Campe worked as a publisher and bookseller and helped to arrange the publication of Holst's *On the Vocation of Woman*; Reimarus published numerous entries in Joachim Heinrich Campe's *Kleine Kinderbibliothek*.

[31] In a letter dated 1 February 1802, Reimarus wrote to Franz August Gottlieb Campe, who had sent her a copy of Holst's book: 'You had the good grace, dear Herr Campe, to send me the work of Fr[au] Holst, *On the Vocation of Woman*, but since I have always disliked reading about matters so general as the dealings of people or the alleged rights of women, and know the pen of Mad[ame] H[olst], I think it is better to give it back to you without leafing through it.' Cited in Spalding, *Elise Reimarus (1735–1805)*, 216, n. 46.

the counterclaim made by a later biographer, place the claim in doubt.[32] Holst left Hamburg for Parchim in 1813, and her husband died in 1825. In a letter dated 31 October 1824 she wrote to Campe, who had arranged the publication of *On the Vocation of Woman* in Leipzig two decades earlier, requesting his assistance to publish a new manuscript she had recently completed.[33] Campe seems to have denied her request and the manuscript has unfortunately been lost.[34] What the letter reveals, however, is that Holst continued her literary endeavours to the end of her life. She spent her final years with her son on the river Elbe in Groß Timkenberg, where she died 'quietly and gently' in 1829, 71 years old (p. 115).

1.2 Writings

1.2.1 *Observations on the Errors of Our Modern Education*

Drawing from the practical experience gained as a pioneer in women's education, Holst wrote several texts on pedagogy and the social status of women. Her earliest known work, published anonymously as *Observations on the Errors of Our Modern Education from a Practical Educator* (*Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer modernen Erziehung von einer praktischen Erzieherin*, 1791), offers the first critique of Philanthropinism by a woman.[35] In the opening chapter of the book, 'Comparison of the Errors Made in Education Before and After the Basedowian Era', Holst surveys the development of modern pedagogy through Locke and Rousseau to her own time in Germany. Until the 1750s, most schools in the German states taught

[32] References to Holst's doctorate can be found on the birth certificate of her granddaughter Mathilde (reproduced in Rahm, 'Nachwort', 154) and in several obituaries (pp. 111–14). The entry on Holst in *Das Lexikon der hamburgischen Schriftsteller* disputes the title (p. 114). In his entry on Holst, Jacoby notes that he could not find confirmation of Holst's alleged doctorate. Jacoby, *Beiträge zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 7. I checked the records in *Promotionen und Disputationen* vol. 1 (1637–1804) and vol. 2 (1805–1914) in the university archives at Kiel and found no record of a doctorate under her name.

[33] 'I remember that once, for certain considerations, you also had my *Vocation o*[*f*] *W*[*oman*] published not by yourself but in Leipzig. If you now did the same with this manuscript, and recommended it to some other publisher, then the situation would be resolved and you would greatly appease[?] me.' Holst, 'Holst to Campe, 31 October 1824'.

[34] Holst informs Campe that he has 'upset [her] greatly' because he did 'not want to accept [her] manuscript'. Holst, 'Holst to Campe, 31 October 1824'.

[35] Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era*, 206. The tendency of women writers during this period to publish anonymously is not simply a marker of their precarious social position but also a noteworthy feature of their philosophical expression. While Holst does not reveal her name, her gender is evident in the book's title (*von einer praktischen Erzieherin*). See Easley, *First-Person Anonymous*, 7.

the *septem artes liberales* (seven liberal arts), a rule-based programme characterized by rote learning, recitation, and exercises in rhetoric.[36] As it became increasingly apparent that the Latin schools were out of touch with the practical demands of bourgeois life, proponents of Enlightenment began to advocate various strategies of reform. In response to the pedagogical reform unfolding in England and France, for instance, Johann Christoph Gottsched argued that Latin rhetoric should be replaced with a new programme in the vernacular promoting oration and the public exercise of reason.[37] Yet despite Gottsched's efforts to modernize German education, Holst contends that it was Basedow who 'awakened the imitative spirit of the Germans'.[38] In his enormously popular textbook on education, *The Method Book for Fathers and Mothers of Families and Peoples* (*Das Methodenbuch für Väter und Mütter der Familien und Völker*, 1770), Basedow criticized the 'great disorder in the usual style of teaching in schools'.[39] Like Gottsched, he claimed that the Latin system coerced the student's natural faculties into an arcane mould that is 'without reality'.[40] Yet Basedow claimed that Gottsched failed to advance German pedagogy into the modern era, for he simply replaced the rules of rhetoric with an 'astonishing abundance of disgusting verbal cognition [*Verbalerkenntnis*]'. To apply the new insights of the Enlightenment to the German schooling system, Basedow drew from Locke and Rousseau to argue that the education of children must follow 'the natural order of cognition', which begins in sense perception, is developed by the rational ordering of ideas, and only then culminates in the public use of words.[41] Joachim Heinrich Campe, who

[36] Lohmann and Mayer, 'Dimensions of Eighteenth-century Educational Thinking in Germany', 116–18.

[37] Gottsched, *Akademische Redekunst, zum Gebrauche der Vorlesungen auf hohen Schulen als ein bequemes Handbuch eingerichtet und mit den schönsten Zeugnissen der Alten erläutert*, Vorrede.

[38] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 13.

[39] Basedow, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, xi, 26.

[40] Basedow, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, xi, 26.

[41] Basedow, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 18. Basedow contends that Locke's and Rousseau's empiricism demands an anti-authoritarian pedagogy. Locke, for instance, argued that while children are born with minds as blank slates, their bodies nevertheless move according to natural inclinations. The task of education is thus not to provide direct instruction but to work with the child's free capacity for association, which moves from perception to ideas through a process of reflection; Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 75–9. Similarly, Rousseau grounds his account of learning in the child's natural faculties: 'Since everything which enters into the human understanding comes there through the senses, man's first reason is a reason of the senses; this sensual reason serves as the basis for intellectual reason. Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes. To substitute books for all that is not to teach us to reason. It is to teach us to use the reason of others. It is to teach us to believe much and never to know anything.' Rousseau, *Emile, Or on Education*, 125.

worked briefly at Dessau before starting his own experimental school in Hamburg, built on Basedow's *Methodenbuch* to argue that a school's curriculum should not begin with an abstract system of words but with the concrete human vocation 'to make oneself and others happy through the proper training and application of all one's powers and abilities in the circle in which and for which providence has caused him to be born'.[42] Campe illustrates the point with an organic analogy. As a gardener must be familiar with the properties of plants if he hopes to cultivate an environment in which they can flourish, so must the teacher have a firm understanding of children's powers and abilities, and the sphere to which they are destined, if he is to provide a classroom in which they can thrive.

In the case of female students, however, Basedow and Campe both argued that the general human vocation to make oneself and others happy must be constrained to a second vocation that is particular to their sex. Basedow included a chapter in the *Methodenbuch* entitled 'On the Different Education of Sons and Daughters', which draws extensively from Rousseau (fifteen pages of direct quotation from *Emile*) to establish that the female sex is 'under the dominion' of men, and that a woman's education should teach her 'to know how to bear this'.[43] In *Fatherly Advice For My Daughter* (*Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, 1789), Campe instructs the young women of the German states that the purpose of their education is to enable them to balance *two* vocations, one general and one particular:

> You are a *human being*—thus destined for everything that the general calling of humanity entails. You are a *woman*—thus destined for and called to everything that woman is to be to man, to humanity, and to civil society. So you have a twofold vocation, one *general* and one *particular*, one as *human being* and one as *woman*.[44]

[42] Campe, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, 8. Between 1785 and 1792, Campe edited a sixteen-volume standard work of Enlightenment pedagogy, which included new translations of Rousseau's *Émile* and Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

[43] Basedow, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 159. For a discussion of gender in Basedow's *Methodenbuch*, see Louden, *Johann Bernhard Basedow and the Transformation of Modern Education*, 119–20. Louden notes that while Basedow restricted women's education to their particular vocation in print, his activities, especially after his resignation from the directorship of the Philanthropin in 1785, indicate that he held a more liberal view in practice. Holst, however, would have been unaware of this. Her primary concern is to stem the growing influence of Basedow's *Methodenbuch* on German pedagogy. See Louden, 'Amalia Holst's Critique of Basedow and Campe', 80–1.

[44] Campe, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, 5.

By virtue of their status as human beings, women are called to perfect their powers and abilities. The expression of this vocation, however, is qualified by the 'sphere of influence [*Wirkungskreis*]' to which their sex is destined. Campe makes it clear that a woman's sphere of influence is not contingent on present social conditions but determined by fixed and indubitable nature:

> The first and the most necessary thing I have to tell you here, if you have not already noticed it yourself, is this: the sex to which you belong, according to the present condition of our world, lives in a dependent as well as intellectually and physically weaker state, and, as long as the condition of our world remains the same, necessarily must live. God himself willed—and the entire constitution of human societies on earth, to the extent of our knowledge, is tailored to the fact—that it is not woman but man who should be the head. For this purpose, the Creator—as a rule—gave to man the greater muscular strength, the tauter nerves, the more unyielding fibres, the sturdier bone structure; in addition, the greater courage, the bolder spirit of enterprise, the decisive firmness and coolness, and—as a rule I mean—also the unmistakable predispositions to a greater, more far-sighted and comprehensive intellect. The entire course of education and life for both sexes in all cultured peoples has been arranged according to this end: the woman is weak, small, delicate, sensitive, timid, small-minded—the man, on the other hand, is strong, firm, bold, persevering, tall, noble and powerful in body, etc.[45]

Campe contends that a woman's physiology manifests a dependent purpose ordained by the Creator. The task of a woman's education is to teach her to carry her dependence gracefully. Perfectibility and dependence combine to form a distinct female vocation: 'to become *happy wives*, *educating mothers*, and *wise household administrators*'.[46]

In the opening chapter of *Observations*, Holst expresses her support for the recent shift in German pedagogy from the Latin curriculum to a new programme based on the student's natural capacities. Nevertheless, she explains that her extensive experience as a 'practical educator [*praktische Erzieherin*]' has led her to the conviction that the Philanthropinists fail to

[45] Campe, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, 18–19. Holst evidently has this passage in mind when she criticizes the Philanthropinists for equating physical and intellectual strength (see pp. 11–12).

[46] Campe, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*, 14–15.

apply the new understanding of education developed by Locke and Rousseau in practice. In the following four chapters of the book, Holst identifies four errors that stifle German pedagogy from entering the new age of learning it promises. Despite claiming to ground the pedagogical context in the natural ordering of cognition, the Philanthropinists overemphasize the use of reasoning with young children and underplay kinaesthetic learning, play, and imitation.[47] They attempt too much too soon, exciting a child's imagination without first laying a proper foundation.[48] They promote the use of general elementary books, which fail to respond to each child's particular needs.[49] And by dressing up their lessons with the latest children's literature, they overstimulate the imagination and stifle the organic maturation of virtue.[50]

While there is nothing overtly gendered about Holst's diagnosis of the errors of modern education, it nevertheless has radical implications for the Philanthropinists' attempt to curtail the education of women. This is particularly evident in her charge that the errors of modern pedagogues reproduce a contradiction that can be traced back to Rousseau.[51] In the first four books of *Emile*, Rousseau outlines the proper education of a young man to illustrate the pedagogical implications of the Enlightenment. His famous opening lines indicate that nature provides the authoritative grounds for education: 'Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.'[52] While education should not therefore be reduced to books and scholarship, Rousseau concedes that Emile must nevertheless learn to live in society. Nature provides the normative foundation of his rationality, yet it is culture that realizes and directs his natural capacities. In Book V, Rousseau turns to the education of Sophie, Emile's future wife. 'In everything not connected with sex', he states, 'woman is man.'[53] This is to say that, to the extent that they share the same organs and bodily needs, men and women are equal. Yet he then asserts that nature has fixed a complementarity between the sexes: 'In everything connected with sex, woman and man are in every respect related and in every respect different.'[54] The difficulty of comparing men and women thus 'comes from

[47] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 22.
[48] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 34.
[49] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 47.
[50] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 74.
[51] [Holst,] *Bemerkungen über die Fehler unserer Modernen Erziehung*, 32.
[52] Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, 37.
[53] Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, 357.
[54] Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, 357.